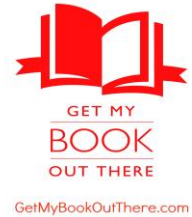


Get My Book Out There Podcast #3 Why Author Branding Is So Important



Narelle Todd:

Hi. I'm Narelle Todd.

S.E. Smith:

And, I'm S.E. Susan Smith, and we'd like to welcome you this week to our weekly chat on real world marketing tips and promoting for self-published authors. Today we're going to be talking about branding, and, hopefully, we're going to be giving some different perspectives on branding because it's interesting. The more you get into it, the more you learn how branding is a part of both your professional and your personal life and how the two mesh with each other.

S.E. Smith:

So, I'd like to say hello to Narelle.

Narelle Todd:

Hello.

S.E. Smith:

And get her feedback on how all of this is going to go about.

Narelle Todd:

Certainly with branding, I reckon it's one of the most fundamentals to anything you do. Particularly with creatives and authors, it is something that you need to get right from the very start, or at least have it in place. Traditional things around branding are things like what are the colors that are associated with you? What's the look and feel? It's getting those things in place so that it's consistent. What that does is just warm up your audience to know that when they see certain things, they go, "Oh, that's S.E. Smith, so I know that's her. I feel right, comfortable." It's almost like less chatter in the person's mind so they can just look at what is it that you're trying to say or share with them.

Narelle Todd:

That's why, right from the start, it's good to work out what it is that you want to be represented publicly in a visual format. That's probably the most traditional aspect of branding and the one that we most talk about and the one that we most share about. But, of course, there's whole other aspects involved there. We wanted to look at what some of those things are. Apart from the traditional ones around what's your font, what's your colors?

S.E. Smith:

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It's funny because I'm not as comfortable with dealing with the more structured understanding of what branding is. So, it's like, oh, I just like that color red. It's not I don't care what color it is. It's just that color, where I like black, or, like you said, it's important on the more structured level. For me, it's all an aesthetic, so it's what pleases me, what pulls me in, what drives in.

S.E. Smith:

And so, I'm more focused on the less analytical side of the branding part because that goes with who I am, and that's part of my branding. That's part of who I am as a person, and it's that creative part. I look at it, and I go, "Oh, I really like that." I don't care that it's not the exact same color red. It goes with what's going through my head at the moment. Sometimes you have to ... They're kind of a brace against each other, and other times they just flow right into each other and create an even stronger link, I think.

Narelle Todd:

For sure. I think it's important to recognize the creative aspect in anything that you do. So, if you are going off-brand, the thing to tie it back in would be to insert your logo, say, into that graphic or meme, or something like that. And, that ties in, then, for your readership. Oh, this is an S.E. Smith. It's certainly important to have consistency with something. So, if you're changing up your colors, not a big deal. Make sure that your logo's there, and that lets people know. Or, if you're using your colors, then people are comfortable with that.

S.E. Smith:

One of the things that I thought it was interesting, there's a part in it because enough knows who Elton John is and his music. One of the things that really stuck out with me was that everybody was trying to put him into this little box. It was like this is how it's done. This is how you play music. This is how you do this. This is how you do that. One of the things he was asking is how do you take this geeky boy with glasses and put some soul into him? In one part, they say, "Well, you've got to forget about who you were and reinvent yourself." I don't think that's necessarily true because when you look at it, he never had to reinvent himself. He just had to step out of that box everyone kept trying to put him in. Once he did that, then his branding fit perfectly with him.

S.E. Smith:

I notice that myself, that in my own personal experience I have people that, at times, try to put me into that little box. I'm like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," and then I just go off and do my own thing. I understand that is part of who I am, and I accept it. I'm not afraid of embracing that part of my branding, that people tease me about having squirrels running around in my brain at the control center. Yeah, I do, and it's okay. It's okay to be different. It's okay to step out there because that goes with my personality, with the way I write, with the way I approach things in a creative way. It works well when I have somebody that's like you, that are able to work with me and my creativity, but you're also able to help organize me so that I don't get overwhelmed by it.

S.E. Smith:

So, I think when you're working with your branding, it's understanding your strengths, and your weaknesses.

Narelle Todd:

I think authenticity in branding is important. This is for particularly creatives, authors who want to be known as them. If you're writing to market, then that could be and possibly is a different kind of branding experience. But, if you're writing as you and you want to build your brand, then authenticity definitely is important. You need to be true to who you are because in your interactions with your readers, that's going to come through

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anyway. People are going to discover, as with you, that the squirrels run the show and that you do go from thing to thing. So, it just makes sense to incorporate that into your branding. Don't be afraid of going, "This is me. I'm different. That's okay." I loved the recent thing I read about Stan, you know, who wrote the Marvel comics?

S.E. Smith:

Yes. Stan Lee?

Narelle Todd:

Yes, Stan Lee. He was saying about the X-Men that part of the reason he wrote that was to show people that being different was okay. It didn't make you bad. I really loved that because I think that's what it is about, each one of us being comfortable with our branding enough to be able to go, "Well, this is who I am. I'm different." Or, "This is what makes me special, unique," or maybe not special and unique. You might just be the same as everybody else, but there's something that is you. That's what people will gravitate to, and that's what you have to let people see as part of authentic branding.

S.E. Smith:

I notice that when I'm writing, I'll get new ideas. I may end up writing a story that's in a brand new series, or it may be that I do jump from one series to another and another, and then take time to come back. But, I'll always come back. That's not the problem. I know readers can sometimes get frustrated that I've got two books left in this series, or one book left, or I haven't written the second or third book in this other one. But, there's always a reason for it. And, whether it's the fact that I'm not ready to write it, or the characters aren't ready for me to share it, I think that's a big point.

S.E. Smith:

I have to be ready for that story to unfold. I've found that my strengths come from re-coming back to a series and seeing it from a fresh point of view. I find them exciting and challenging, and I want to know what's going to happen. You start writing the same series over, and you're just writing one book after another after another after another. I won't say that it loses its magic, but it becomes almost emotionally draining because you're lost in this world. You need to pull back sometimes and go to a new world, visit that, and then come back.

S.E. Smith:

I think, also, what you were talking about with Stan Lee is don't be afraid to reach out. Don't be afraid to try new things or expand to a different horizon. For me, I try to look at aliens in a totally different way. We see most of the movies that we watch, it's always these really bad aliens. Yes, I do have some bad aliens. But, I also have a lot of really cool ones, ones that are not here to totally destroy the Earth but to help make it better, or where you do have a bad alien, but then you've got the good aliens trying to help defeat the bad ones. So, I think that's not something that you see except in movies or series like Star Wars or Star Trek. There's so few, and it's like why? If we were to live in this massive universe and we discover we aren't the only ones out there, there's a good possibility that we would be in relationships like this.

Narelle Todd:

That's why it's important to be true to you. We've had this conversation many times because it's obviously much easier to market a complete series, where one book comes out every three weeks or so, the traditional way of publishing. So, it's easier, often, to do things in that systematic, rote sort of place. I think also challenges

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because you'll often see that the stories with authors who do that tend to become the same. And, it's that ... I call it like the old Mills & Boon. There was a set formula, and you often see that set formula come out in books like that.

Narelle Todd:

There's minuses and there's pluses for whichever, but I think the important part is that you are true to what's right for you. You need to write the way is true to you, and then you work your branding around that, and you work your marketing around that. You do the best you can, but people are going to connect with you because they know that, at the heart of it, you're real, and you're authentic.

S.E. Smith:

You're doing this in the long run. It doesn't mean that your branding won't change over time as you change, but the biggest thing is not getting so stuck that you can't do that change, and not to be afraid to push the limits of the type of branding that you want to do. If you find one thing ... What is it they say? Your taste buds change like every seven years? Well, don't be afraid to let your branding kind of evolve over that seven-year period as well, because as a person you grow the more you do something. And, I think that's also important, to recognize that we've seen it in major brands. Coca-Cola, I don't know how many different ways that they've changed up, but just to use them as an example. So, don't be afraid to continue to revise, revisit, and grow as you grow as a writer or as a person. In whatever business you do, don't be afraid to let your branding grow with you.

Narelle Todd:

Absolutely. It needs to change just like we change. Your branding needs to go with you. Yes. So, if you are struggling with defining what your brand is, don't think of it as something you're tied into for life. Start with something. You've got to get started with that. That's the most important thing. If you stay still doing nothing with your branding, then that's going to negatively impact you. So, at least start with something, even if it's a logo in the traditional sense. Start to talk about common themes, or there's different ways that you can brand. So, if you don't want to go to the expense of creating a logo because you're not sure what that is, look at other things that you can do start to create for yourself the brand.

S.E. Smith:

I've noticed that. When I first started in 2012, up until now, I notice the changes. I still have the basic coloring, but my logo has changed horrendously, but in little increments. It has evolved as I have evolved, and focusing, understanding myself better, appreciating the knowledge that I gain. One of the things people ask me is ... In fact, I just got this question the other day. Do I want to do S.E. Smith Presents? Or, I had changed it to The Worlds of S.E. Smith.

S.E. Smith:

And so, I'm spending more time focusing on The Worlds of S.E. Smith because, for me, these are all these different worlds that I'm creating. It's not just one thing. It's the eBook, the variety of genres that I write. It's the paperback. It's audiobooks. It's the foreign languages, and it's the animation. It's the songs. So, all of this are coming about. It's like my books where I had all of these series and they're coming together into a universe. They are The Worlds of S.E. Smith. These are the worlds that I'm creating.

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S.E. Smith:

So, I'm focusing more on that type of branding through the evolution of understanding the books, myself, my business, and who I am and where I want to go. But, as a creative, I'm very, very thankful to have someone who is organized, that can recognize that, and then help me contain it and actually put it into progress. You need somebody. I can come up with a lot of the ideas, but I need some help. How do I get it from here out there? That's where having that balance with working with someone who's more organized makes such a huge difference.

Narelle Todd:

That's the important part, also, with branding. You said this before, about recognizing strengths and weaknesses. It's the same with building your team, recognizing those strengths.

S.E. Smith:

And delegating it out.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah. Delegating is a good thing.

S.E. Smith:

That will be for another podcast.

Narelle Todd:

Yes, it will be. We hope that you've gotten at least one thing that you can action today on branding, professionally and personally, making it authentic, making it real for you.

S.E. Smith:

And, make sure that you find someone that can help you balance.

Narelle Todd:

Thanks to everyone.

S.E. Smith:

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. We'll talk to you next time.

Narelle Todd:

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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