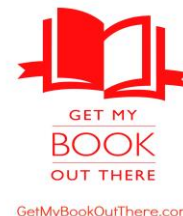


Get My Book Out There Podcast #21

How to Write Stories That Go Beyond Books



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 2 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 Bestsellers List and making the USA Today Bestsellers 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:

Today we're going to be talking about how to write stories that go beyond books. This is Susan's specialty, so I'm going to hand it over to you. Fire away.

S.E. Smith:

Well, the one thing that I always say, and I know I say it over and over and over throughout our podcasts, is think outside the box. And that is one thing that... We just found out like this last week, people are like, "Oh, but you can't do that because there's this rule." And it's like, "I don't like rules. I'll follow certain ones, but really, not all rules are created the same." So for me, it's kind of nice not knowing the rules when I started so I just kind of just plowed ahead and I'm continuing to do that. Sometimes I'll hear people say, "You can't do that." And I'm like, "I already did. Why not?" Don't be afraid to think outside of the box. So when you're thinking about your books, you need to think outside of just publishing them. You need to think about the fact that you want to make your books work for you.

S.E. Smith:

And the only way you can do that is you don't want to have to sit and crank out one book after another, after another. Although that can be fun, it can also be very exhausting. You want to make your books work for you. And in order to do that, you need to think beyond where can these books go? That'll lead us basically into tip number two, look at successful companies. One of the things I love is... Think of Stan Lee. When he wrote the Marvel comics, his first off, probably, I don't know, I haven't studied this, but when he first began, he was doing Make this year a book selling year with my clear step-by-step plan to market your books and build a strong business foundation... without stressing over time, money, or sales! Download my guide [HERE](#).

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something revolutionary. He was taking a story and putting it to graphic art. Well, those graphic arts grew beyond just the pages of a comic book and they became the whole Marvel Universe. So think about how can your books become this universe?

S.E. Smith:

When I write, I write as The Worlds of S.E. Smith, because that's what it is. It's the worlds. It's not just one book or one series, it's all of my books, it's all of my series. And it goes beyond that to the audio books, to the paperbacks, to the animated films that I'm working on, to the music, to all of the different graphics that I've got, the coloring books, the plush characters. So I'm thinking outside of the box, how can I get my stories to take on a life of their own and create this universe that people really want to be a part of? And I think too often, authors get stuck in this rut that I'm a writer, that's all I'm supposed to do is just write a book and crank it out.

S.E. Smith:

Have you seen that with yourself? You've dealt with authors and all they can think of is writing the next book. They can't think of how can I put that one story to use for them.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah, I see that a lot with my clients. I call it the strategic nature of being in business. Writing is a business. And it's more than just your writing, even though the writing is the foundation and the core view of a writer's business, there's all these other things that come into play. But when authors aren't thinking of them, all they think of, say, is writing the next book, they miss out on how to build a business which is really strategic and which has the capacity to send out tendrils into all different areas and just have a bigger impact, which of course is what you can do if you have, say, merchandise, or if it's not just an eBook, it's a paperback and it's an audio book and you get it translated. There's so much that you can actually do with the core part of your business, your books, all the other things that are possible that come out of it, which of course then boost your income.

S.E. Smith:

Look at Nicholas Sparks with him and his movies. Look at Stephen King, J. K. Rowling. I mean, the list goes on and on and on, where you take that core story and then you build upon it and you end up coming up with action figures and movies and other bigger things. I think the Harry Potter is probably one of the biggest where you can really see, because they've just exploded with the merchandise. And then you got backpacks and you've got shoes and jackets and purses and costumes and hats. And I mean, you name it. And all that is, is people are not only buying that item, but they're also a walking advertisement for you. So, taking that concept from that book, and even though the book is... What? Been out for over 10 years or so, well over 10 years, it's still popular today because people are still being exposed to it. So there will be that next generation of new readers that come along. And that's one of the things.

S.E. Smith:

Stephen King has it. He's got, I guess, some of his merchandise stuff, but because of what he writes. I mean, he does have merchandise that goes along with his. So what you want to do is you want to look at how can I take

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my stories and expand it outward as a good business person and make it more profitable where, not only am I selling merchandise, but it's another way of creating more marketing, more advertising.

Narelle Todd:

And you can do it even when you're small, because many people think, well, I have to wait until I'm bigger to afford it, or for enough people to be interested. But people are interested now. And it really is another avenue for you to market. As you say, if somebody is wearing your T-shirt with your book cover on it or a saying from your book or something like that, say, 10 people buy that T-shirt and you can just get the T-shirts printed on demand so you don't even have to hold the stock, for people who are just starting, it's possible to do this. But that's 10 people wearing a shirt who are showing it to heaps of other people. Go do it.

S.E. Smith:

And it's worldwide, because you're using, like you were saying, print on demand is just like you print your books. The thing is you could use Society6, you could have your own store if you want to with Shopify or WooCommerce, there's dozens of them out there, Payhip. So there's dozens of different shops that you could do. There's Zazzle. What was the one with the T-shirt? Teespring. All of these, and it doesn't cost anything to the author. All they have to do is design, have a great idea, a great story, and then put that design up there, create their shop, put their design up there. If you're willing to promote it, you can actually make a good monthly income off of that extra revenue. And not only, like I said, and you pointed out, you're not having to have this merchandise where you're having to carry the stock and shipping and everything because it's all print on demand. People are ordering this stuff, being delivered to them, and then they're advertising for you.

Narelle Todd:

Yes. And if you think of it, say, a 3.99 book or eBook or something like that, if you're then selling a T-shirt for \$20, even if half of that goes in costs or whatever, even if you make 10 bucks back.

S.E. Smith:

Well, even if you make \$5, it adds up over time. And let's say you're making a hundred dollars a month on your merchandise sale, well, that's \$1,200 a year and it grows each year, especially if you're willing to promote it, it's going to grow. And it's giving more people access to your stuff, getting your logo out there, getting your branding out there, which we've talked about.

Narelle Todd:

Yes. So if you think of it.

S.E. Smith:

And it only takes one cute character or one cute idea, or one cute saying, pick one saying in one of your books that just really hammers home, people comment on and turn that into a shirt.

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Narelle Todd:

Yes. So when you think about that book that you're selling for 3.99, 4.99, whatever, now you're actually earning more than what you sold that book for. It has that potential. It's worth it as you say, to just have a bit of a thing, be strategic.

S.E. Smith:

And it's not something that's going to cost you if you're doing the print on demand sites. So, that was tip number two. Tip number three, what are some ways that you can expand your story? I think one of the things that comes to me is we were talking to one of the authors that we work with sometimes, and she had this pet, this one series that was based on pets, on this specific dog, I believe. We were like, "Oh my gosh." We immediately jumped on. You can have the design on a T-shirt, you could have it on mugs, you can have all these really cute sayings. Don't keep yourself back.

S.E. Smith:

When I think of things like the Marvel Universe or Star Wars, Pixar or Disney, when you think of Mickey Mouse, really, there's not a whole lot of movies out there with Mickey Mouse in it. How did Disney... He built everything around this mouse. And that's what he sold mostly was all this stuff around a mouse that he drew and that was his branding and that's how he expanded. And so, you only need that one thing to capture. Take something that's unique in your story, or think about it when you are writing a series, what is something that you can take that you can expand on?

S.E. Smith:

For me, it happened to be, I was writing The Dragon Lords, and I had this dream, it was almost Easter. And I thought about, well, they have kids, and wouldn't it be really cute to have all these baby dragonlings and then following the adventures of these dragonlings as they grow up? It just kind of took a life on for itself. All these ideas came. And so I've been really enjoying building up my dragonlings. And it's a great tie-in because they expand and they're cute, they're fun. Most everybody loves dragons. And how could you say no to a baby dragon? So this is one of the things that I've embraced.

S.E. Smith:

But I've also embraced certain sayings. I have Grandma Pearl and her 20 Rules for Living. And that's been one of my biggest sellers is her poster with the rules of how to live a good life.

Narelle Todd:

It's important to note here, things we've also spoken about too with regards, say, the mindset about being prepared to fail fast. And that's the beauty of, say, print on demand is you can go test these things out. So you may think that a design is great or a saying is great. Go test it on a, say, print on demand T-shirt or something like that. If nobody buys it, well, that's a good indication that that's not it, so go try something else. But the idea is to go out there and actually test. Don't be afraid to put something out there. Get feedback from your readers, and by that, I mean sales. So if it hasn't sold, then, okay, well, I need to go try something else. You need to tie your mindset in as well about being prepared to say, okay, that didn't work. That's okay. Let's try

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something different. Instead of going, oh, merchandise doesn't work for me. And you've tried it once or something.

S.E. Smith:

And don't expect to sell like \$10,000 in a month right away. Is it possible? Yes. It's possible to sell that much and much more. But it's also possible that you may only make a sale here or there. But you've got to remember that, especially if you're not promoting it, even if you make a sale here or there, it's not costing you anything, it's a place to get out and you're still making some revenue. Every little bit helps when you're trying to build your business.

Narelle Todd:

Yes.

S.E. Smith:

I think the mindset is the big thing is a lot of people are like, well, I didn't think about that, or I don't know what to do, or I don't know. Take some of these ideas that we're getting and take a critical look at your writing and say, "You know what? That one line everybody comments in that book that I wrote, what is it?" Nike's Just do it. And everybody knows if you have Just do it and then that little logo they know exactly who you're talking about. Well, that's what you want to do. Have that one saying and your logo, and everybody starts recognizing who you are.

Narelle Todd:

Yes. And a good place to go is Kindle, is to go and have a look at what sentences that people have highlighted. Your readers have told you, these are the bits that I really love. So the answers are there that you can at least start with and see if it resonates with the broader community.

S.E. Smith:

And don't be afraid to ask your readers. If you've got a readers group or and on your Facebook, make that one of your questions, "the favorite scenes or favorite lines or favorite character that has really stuck with you," and gather that information from your readers and use it. I remember once reading that most successful people, when they get an idea, they usually act on it within the first five to 10 minutes. And if they don't, then the majority of people don't do that. And because they don't, then they never follow through or they never act. But what they do is, the most successful people, they'll get this idea, they'll immediately act on it. And then when they realize, well, maybe that wasn't such a great idea after all, they fail fast, but they keep going. And they store that information. It's not a failure. I created a hundred light bulbs and none of them worked. And then the hundred and first one did. But I didn't fail that hundred times because I learned something each time that moved me forward.

Narelle Todd:

All of the concepts that we've been talking about in our podcast, really all work together because what we have found is it's about the strategy, it's about bringing everything into play when you come to work on your business and in your business. And once again, in getting your stories to go beyond your books, this really is about where you're going to bring in your mindset and you're going to have the courage to take a step out there and do something you may not be comfortable with.

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Narelle Todd:

And with that, you need the mindset to be able to say, look, I'm going to fail fast and learn. All of these things all play together to build your business, which is not just your books. And that's the thing with authors, it's kept about the books. Whereas for readers, you've just brought them into a world, as you say. They want to know about that world just as we want to know about what's happening with those characters that we read about why we love seeing them in other stories, even if it's just a cameo, but we want to know that they're there and stuff like that.

S.E. Smith:

Well, one of the things I really realized the last couple of days is we've been watching movies, we're finding it more and more difficult to find the kind of movie that we want to watch. But we watched this one Sci-fi. And the first one was really good. And then we watched the second one and it was kind of like, oh, okay, it's not that good. But you could see that they set it up for the third one. And even though the second one wasn't all that good, we want to see the third one because we want to know what happened to dad. So it's like, okay, it's like, good? Not sure, but we'd still watch it so that we could find out about dad.

S.E. Smith:

Another thing is you've got to realize, when you're building stuff like this, you've also got to decide, am I building a foundation? So even though you make it, all of the merchandise stuff starting to get in place, of course, the more merchandise you have, the better it will be. But one of the other things is that when you're building it, even if you're not selling a lot at first, it may be because you're not advertising or you're not ready to push it. You're getting it in place so that when you are ready to do that push everything is there. Think about it as opening a store. You don't just put one item on the shelf and then open the doors and say, come into my shop. You've been gathering your inventory, getting things in place and then getting it all displayed so that when you do open the doors, people come in and then it's like, wow. So, that's what you're wanting to do.

Narelle Todd:

Great tips on how we can build a business which is not just books. The books are the foundation. It gives you then different income and revenue streams.

S.E. Smith:

To infinity and beyond.

Narelle Todd:

Yes. Oh, my gosh. No business can be just on one revenue stream, that's not healthy. Imagine if that got taken away for some reason.

S.E. Smith:

It got taken away, if it goes out of style like bell-bottoms did. They came in and then they went out and then they came back in. But you may have to wait 20 or 30 years. And if you're trying to build a business, you can't stay in business by only doing that one thing.

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Narelle Todd:

Yes. So we need to get out there and think outside the box. Go and have a look at what other people are doing and taking the best parts of those and incorporating them into your own business, and obviously putting your spin on them.

S.E. Smith:

So I hope everybody's enjoyed this new strategy to thinking outside of the box and how can you take your books and take it to infinity and beyond?

Narelle Todd:

Absolutely. So let us know how you go. If there's something that you're going to go try today, maybe you're going to do a T-shirt with a saying from one of your books, pop it in the comments, let us know. We can't wait to see what you come up with.

S.E. Smith:

And post them down below. And if you have any questions, we're here for you.

Narelle Todd:

Absolutely.

S.E. Smith:

Have a great one.

Narelle Todd:

Thanks everyone.

Narelle Todd:

Hey, thanks for joining us today. We 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/getmybookoutthere.

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