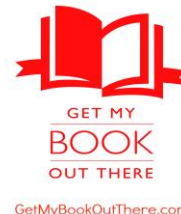


Get My Book Out There Podcast #6

3 Ways to Successfully Collaborate With Other Authors



Narelle Todd:

I'm Narelle Todd.

S.E. Smith:

And I'm S.E. Susan Smith.

Narelle Todd:

We are the self-publishing author and marketing duo that has sold over two million books, but we didn't start out knowing how to sell books. Fast forward past many failed promotions and a lot of lessons learned, you'll see how we went from self-publishing newbies to hitting the New York Times Best Sellers list and making the USA Today Best Sellers list 19 times and counting. We created The Get My Book Out There Podcast to give you simple yet effective marketing strategies to increase readership and book sales, so you know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, as well as some tips for staying mentally and physically well.

S.E. Smith:

Let's get started.

Narelle Todd:

We're going to talk today about the three ways that you can grow your author business by collaborating with others. Now, this is for people who are just starting out, it's for people who are a little bit along on the journey, and it's also for those who've been doing this for quite a while and have a really good following. So three tips that can help everyone, really.

S.E. Smith:

Collaboration between authors should always be something that is continuous. The longer that you're in a business, the more you branch out in your networking. And to be successful, you really do need to network with other authors, and getting to know both the new authors, and the seasoned authors, and the ones all in between, can really make a huge difference, not only in your enthusiasm for what you're doing, but also for reaching new readers.

Narelle Todd:

Absolutely. And it's important to remember that fellow authors are not competitors. It's not like in a traditional business, say where, it's white goods or electrical goods where you've might have five different toasters in front of you, and you're only going to buy one. It doesn't matter how many books you put in front of readers, they're going to buy. They'll buy the books from all the authors. This is not about that person's a competitor. This is how can we work together to increase our readership, make more sales, and of course, connect with readers as well.

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S.E. Smith:

And readers love finding new authors. It just widens their library and builds an enthusiasm in them. And it's so hard being when you listen to a reader who's discovered this new author and they're like, "Oh my God, I didn't even know this author existed." And yeah, the next thing you know, they're out there and they're help plugging it away for you, but it's that collaboration between the authors and the readers that builds that partnership.

Narelle Todd:

Yes, absolutely. So here are three ways that you can collaborate with other authors. First way is with anthologies. So Susan, you've been part of the Pets in Space anthology for five years now. It's an annual event. Often the thought is, "Well, anthologies are really only for authors who are at the top of their niche." What's been your experience with Pets in Space?

S.E. Smith:

My experience has been very, very positive. I think one of the things that I've really enjoyed about Pets in Space is the fact that it's got two themes. One, pets and space, so you know that all of the stories are going to have that element in it. But the other is, it's for a good reason. And in this case, it helps hero-dogs.org, which is a nonprofit charity. And so you're doing something where you've got this theme base, you know that you're going to be reaching the readers, you're doing it for a great cause, and the authors come up with such creative pets.

S.E. Smith:

I think I'm just excited about reading their stories, and seeing the different types of pets and how they interact in the story, and make it a more pleasant experience for the reader. It's I think a fuller one. But the two coordinators for it, Pauline and Veronica, have done such a great job at building a community of authors where we're very, very supportive. And so you don't feel like you're trying to do it all on your own. And you do get to offer authors our readers. So it's a great way for readers to find new authors, great way for authors to find new authors, and build your community.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah, I know in particular that Pauline and Veronica have been very clear about wanting to include at least two newbie authors in each anthology. So for this anthology in particular, and I'm sure for many others as well, it's not always only the top tier authors who were invited to be in an anthology. If you're looking at an anthology and you're going, "Oh, I wish I could be in something like that," approach the owners. Approach the coordinators of the anthology. You can only ask. They can say yes or no, but if you don't ask, the answer's always going to be no.

S.E. Smith:

And I think one of the other things that I really like about it is, that they make sure that all of the authors compliment each other. So even though there may be a wide range of writing styles and a wide range of heat levels, each of the authors does compliment the next one. If you are going to be in this anthology, you want to make sure that you put your best foot forward. So always make sure that you write the best story that you can, and make sure that you have it edited. That is so important, because it can really make or break an anthology. And your story is a reflection to the others, and theirs is to yours. So don't be afraid to let the others know also, that you want a well edited book in that anthology.

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Narelle Todd:

And make sure when you are looking for an anthology to be a part of, that you are teaming up with similar authors who might be around similar theming, similar branding, similar things. So, you may not want to be in an anthology, say that's erotica, if you write romance, for example.

S.E. Smith:

[inaudible 00:05:58], especially.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah, yeah. Those two things don't match. So you want to make sure that you get that right as well. So don't just go for any anthology, be quite thoughtful about which ones you go for, because even though you may be say, new being an author, you also want to be true to who you are and your voice as an author.

S.E. Smith:

And the whole purpose is also to get your name out there for new readers.

Narelle Todd:

Yes.

S.E. Smith:

And so if you were in the wrong anthology, it can also not bring you in those new readers. It could actually be detrimental to building your base.

Narelle Todd:

Anthology leads us into our second tip, which is shared worlds. Amazon used to have a thing called Kindle Worlds, and they did away with that, but many authors have continued to operate in a similar sort of concept. And so for those who don't know what it is, it's where you have a shared environment or a shared world. And then authors write stories all centered around that particular world or environment. Good example is your Magic, New Mexico world, where you have up to 20 or so authors writing their stories set in that world, but they're all their own individual stories.

S.E. Smith:

And the good thing about this, this actually began as a fan fiction type writing. So this is for people who are thinking about being an author. Who want to be an author, who want to write a book, but they're not sure about where to start with it. And if they fall in love with a series... Like with mine, I chose Magic, New Mexico because it's such a wonderful world anybody can write in and build on. It's a world where magical creatures live together in harmony. They have a town, they go to school, they have businesses, and tourists come in, and aliens pop in. So it's one of those that you could write a contemporary, you could write paranormal, you could write a sci-fi, but they're all in this magical town called Magic, New Mexico, where being abnormal is the norm. And by doing this, you're offering basically a starting place, a jump board, for somebody who's thinking about wanting to write. And many of the authors, it was their first opening to actually get in to becoming an author themselves.

S.E. Smith:

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They love the world. They love the characters. They wanted to create their own or expand upon, a business or create a business where all these characters came in. And when they did, I gave them that foundation. But they also have a springboard in that I helped promote it. We have the Magic, New Mexico website, we do the newsletter, and all of the authors work together to share this world, and each other's work. You're not starting from scratch all by yourself, out in this dark little void somewhere, in this black hole where you're wondering, "How am I ever going to write a book, or get seen, or anything else?" We help give you that guideline. And there's a lot of different authors that do have these type.

Narelle Todd:

Have a look for authors. You can certainly go say, on to Amazon and have a look for your favorite authors, and see if you can see any worlds in there that they participate in, then do your research and see the best ones for you, and then approach the organizers for that world, and see if you can be part of it. Bear in mind that you want to make sure that there is promotion going on, because part of this is getting your book out there. So there needs to be that active promotion as part of being a member of the world, and something that you need to do as well as the other authors in the group.

S.E. Smith:

Like you said, when you check, also be aware that some authors take a percentage of the book sale. So they actually split the royalties with you. Some worlds do, some don't, and they do it a different levels. So read the fine print. But this is a great way, if you found a world that you really love, and others. A series of stories. For mine, it was the Magic, New Mexico. And you think, "Oh, I've got this perfect character that would be great in this world. "I've never written a book, but I really want to. I would love to see a story about this." Submit it. Try writing the book. And the books don't have to be full length. There's a lot of novellas that can be written in these worlds as well.

Narelle Todd:

And our third tip is to collaborate with two or three other authors and create a box set. So you could do it around a shared theme, a shared area, shared trope even, but you all contribute to the box set, and then you all contribute to the promotion of the box set as well. So I guess in some ways it's like a mini world or a mini anthology, but it's just a couple of you together, keeps things manageable, but also helps you get out and about.

S.E. Smith:

And they don't have to be new. Yes, it's nice to have a brand new, never released story to go onto a box set, but that's not necessarily the only way to do it. You can have a previous book that you've written. And if you get together with several other authors and you decide, "Let's put a box set together. We'll offer it together as a promotion." And like you said, you put it together, you all work together with cross promoting, and you chip in to do some advertising. It's a great way to open up the world for more readers to find you, because readers will take a chance on purchasing this box set, because they're wanting to find new authors.

S.E. Smith:

So don't be afraid. Like you said, make sure that they're all the same. You don't want... Unless you promote it as a wide range of story, you always want to make sure that you let the readers know exactly. If it's not going to be just sci-fi romance, or just paranormal romance, if it's going to be a wide variety, then make sure that you advertise it as that, so readers know. Get together with several authors and collaborate.

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Narelle Todd:

Yeah, definitely. One of the things to keep in mind, if you are going to do a collaboration with other authors, is that theming for this is probably important, because it does help with focusing your marketing. So it could be, it's four books, and dragons are the center point. Or it's four books, and it's set in a different world. Or it's four books, and it's all about a certain topic or a certain trope. You want to be mindful of how can you then market that collaboration, and the easiest way to do that is around a theme, whatever that theme might be.

S.E. Smith:

Remember, you need somebody that's organized.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah.

S.E. Smith:

But willing to take on a little bit of extra work, because this is a little bit of extra work. And remember, the more people that you have in it, it sounds great, but think of heading count. So you want to make sure that you're organized, it's manageable, and remember more is not always better. Sometimes it can be worse. If you've got 30 authors, there's going to be readers that go, "Oh my God, I can't read 30 books. Then it's going to be too big. I can't read that." Believe it or not, in some cases, many cases, smaller is actually better, because then you know they're actually going to read your book.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah, definitely. I think the hardest part of any collaboration is getting everybody on the same page, and just making sure everyone's doing. You've agreed and did everybody hear the same thing as what you thought you said is always the challenge, no matter where we are. So there's our three tips for collaborating with other authors. Remember that authors are not competitors. You can work together to really increase each other's readership. Make it collaborative, a win-win for everybody. Now the promotion opportunities are more, because you've got more authors promoting you. Just have a think about it. And remember, if you don't approach other people and ask, the answer is always going to be no. Get out there and start thinking about, who would you like to be in a collaboration with?

S.E. Smith:

I hope these tips have been helpful for everybody. And if you have any questions, don't be afraid to reach out and ask.

Narelle Todd:

Absolutely. Hey, thanks for joining us today. You know we've got way more information we want to share with you to increase your book sales. So please come and join me at facebook.com, Get My Book Out There.

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