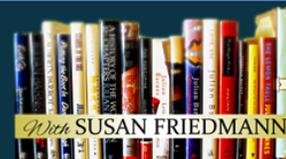


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BOOK MARKETING:

How to Best Overcome the Technology Challenge

Interview with Vicki McLeod

Susan Friedmann: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast, where you learn proven strategies, tools, ideas, and tips from the masters. Every week I introduce you to a marketing master who will share their expertise to help you market and sell more books. Today my special guest is passionate about being fully human in a technical world and using technology wisely and well.

Vicki McLeod is a writer, an author, a coach, a consultant, an award-winning entrepreneur. She's an advocate of mindful business, everyday happiness and living a life rich with meaning. For more than two decades. She's helped organizations, governments, and small businesses create conversations that matter with her clients, customers, and stakeholders. She's coached and mentored leaders, executive teams, and individuals to take inspiration and turn it into strategy. She leads retreats and workshops, writes poetry, and a newspaper column as well as baking bread. Vicki, what an absolute pleasure it is to welcome you to the show. And thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.

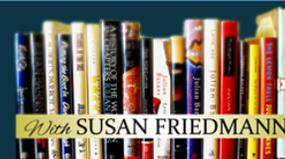
Vicki McLeod: Thank you so much, Susan. I'm absolutely delighted to be here with you.

Susan Friedmann: Vicki, you're passionate about being human in a technical world. To me, that sounds a bit like an oxymoron, but talk to us about that.

Vicki McLeod: It's interesting that you say that it's an oxymoron and I can completely see how it sounds that way, because of course, technology, as we know, it is sort of cold and inanimate. It's made up of devices, screens, physical, metallic, or plastic objects that we hold in our hands or touch with our physical bodies. But it has become... The big challenge that we have now is that it's become the medium by which we must communicate with one another. Certainly prior to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, we were already heading in that direction. So, I started writing about this many years ago, but

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certainly as a result of what we've experienced in 2020, we are more reliant than ever on technology to perform the function of human connection for us. So I feel like this is more important than ever that we rise to this challenge, and I do see it as a challenge.

Susan Friedmann: Very much so. And this whole idea of being literate with regard to the digital world, why is that so important these days? I know I resist some of it, but talk to us more about the importance of that and what we can do to make this a pleasurable experience for ourselves?

Vicki McLeod: Right. So, that's such a great question. And for me, digital literacy is practically a mission. It's something that I feel really committed to and really passionate about. In part, in my own life, driven first and foremost by the fact that I lived nearly half, well, almost more than half of my life in the analog environment, where I am not a spring chicken, and I came into technology and into the digital environment, really forced to by my work as a communications consultant. I realized when I was about 50, that if I didn't get into social media, for example, I might as well get out of business. And about 15 or 20 years before that I had realized if I didn't get my clients onto websites and move them from brochures and paper, collateral, marketing collateral, into digital collateral, I wouldn't be serving them.

I came at it from the point of view of someone who came out of the analog world and was in a sense forced to adapt as many are, sort of digital immigrants. We're reluctantly crossing that divide and I crossed it reluctantly, but I saw it practically that I needed to do so to stay in business. But what I've come to see as the years have gone by, particularly if I look at, for example, my aging mother, is the desire and actually the right of people to participate fully in their lives. And today, if we're going to participate fully, and again, more so in the COVID world, but even prior to the COVID world, if we're going to participate fully, we need to at least have some rudimentary digital skills. And we need to have access to the kind of infrastructure, for example, wifi, broadband, et cetera, that allows us to use those tools effectively, at choice. So, which is to answer your question about how do we feel good about doing this, or how do we feel more comfortable with it, really is about recognizing that we are at choice about how much technology is a part of our lives, how we use it, and what we choose to do with it once we made the decision to use it.

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Susan Friedmann: I'm wondering, that there's a lot of misunderstanding as to... You mentioned social media, obviously this is [apivotal 00:04:40] in all of our lives, but I think there's some misunderstanding and help me with this, with regard to what it can actually do for us, or maybe our expectations are that it can do more for us than it really can. Help me with that.

Vicki McLeod: Yeah, well, that's again, really interesting, almost conundrum that you're presenting, because part of my own journey was coming to realize... I spent a number of years working with small businesses, helping them cross the digital divide, essentially helping small businesses, micro and small businesses, get set up with website, with integrated digital hubs, with social media and so on. And very quickly as I was doing that work, I came to realize that it was setting up people for a situation where they were feeling personally overwhelmed, especially the smaller micro business or in the case of authors, for example, where you are the author of your book, you're marketing, your book, you're also selling your book. You say there's a big task and maybe one person, or maybe you have a very small team. People were experiencing overwhelm, they were experiencing burnout, they were feeling very, very stretched in trying to run their businesses and run their digital marketing.

I started to really look at how could we, rather than simply following the sort of prescribed X number of tweets per day, X number of posts on Facebook, so many posts on LinkedIn, et cetera, actually start to look at a formula that was much more human. And I wrote my first book on trending, really, it was in 2016 as a response to what I was seeing as this overwhelm in the marketplace, in terms of particularly small businesses trying to do it all. Since then, of course there's many, many services and businesses that can help, there's many now digital marketing companies, there's many consultants, but at the time there weren't. And I still think today, people are being asked to fulfill all of the functions. So one of the ways that you can sort of start to navigate it is to really get clarity about what's important to you, what is the outcome that you want from the technology? And then how can you get there in the way that best serves your life and do it in a mindful way?

So in one of the examples I'll give right now, is I think that coronavirus has forced us to use technology for what I see as its highest purpose, which is to connect us, and to connect us across time and space and geography.

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Humans have an enormous desire to connect with one another, it's one of our driving forces to belong, to connect, to be authentic, to be seen. And technology affords us that, at its highest use. And yet we are experiencing fatigue with it as we are using it more and more in our day-to-day lives just simply to stay connected. So on one hand, great, highest use, on the other hand at using it all the time, not so great because we're in human biological bodies that have a really specific set of needs. I've kind of linked the answer to the question, but [inaudible 00:07:22]

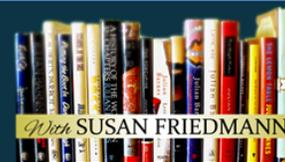
Susan Friedmann: I mean, there's a lot of different ways we can look at this, and you talk about the fatigue, because for me, just thinking about social media is exhausting. I don't necessarily have to do it, but it's like, okay, thinking that I have to be on Facebook, thinking that I should be on LinkedIn, thinking that I should be writing articles as well. It's like, "Oh my goodness, what do I do first? Where do I go first? Which is the right thing for me to do?" And I get a lot of writers who come to me with that same predicament.

Vicki McLeod: Yeah, totally hear it. And I experienced it myself. And I would say I'm at a very high level in terms of my ability to interact with technology and my tolerance for it. But I think that you're raising a really, really valid point, which is if we add into that mix... And so, as I was saying at one time, a lot of sort of social media gurus were telling people, "Here's what you have to do in order to have an effective social media presence". Many of those gurus have teams of people who are doing that for them. And I really took issue with that in sort of 2016, 2017, 2018, like this is great advice, except for please be transparent and say that there were six people on your team for you to achieve this level of presence, right? We need to know that as the audience or as the individual that's trying to be effective online and trying to meet certain social media standards, which we were all making up.

I spent the first 10 years in social media, as part of that body of people who were kind of making up the rules for it. And we can change the rules, we're allowed do that. We're allowed to say "This doesn't work for us as humans, so why don't we do it differently and set a different standard?" But if we add into that mix that you're talking about that very exhausting mix, now we have on top of that, the fact that we are required in order to do pretty much all of our working meetings, to use new technology such as Zoom or Hangouts or things that we may not be familiar with. Some people are and some people aren't, many, many people are having to also enter this new

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learning curve in order to use a video conferencing technology just to stay connected or to just forward business.

There's a lot of pressure. And I feel very strongly that we have the right as human beings to say, "I do not want to experience my life as a life of continual pressure". We're allowed to step back and say, "I'm going to do it differently and find another way". And your options will depend, of course, and I'm trying to sort of think for the sake of your audience, options will depend often on budget. Can I hire someone to do that? Do I love to do it? Maybe you love being on Twitter, so then keep doing that because it's nourishing and lean into that platform. Or in my case, I, for example, love Instagram. I spend more time on Instagram than on other platforms because it's good for me. It feels good.

Susan Friedmann: What is it about Instagram that you enjoy?

Vicki McLeod: I think for me, a couple of things, I love, first of all, the visual element, I'm quite a visual person. And so just to be able to see, to me, Instagram really is about the pretty pictures, and that's a very basic view of Instagram, but I also really like that it doesn't have the same overwhelming level of engagement that you have with something like Facebook, Twitter as well. On Instagram, the conversation is very straight forward, and I really appreciate that. It feels like a rest to me from the sort of clamor or the noise that's present on other social media platforms, particularly Facebook. Particularly now, when there's a lot of political noise, you don't see that so much on Instagram, and that feels to me like a relief. I feel like our day-to-day lives are stressful enough, especially these days, so that to have a place where we can go on social media, where we feel like we can experience a little bit of joy. I think many people find TikTok to be that place as well, because it's got a sort of aspect of silliness, but that is, if you can use it for your business but also use it for yourself, is sort of the tip that I would offer.

Susan Friedmann: But then there are two sides to this. Because as you say, there's that pleasurable side, you enjoy it, that's that escapism, it's like going to a movie or watching a movie now. And then there's that business aspect of it. Now with regard to Instagram, is that something that you use for business or is that just pleasurable and therapeutic for you?

Vicki McLeod: It's both. And that's, I think again, where I would sort of point to, is if you can find that intersection... I often say when we're talking about marketing

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and branding, that the more aligned your brand is with who you truly are, the easier your marketing and sales is going to be. So when I'm showing up on Instagram as myself personally, it's very congruent with who I am in terms of my business persona. There's very little friction there. The more that you align in all your touch points, the easier it becomes to manage those touch points, because I'm just showing up as Vicki on my Instagram. So the things you'll see on my feed will be my books. You'll see some inspirational stuff because I have a coaching practice. You'll see my bread, because what I love to do is bake bread. You'll see a lot of nature because nature is my church, it's where I get my solace. Particularly again, in these times where we've been very limited in where we can go, nature is one of the places we can go. It really is an expression of a philosophy of life that I hold.

And if you are aligned with that as a potential customer or client of mine, you will go, "Oh I'm aligned with this human, we have something in common already, I can tell from this feed." You might then be prompted to investigate more thoroughly the links that are available, that again, social media and the digital affords us this wonderful way to create an interconnected hub of links that can lead people to you for your services. For me, it's been this ongoing journey of alignment and it's where I point my clients to when I work with them, as how can we make sure that you're aligned in your life first and foremost? And then if you're looking for that business alignment or that kind of work with me, then it's, how can we align your business schools with this life that you have chosen so that your marketing and sales become much easier? It's never going to be completely easy, there's a very congruent and coherent sense of the brand and of the person. And being authentic then isn't hard because you're already there.

Susan Friedmann: Yeah. You don't have to try and be authentic, because it is or it isn't.

Vicki McLeod: I always think it's so funny that you were trying to be authentic, and well, you kind of either are authentic or you're not. And the challenge, I think again, is well, a lot of what we see in the digital environment, it is staged. We can stage ourselves on these platforms, we can set up an identity that may or may not be congruent with our persona. And we might do that deliberately. Some people do that deliberately because they want that removed from their personal lives. And I think that's a fair call as well, as long as you're doing it in a way that's conscious and you understand why you're doing it. And you have hopefully good business goals around why

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that choice is being made. Sometimes it is more useful to have a persona that's a bit different depending on where you're at in your business or your work. And for writers, I think that's sometimes the case. Where the writer is very private, but the persona that they put online is a bit different than who they are as a person.

Susan Friedmann: Yes. And I know that for me, I mean, over the years now having done this podcast for four years, I feel much more connected to it. And I know that I can just let myself go and be more authentic. If I listened to some of the first episodes, I'm like, "Oh, I was so stiff and I didn't want to say anything". But now I'm like, "I just let it go and enjoy it". And for me, I really enjoyed it. It's therapeutic meeting people, talking to them, just learning from all these wonderful guests that I have, like yourself.

Vicki McLeod: I think one of the beautiful things about, at least my time on this planet, has that we've been able to renegotiate a lot of things that we thought were givens. We thought at one time, at least in my lifespan, that you had to wear a suit to go to work. That you had to belong to certain kinds of associations, or you had to present in a certain way to be perceived as professional. And we've really navigated a whole new way of being in the world around what it means to be professional or to appear professional. And that's changing again. One of the things that I find very exciting about the times we're in, in terms of being forced into this digital environment, particularly around video conferencing, is we're coming up with new rules of engagement. We're coming up with new ways of being, it's very different way of being in a Zoom video call, for example, and how you would have been if you were sitting in a boardroom.

And the rules are going to change because we're now in our homes. So some of the things that might've been dictated in terms of office behavior in the boardroom, can't really be dictated in the same way in the home environment. And I find it kind of exciting because I feel like we also, by we, I mean all of us who are using the technologies, have agency. We actually get to make choices about how we want this new technology to work for us and what kind of new etiquette's and protocols we want to set up for them. It kind of reminds me a little bit of when social media was new when we were figuring it all out, what were the rules, and what were the etiquette, and what were the norms?

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- Susan Friedmann: Well, we're certainly trying to figure things out and what just went through my mind as you were saying that, was the celebrities who are doing their shows from their own home, it's going to be very interesting when they have to go back into the studio and do things the way they used to do it. Because there's something like you said, they're their own boss in their own home, but when they're in the studio, they're at somebody else's, that can-
- Vicki McLeod: Right. Which is the same, I mean, if we apply that across the board to what's happening now, that's the same thing that's happening with classrooms in schools. If kids are going to be attending class remotely and they're sitting at home, what are the rules that can be imposed on that child at home from the school? I just think it's a really interesting question. Take the celebrity example, would a celebrity, perhaps of a female celebrity, want to spend two, three, four hours in hair and makeup again, when she hasn't had to. She or he, for that matter, hasn't had to for the last several months, because they've been at home and they've been having to take care of that themselves and it may be a much easier routine. There's many, many things that I think people are finding very advantageous about working from home and being at home and they may want very well want to carry them into the new future. Certainly working from home, I think is going to be one of the things that we're not going backward on that one. You might [crosstalk 00:17:29]-.
- Susan Friedmann: I think everything's going to have a sort of a hybrid feel of it. I know that I just attended the National Speakers Association Convention, which was meant to be in Washington DC this year, and ended up online. And now they're going to do future events as a hybrid because they found out what they can do, and it's so much more than they could have just done in the space, on the stage, in the breakout rooms, in the hotel, in DC.
- Vicki McLeod: That's exciting. I find that exciting. I find that they are in a sense, in a brave new world as a result of being forced, again, forced across this divide, forced through this change. But I think many of the silver linings ultimately are going to be that we are going to find new ways of doing things that work better and that are more human and more humane in a sense. There's a lot of advantages to less travel, particularly if you're a speaker or if you have a family or if you have other obligations. There's so many ways that I think that we are going to find to do things that will be supported by technology,

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but also be very respectful of our human boundaries. I'm just curious, what was it like for you as a speaker to attend that event virtually?

Susan Friedmann: It was so different. It was just so different seeing my colleagues on a screen that it was all prerecorded. Yes, it was nice to see them, but there was definitely that element of engagement that we missed and that energy that you get at these events. I mean, there's twelve, fifteen hundred people usually attend, and there's so much sort of electricity in the air, that you come away after five days and you're like, "Aah, I need a break just to relax from all this incredible energy". And there was that element that was definitely lacking.

Vicki McLeod: How do we recreate that? That's one of the challenges that I'm taking on.

Susan Friedmann: That's got to be hard. That energy that you're not getting. And I know that, and you and I discussed this earlier, several of our keynote speaker colleagues who literally overnight went from having full calendars to no events on their calendar. And now everything's done through Zoom. We talk about virtual meetings, and Zoom has sort of become synonymous with virtual. And I think we're getting so fatigued with this. What's the answer? What is the answer?

Vicki McLeod: Partly the answer in the sense, is in the discussion that we're having, which is, I think one of the things that happens... Well, there's two things that I think are important. One is, we're not used to operating so fully in the digital environment in terms of something like Zoom. We need to kind of adapt, start to adapt ourselves to that environment. So one thing, for example, that's really difficult is seeing yourself on screen. When we're interacting, just normally we don't see ourselves, we see the other person, but we don't see ourselves. So there are some tricks and techniques that you can use to minimize your own screen, but to get used to seeing yourself on video, it's really challenging. And we're using... I think because we're trying to engage in the energy... So this is the second thing, we're using a lot of energy just to try to stay focused and to remain attentive because we're at home, everything is happening in our homes.

Our work is happening, our family life is happening, whatever's happening in our home... As it happened to us, my phone rang, wouldn't have happened if we'd been sitting in your studio. We're managing a lot of the environment, as well as managing our biology when we come to these calls. But the

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energetic piece that I wanted to go to, is I think that one of the things that happens for people when they go online is they tend to become a little more passive. Not if you're the presenter or the speaker necessarily, but as an audience member or a participant in a meeting, let's say. So I really think one of the things we can start to do together is to really take a full responsibility for the experience that we're having online, and ask ourselves, how can I bring that electricity, or that energy, or that synergy to this engagement? How can I be fully present even though I might not be the one speaking or presenting? Or even if I might have my camera turned off, which many people are arguing?

I tend to want to ask people to keep their cameras on when I'm doing a meeting or leading a session, because then I can read cues, but many people, because they're in their own homes, feel that they prefer to keep their cameras off for lots of reasons. Some of them can just be, they're not camera ready, they don't feel camera ready, or they're feeling like their home is a mess, or whatever. But then how can that person then take responsibility to remain fully present, even though they can't be seen? So that they're not just emotionally exiting the meeting because they are not visible. But kind of see this as like we have to collectively make a commitment and take responsibility for the experience and to give those speakers and those presenters the absolute gift of our presence, because that will make the difference.

And I have experienced it, not in all, but in some of the things that I've attended in the last few months. In particular of the poet, David White offered a series online where there was 4,500 people in attendance from around the world. The energy was palpable, even though I was sitting at home in my pajamas, so it can be done, but I think it's about presence.

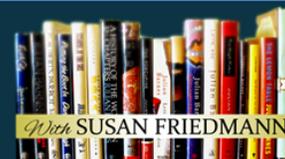
Susan Friedmann: Interesting.

Vicki McLeod: And I think the exhausting part is that we're trying to figure that out while we're doing it. So we're now operating on so many multiple levels of awareness.

Susan Friedmann: It's hard after the third or fourth or fifth Zoom meeting for the day. You're like, "I'm going to cut my camera off because I just need a break for a few minutes."

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- Vicki McLeod: For sure. And I do think that, that's a permission we need to give each other too. That's what I've tried to do anyway, is to say "I'm going to request that you keep your cameras on, but we're going to take a break every 20 minutes and everyone can turn their cameras off and we can go do something". And just to take care of our own biology is important. And I also think we can't expect to... Because we're not getting that exchange that you're talking about, I think we can figure out ways to get it. And we're still working on that, we're, we are not there yet. I think without that exchange of energy that often energizes us, we may not be able to do the same number of interactions in a day online as we did prior. And that's something else about the being human part, is maybe the limit is going to be two or three zooms a day, not five.
- Susan Friedmann: It's like meetings. Is that everybody's in a meeting all the time, now it's everybody's on a Zoom meeting, so.
- Vicki McLeod: Yeah, yeah. And we're doing all of our things and also, we have to remember that we're doing it in one place, which is another kind of energetic thing, right. We're not moving from place to place. It's not like we're getting in our car or on the bus and then going to our next meeting, or then going somewhere else for lunch and then going to maybe take a walk with a friend, and then going to another meeting. We're here at home within four walls. [crosstalk 00:24:27]
- Susan Friedmann: Yes. Going from the office into the kitchen, and once in a while take care of nature, and back again. Vicki, if listeners wanted to find out more about your services, how can they do that?
- Vicki McLeod: That they can for sure visit my website. It's www.Vickimcleod.com. And you can find out really anything you want to know about me there. They can also follow me on any of the platforms, typical social media platforms. I'm not on TikTok, but I am on most of the others. I am very happy to have people engage with me, follow me, send me an email. Yeah. Find and follow and I'll follow back. And my main interest of course, is in conversations that are meaningful. So I'm happy to make myself available online
- Susan Friedmann: And baking bread. Don't forget that part.
- Vicki McLeod: I know. Right.

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- Susan Friedmann: I love that.
- Vicki McLeod: If only we had smeller visions so people could [crosstalk 00:25:24]
- Susan Friedmann: I know. I'm smelling it already. It's that trained response.
- Vicki McLeod: That's right.
- Susan Friedmann: Vicki, if you could leave our listeners with a golden nugget, what would that be?
- Vicki McLeod: I think the main thing that I would want people to take away would be, that you really do have agency in the choices that you're making online. And also in terms of the experience that you're having, and to really inhabit the agency, really step into the fact that you are at choice and the technology is here to serve you.
- Susan Friedmann: Fabulous.
- Vicki McLeod: And stay human, just stay human.
- Susan Friedmann: You've been amazing. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom. And thank you all for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview. And I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.