



## FLATT-BANDOS PODCAST

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KENEALLY: Welcome to *Beyond the Book*. My name is Chris Keneally. It's a pleasure to be your host for these regular conversations about the publishing and writing industries. We're doing a special series of podcasts helping people get to know better some of the very special presenters for Publishing University 2009, which will be coming to New York City in May, just ahead of Book Expo America, and as always, is sponsored by the Independent Book Publishers Association.

Joining us today for the program, we have Marika Flatt from Austin, Texas. Hello, Marika.

FLATT: Hi. Thanks for having me.

KENEALLY: Absolutely. Welcome to *Beyond the Book*, and also on the line from Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kate Bandos. Kate, welcome to the program.

BANDOS: Hi, Chris. It's mighty cold up here, so I think I'd rather be in Austin where Marika is.

FLATT: It's a beautiful day.

KENEALLY: Well online – online it's always a beautiful day, and it can be any temperature you want it to be. Kate and Marika are going to be talking to us today about how to make the most from limited budgets when you want to make a publicity splash. And limited budgets is probably the by-word for today because,

of course, times are not exactly flush, and budgets are something that everyone is scouring for for opportunities to save some money.

Publicity though, of course, remains absolutely important. It's how you get the word out and how you drive sales. And some of the things that we're going to hear about in this little program would be conducting publicity tours and satellites tours, what to expect and not to expect from various packages, helping reporters out – I can identify with that. I used to be a reporter, and we need all the help we can get. And even becoming a media darling.

And so, with all that in mind, let me start with Kate and ask you about just what it means for publishers these days to have to really pay so close attention to their publicity programs, given what's going on in the economy. Are there special approaches that they could take that's going to get the most bang from their buck?

BANDOS: Well, happily, the – with today being so focused on the web and the Internet, it's an immediate way that publishers are saving a lot of money because no longer do you have to print nice looking, flick pieces, nor do you have to paying the cost of mailing pieces until somebody is really interested in your book, and then, of course, you need to mail that out with some pieces. But an immediate savings in this climate is because you can make terrific pieces, have them online and send them out, have people come to your site, etc., but the savings doing – without having to do printing and mailing of press releases is one really big place that people save today.

KENEALLY: Now, do you recommend that each individual book or each individual author have his or her or its own web site, or is it enough to develop these materials for the various books within the publisher's overall web site?

BANDOS: I feel that the publishers – that the authors need to have a web site. If they have multiple books, then the multiple books can be on their site, but I think that in addition to any publisher site, if an author is not the publisher, then the author should have an independent site from the publisher, because then they have control over what material is there, how often it gets updated and many other facets.

KENEALLY: Right. And certainly, again, you could even make that a mirror of each other and doing duplicate web sites or web sites that kind of feed off each other is, as you say, a great way to make the most of everyone's efforts, without really adding tremendously to costs.

Marika, I just read an article of yours in *The Independent*, which is the IBPA's newsletter -- it was in November 2008 – and you talked about making the most from freelance writers, and as I mentioned at the top of the program, I used to be a freelance writer myself, and I really found what you had to say very – very much on target. Freelance writers – we eat what we kill and so being able to get the advance word on something that helps us pitch a story to an editor or a publication

is very helpful indeed, and if you're a publicist, the care and feeding of freelancers can go a long way. Talk about that.

FLATT: Well, it's such an important thing these days because – and Chris, I call it my hobby but I do some freelance writing for a couple of local publications too, so I have the fortunate viewpoint of seeing it from both sides, and in this day and age, there are so many freelancers out there because, as we all know, newspapers and magazines have cut their budgets and so they're outsourcing to freelancers more. And like you said, as a freelancers, you really rely on kind of catching the scoop and hearing about different things from your sources, and so publicists and publishers out there can really benefit from kind of taking care of those freelancers that they work with on a regular basis.

Freelancers are always looking for good stories, and if you can build those relationships with those freelance writers, then that can be a real great ongoing relationship for both the freelancer and the publicist or the publisher because you're helping each other out, and it's an ongoing need, and so really kind of tapping in to what that freelancer needs and what kind of stories they cover will go a long way in developing that long-term relationship.

KENEALLY: Right. And I would imagine that many freelancers today are not just writing for publications, whether they're online or in print, but they're probably also keeping their own blogs. It's helping to establish their reputations, and it's a place they can, perhaps, reuse material or float some ideas. How do you find the right freelancer for a particular book or a project? Any special tips for doing that?

BANDOS: This is Kate. I can – I'll mention a couple and then I'm sure Marika has some others. There are two services online now that are terrific. One is paid for, the other is free. ProfNet is the paid service and that's part of PR Web, and they – when you have paid your fee, everyday you get feeds telling you what reporters are looking for and what their deadlines are and how to contact them, etc. And so as the publicist, I scan through those several times everyday as they come in and either respond directly or forward them on to the authors and publishers we're working with for them to respond.

The other service that is sort of a mirror of it is the free service that Peter Shankman has put together that's – the term is Help A Reporter Out, and the initials H-A-R-O, HARO, is how it's known, and people can just go on Help A Reporter – it's either HelpAReporter or HelpAReporterOut.com and you sign on and you start getting those feeds.

So, those are two really good ways to start seeing the topics freelancers are looking for, and editors and producers as well post on those two sites.

KENEALLY: Right. And what I recall is that, while you're right for the ProfNet, there's a fee there to get those particular alerts, but if you are an expert, you can list your

expertise and your background – you can list that for free – so you can position authors as experts in their fields and get that information in there and reporters can find that and that is for free, I believe.

BANDOS: I'm not sure. I believe that's true. Yes.

KENEALLY: Right. Marika, anything you have to add today? Any other tips with – with the question in mind. How do you find the right reporter for the particular project you're working on?

FLATT: And I would second that, what Kate said. Those are great resources. I also think that getting out on the Internet, doing some key word searches to find out who's writing on your particular topic, for instance, if it's retirement or aging parents – whatever the topic might be – you can get out and get online and do some Google key word searches and find some of those reporters out there that are already writing in publications like *USA Today* or online publications that are covering those stories, and then get in touch with them and just become a resource for them for future stories.

Another thing that I wanted to add on to that, and Kate and her firm (inaudible) the promotions. At our firm, PR By the Book, we probably both do this as often as we can find the time to – when we do make those connections with the freelancers who have posted queries on ProfNet or Help A Reporter Out, we try to go back and touch base with those people, even after we've secured that initial story, so we can maintain that relationship and find out what they'll be working on next. And that's a great way to kind of follow up, and I know we all kind of run out of time and wish that we could do more of that, more of those follow-up type things, but we do try to build those relationships.

BANDOS: And it's one of the reasons that if you're going to – if an author or publishers is going to hire a publicist, that they should be looking for someone – a company or freelance publicist – who works in the field. For instance, we do a lot with travel books and with parenting and children books, so we know a lot of the freelancers who write in those areas, where, if someone came to us with a financial book, we'd be starting from scratch, but another publicist or publicity company might have great connections with all of the freelancers and sites that have to do with that topic. So, that's another way that a publisher or author can get the help they need without having to reinvent the wheel.

KENEALLY: Right. We are here with two publicists who really know the publishing world as their particular target. We've got Marika Flatt, who is coming to us from Austin, and she is the owner and operator, I suppose, of PR By the Book, which is combining her love of media and public relations. She's written herself for newspaper and television and previously worked for an Austin-based book publicity firm.

We're also joined by Kate Bandos, and Kate is online at [KSBPromotions.com](http://KSBPromotions.com). She been working in media and publishing for 35 years, and prior to having her own company, she was a publicity director for such household names, if you will, in publishing as Pequot Press and Pelican.

It's a pleasure to have both of you online. Let me ask you this. Evaluating how well a publicity effort has done is always a big question. The old comment about someone said that half of the money he spends on advertising is wasted, only he doesn't know which half. How do you know which part of your publicity campaign has worked in the way that you hoped? Marika, do you have any thoughts on that?

FLATT: Well, and I know that Kate has some things that she wanted to say on this topic, too, but I think that that's one of the hardest questions to answer when I'm talking to potential clients because we can talk big picture and we can look at the success of different campaigns, but the reality of it is that each and every campaign is different, and the timing and the scope and the topic and the expertise of the author, and so, it's a really hard thing to nail down, but you can always watch the sales of the book after certain media hits, whether it's print or online or broadcast, and try to see the blips in sales after certain media. And also –

KENEALLY: And these days, the Amazon.com number, which sometimes authors get obsessed with, but nevertheless, I know in my own case, you can see that move almost immediately after something does appear in the media. It has an impact and you know it, whereas in the past, you really couldn't tell.

Kate, what about you? Any thoughts on how to evaluate the success of a publicity effort?

BANDOS: No. Again, we try and tell people that this is a free press and so, they themselves or their publishers or publicity people that they may work with, all we can guarantee is that we're going to reach out and get the information in front of these media people, be they print, web, electronic, etc., but ultimately, it's up to them whether they cover it.

And that being said, we sent out an e-mail blast yesterday, and we have in less than 24 hours, had something like 35 requests for review copies. I've already set up some interviews. We feel very comfortable that that was a really good response and will be something we can build on. We had sent a release on the same book with a different subject line a couple of weeks ago and only got a smattering of response. So, sometimes, it's trying things over and over or differently to see what the response is.

The other thing is that if you get a story on AP, the Associated Press, or on any of the wire services, it may be one contact or one publicity opportunity, but it appears

in so many places, and so again, you have to take all of these elements into consideration.

We had an author, who last Saturday and Sunday was on CNN. The show was done on Saturday and then repeated on Sunday. He's already been invited back to do three more shows with CNN and a reporter at *Forbes* saw the piece, called him up and did an interview for a story. So, you can often see those kind of things as well, where somebody sees one of the things that has appeared and now, they're coming for information because of the author's expertise or the topic.

KENEALLY: Right. Well, certainly the great secret of the TV newsroom is that they get a lot of their tips from the newspaper. So, if you get into a particular daily, it ought to be an opportunity to make sure everybody in that same city's television newsroom knows about it, too.

This is a last question. We're recording this right ahead of the holiday shopping season, which makes me think of the seasonal opportunities. As a question for each of you for a short answer, Marika first, any particular season better than another for a certain type of book or a certain subject?

FLATT: Absolutely. And that's one of the first things that we look at when we're talking to a potential client, and of course, it really depends on the topic of the book, but just a couple of examples, a few things that are top of mind. We have a book that we're working on in '09 that is called *The Last Aloha*, and the basic topic is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hawaii's statehood, and that happens to be taking place in '09, so we're trying to time that with possible coverage of that topic that would be happening anyway.

And another example would be there's a children book that has – that covers the topic of springtime, and so we're timing the publicity for spring, and so we already focused on long lead magazines because they work four to six months ahead, so we've already been focusing on that for spring, and then we'll be hitting other types of media as it leads up to springtime.

So, (multiple conversations; inaudible) the book.

KENEALLY: Right. I was just thinking, you get to think about spring, even as the rest of us are looking out the window at winter.

FLATT: That's right.

KENEALLY: Kate, what about you? Any particular thoughts on seasonal opportunities?

BANDOS: Well, there are a couple of – there are regular months, for instance, January – you're always talking about New Year's resolutions and health and getting fed and

following through on things like that. In the other – sorry about that in the background – we’re going to the – sorry.

KENEALLY: Live podcasting.

BANDOS: That’s right. Live podcasting and alarms going off. So, there are certain seasons where you’ve got health or Cancer Awareness Month or it’s Mother’s Day, and so, again, you should look at a calendar. With a cookbook it’s wonderful because you can do soups for this time, for wintertime of year, you can do summer salads when it’s too hot to cook. You can take things like that, and a lot of publishers and authors are taking the opportunity, which chases a calendar of annual events lets you propose a day, so that we’ve authors do mystery week or some other kind of special day, that then every year from then on, they can use that week or that month or that day to tag publicity onto.

KENEALLY: Well, that sounds like fun. And I was just thinking, it’s barbecue probably for July, not for November and all that kind of thing. Well, listen – thank you both for joining us and for giving us some of these tips, the kinds of things that people who attend Publishing University 2009 in New York this coming May will hear much more about.

On the line with us today – Marika Flatt from Austin. Marika is the owner of PR By the Book. Thank you for joining us Marika.

FLATT: Thank you for having me. It’s been great, and I look forward to seeing everyone in May.

KENEALLY: Right. And Kate Bandos, as well, coming to us from just outside Grand Rapids, Michigan. Kate is the founder and President of KSB Promotions. Kate, thank you for joining us.

BANDOS: OK. It’s been a pleasure.

KENEALLY: And this is Chris Keneally at *Beyond the Book*. We will look forward to having more special programs helping people get to know better the presenters for this year’s Publishing University courses brought to everyone by the Independent Book Publisher’s Association. Look forward to having you back with us again soon on *Beyond the Book*.

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