



SALES BOOT CAMP FOR AUTHORS AND OTHERS

With Janet Spurr, author of “Beach Chair Diaries”

www.beachchairdiaries.com

Q: We’re learning some ways to turn cold calls into hot book sales here today at Beyond the Book. My name is Chris Kenneally, the host of a program brought to you by Copyright Clearance Center, and joining me today is Janet Spurr, who is an author of a book called *Beach Chair Diaries*, but also someone who practices what she preaches after years of marketing and sales and bringing those skills to the book business. Welcome, Janet.

A: Hi. It’s good to be here.

Q: Well, it’s great to have you and the particularly appropriate time as it is finally summer in New England for us here, and you’ve got a book out that’s talking about summer tales from Maine to Maui. It’s available from Falmouth Heights Books and online, I’m sure, at all the usual sites.

You can tell us more in a minute, but what we want to pick your brain about today is some of the tips that you’ve got to offer authors, which sometimes, when you sum them up, and you’ve got 10 here, sound fairly obvious, but I know from personal experience that if you’re not thinking about these things in a kind of forward way, it’s easy. You’re in a hurry, you’re in a rush, the book is the thing that seems most important to you, but then you have to remember you’re also a salesperson for the book.

So, so before we dive into the 10 best ways to turn cold calls into hot book sales, just tell us how you feel as an author when you’re out selling the book. What are some ways you try to think about that process?

A: Well, first of all, I think that once you fulfill your dream of publishing your book, it is one of the most fulfilling things I’ve ever done in my whole life, and the dream part is something that as a – I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately, is that as a writer, you really need to share your dream with other people, so you need to get over being self-conscious or saying you don’t have confidence, and the best way to do it is to visualize your confidence ahead of time. Before you make a call or walk into a bookstore, visualize that confidence, whether or not it was your college graduation, your book launch party, or whichever makes you feel the most confidence, and then stand in that confidence when you approach different bookstores.



Q: Yeah, well, I know, it's funny and I think that's a great point, but I think it's also true that a lot of authors tend to be authors because it allows them to sit in a room by themselves for long periods of time without having to make excuses for it, and they can be, some of them, quiet people, not, not – they don't think of themselves as salespeople. So, what you're describing though isn't necessarily a salesman's mode but more of a personal, one-on-one kind of thing – how am I, how am I coming across? Is that right?

A: It – You're really right on about that because I thought about this as far as being a salesperson and being a writer, you couldn't have two further opposites.

Q: Absolutely right.

A: But if you think of yourself as a business consultant rather than a salesperson and you want the long-run relationship with that store buyer, whether or not it's a book store, a gift store, a museum shop, or a boutique, you want the long-run picture with them. If you treat them with respect in being polite, then you won't come across as a salesperson, and if you're passionate about your book, if you show that passion and you're polite about their time and considerate, then you'll be a winner in anything you do.

And sure, it's hard getting on the phone. It's hard promoting your book, but that's what you want to do in the long run. So, Jack Canfield said to me that 20% of your book is writing it and 80% of it's marketing, and I think that's more true today than any other year we've ever had in publishing, particularly with the social networking, which was not anything I knew how to do, so I hired a cyber assistant part-time weekly to set me up on Facebook, Twitter.

So, you can do a lot more social networking than ever before, so if you are really uncomfortable on the phone or face-to-face, try the social networking, but hopefully, I'll be able to tell you more ways to feel more comfortable.

Q: Well, let's just finish the thought and then we will dive into the 10, 10 ways to do all of this that you put together for us.

It seems to me that if you are a writer, then you are at least practiced in trying to sell your work to the most important person, first of all, which is an editor. Whether you're a freelance writer for magazines and newspapers or whether you've got a book to sell, you've got to convince. That first sale is probably the most important one, and so – I suppose, even if you self-published, you've had some experience somewhere along the way in getting, in convincing somebody that your story is one that they should sit and listen for.



A: Yes.

Q: And so, that perhaps is a place to start, maybe for authors. They can think about the convincing that they've done, whether it's with an editor or even family members that they've had to sort of practice their story-telling skills on. Hopefully, that helps for people who might be, as I say, not entirely sure of their sales skills, but if they follow along with this list here, they should be better off at the end of things.

So, you started off with number 10, which is to visualize that, that most confident time, and so cold calls, they're a tough thing to do but it's a numbers game.

A: You're – it's like playing a slot machine. Eventually, you're going to put in enough nickels or quarters or whatever and you're going to eventually win, and I do this visualization technique. I speak out loud. I'm not a morning person, so what I'll do is sometimes I'll get up in the morning and say it's going to be a great day. I'm going to make great sales. It's going to be a great day. There's not going to be any traffic. It's going to be a great day, and it really works to change your outlook for the whole day. I highly suggest that.

And another thing that one of the endorsers of my book, Jack Canfield, who is a great mentor and friend, said to me, put up your dream and visualize what you want. Put it up. I tape it to my bathroom mirror, whatever it is, and that helps, too, to help with your confidence.

Q: Yeah. A friend of mine calls it manifesting. So, if we're –

A: Yes.

Q: If we're looking for a parking space in the car, she says now I'm going to manifest a parking space and sure enough, the parking space appears.

A: I used to get parking spaces on downtown Boston on Newbury Street, as well as in Manhattan, and I thought you know what –

Q: Two of the most difficult places to do that.

A: And I thought to myself, you know what, Janet, if you're visualizing parking spaces and getting them, why not make your dream bigger?

Q: Yeah, that's right. Go beyond parking spaces.



A: Right. Get the whole garage.

Q: Absolutely. A garage or condo or something like that. OK. So, number 10 is visualizing. And number nine is interesting and there's a few examples of them here in front of me, which is props, but there's your book. I suppose that's a prop, but there are more than that. Talk about that.

A: One of the best props you can have is a postcard. I have a postcard with my book cover on it, which I did through VistaPrint.com. There's also another company called Truvets (sp?), which I haven't worked with yet, and you can print – put your book cover on the front and you can put anything on the back of it, which I change regarding the different events that I'm doing – and this, I whip out of my pocketbook this quicker than I think Clint Eastwood whips out his gun, and I give this to everyone anywhere, even on beaches of Maui.

Recently, I was at a funeral and it was after the funeral – after is the key word here – when somebody was suggesting at the reception that we should all get together for a reunion, and I took out my postcard just automatically to give my address and name and everything, and he took one look at it and he said, we should carry this in our gift shop in Maine.

Q: Wow, an unusual sale, but yeah, you have to have some kind of – you have to be ready. I think there's a lesson there, and I'm looking at the reverse side. Just because it's a postcard doesn't mean it has to be mailed, but if you should happen to mail it, there is this service, it's Stamps.com, where you have put your book jacket on the stamp.

A: I just did that.

Q: Great. That's terrific.

A: My cyber assistant did it. It's fairly easy and you can have all your stamps made up with your book cover on it.

Q: Ladies and gentlemen, you are going to want to do this. This looks terrific and I think especially the image, which is of a sort of – it's something we all yearn for – that time away at the beach in a chair, something to do, to read, just relax, contemplate. So, it's a great image and a neat, little small suggestion. So, those are some props, but you've got – because the book suggests so many different things, you've got a beach bag, you've got some notebooks here, all sorts of things – bumper stickers, magnets, just about anything works as a prop if it seems to be appropriate to the title, I suppose, right?



A: Yes, yes, but you can really – I got the magnetic bumper stickers, and magnetic bumper stickers have caused a lot of people to walk by my car, look at it. Now, I recently started backing up my car at the beach, so anyone that comes off the beach sees my bumper sticker. And a woman up in Vermont at a rest area stopped me the other day and said, I have to ask you, what's this about?

So, you just have to constantly promote your book because last night I had something happen. It was very special to me. I was out to dinner. Somebody came up to me that I knew and said I need a copy of your book for my wife. And I said well, it's on sale at this store, this store, and it's also listed through Ingram, which a lot of bookstores need to know as well. And he said, well, she's going through a difficult health time and I really wondered if I could get a copy directly from you, and I said – he told me the specific health issue, and I said I'm going to go to my car right now and get you a copy.

And as I'm telling you this, I'm getting chills because as I walked towards my car, I thought, you know what – this is when it gets bigger. This is when it gets bigger than your book, bigger than your dream, when you start to help people. And the gentleman, when I gave the book to his wife, he said let me pay you for it, and I said, no, no. I said donate it to the Breast Cancer Society, and that's when I thought that's when it's beyond worrying about if you're feeling uncomfortable with selling your book, realize it's a bigger dream and you could be helping people with your words.

Q: Right. And there are readers out there. It's true now, there seem to be more authors than ever and people forget that authors aren't who you write the, your book for. You don't write it for other authors. You write it for readers and it's the connection with the reader that is going to help you to sell the book.

Here's one I don't know we have to spend too much time on, but it says smile.

A: I just recently read something in *Yoga Magazine* about smile while doing yoga, smile when meditating, and smile when you're on the phone and smile all the time. People will wonder what you're up to and they'll want to talk to you. And speak in sound bytes, of course. That's something that a lot of authors do now, but when you go to approach a buyer on the phone or in person, speak short sentences.

Chris was telling me about his book and his short sound byte and I loved it.

Q: Right. Well, just so people know what we mean, I have a book on Massachusetts history, and I talk about how it's from Redcoats to Red Sox, and they get the idea that it's kind of serious history but also some fun history there as well.



A: See, I would buy that. You're such a marketer.

Q: Right. Well, I've got one in my car. No, I'm kidding, but I like the idea of carrying a book around in your car. Certainly, that makes some sense to have a box of some books there just because you may want to give one away to somebody or you may have some use for it otherwise. That seems like also another kind of inadvertent hint.

Number seven is connect with the buyer, and I think we've already hit on that point. It's about finding ways to talk to people, finding confidence. You say being honest. You're not going to convince every – anybody, and there's a joke about how the secret to success in business is sincerity and if you can fake that, you've got it made, but still, I don't think you can fake sincerity when it comes to these things, especially if it's a book that's your story, it's a personal story. It has a lot of memoirs and non-fiction, and if you've tried to arrange the facts or tell a story that isn't your story, it'll be clear to people right away, and same is true, I think, when you're trying to sell such a thing. If it's not truly yours and you don't truly care about it and love it, it's going to be obvious.

A: I think it's important to speak from your heart and when you go into store, what I suggest is look around, pretend you're a shopper maybe, go up to the counter, see if there's a business card with the store owner's name on it or the bookstore buyer's name on it and, so therefore, you could say could I please speak to so-and-so, rather than who is, could you please tell me who your book buyer is. So, it's a little more personal.

Look around the store. Maybe notice a unique display or something that captures your eyes and say something about it to them, but be really honest and speak from your heart. Don't just make up something because a display is great. If they have a unique café area in the store or something like that or your particular section – for instance, mine's travel essays – your particular section is more unique than another section is in another bookstore, say something to them about it but be honest.

Q: Right. That's that connection thing again, and so, honesty. Politeness is something. Again, these seem like rather obvious tips, the sort of things our parents told us to do when we were five, but I know that when we're, as authors, trying to sell our book, and I was even hesitating using the word sell -- I was trying to find a different word, but that's what we're doing here – you need to remember that the world doesn't owe you a darn thing and nobody's going to have to read your book. They can get by without it, so politeness, smiling, honesty – all of these things really will help to get the book noticed.



A: I think it's important whenever you call anyone -- even with my friends -- if I hear that they're rushed on the phone, the first thing I'll say to them is are you busy? Is there a better time to call you back? And I think that sometimes we're so in a hurry or we're so almost possessed about getting our passion out there -- possessed about passion -- there's another possible title -- that you forget that the other person on the phone is doing a lot of different things and to make yourself be the polite person on the other end, to let them know that you care about what they're doing and that you'll be glad to call them back. You'll make yourself a hit just by doing that.

And leave your postcard or your book with the buyer. I find the postcards really work well because business cards tend to get pushed aside, whereas postcard's a little heavier and they stick out a little bit more.

Q: They might even be decorative. Again, the picture here is a pretty picture that somebody might put it up on a corkboard somewhere, something like that.

A: Actually, it's a painting on the cover done by a great friend of mine, Forrest Rodts out of Marblehead, Mass., and people don't believe it's a painting. They keep looking.

Q: Yes. It's really photo realism, I think they used to call it.

A: Yes.

Q: So, again, these are things that, as authors we are not taught. We're taught in creative writing class, show don't tell and all those usual rules. We're not talk about, or we don't talk about what it's like to sell and so, there's this notion here of an alternative close. What do you mean by that?

A: Well, if somebody said to me -- it's a great thing to use -- if someone said to you, well, I'm not interested in your book but call me back on it. The alternative close is would you like me to call you back this month or next month, and actually, a further thing that you can use is what you will use in the last part of your sentence will determine what the person might agree to. It's a little hard to do, but if you say something like well, would you like me to call you back next or at the end of this month, and whatever they hear last sometimes they choose.

Q: That sounds like that's a little cheating, but I think it's a great trick.

A: It's great. And then use your voice. Fluctuate it upbeat. Somebody doesn't want to get on the phone with anyone that says, oh, I've got this -- If I called up and said, I got this great book. It's called *Beach Chair Diaries - Summer Tales from Maine to Maui*, and would you be interested in carrying it -- no one is going to buy it. But



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if you get on the phone and you say, I've got this great book. It's called *Beach Chair Diaries – Summer Tales from Maine to Maui*, would you be interested in it, or actually, if you leave an open sentence that it could be yes or no, so you say something like, would you be interested in carrying three or six copies, and if they say, oh, six copies is too many, you say, well, what about 20, and then you just joke with them and –

Q: Right, right. Well, I like that, and I like the idea of using your voice. Authors, again, are often taught in creative writing classes about finding their voice. That means, of course, their writer's voice, but if you're presenting the work, whether you're talking about it on the phone or whether you're doing a reading or whatever, that sort of monotone isn't going to do it, and modulation is really the key – kind of trying to attract attention by the way you're telling the story, by the way you place emphasis on things.

A: I was just thinking how some writers will read their favorite authors and pay attention to the way that the authors write. Maybe listen to some of the great speakers and listen to the way they speak and maybe copy that, of what works for you and what doesn't. Just keep an upbeat tone and that sometimes helps with sales.

Q: Right. If you listen to Garrison Keillor or when I was a boy, I listened to Jean Shepherd a lot, and so Shep had a way of telling a story on the radio that I have always found very attractive.

Number four here -- working our way down the 10 best ways to learn how to turn cold calls into hot book sales with Janet Spurr – number four is feel, felt, found. What's going on here?

A: Well, I sell -- My full-time sales job is selling to boutiques, gift shops and museums throughout New England and catalogs as well, and sometimes I've found that certain stores don't carry books, so I'll say to them, well, I've found that this other store, they felt the same way you did and they found that when they carried my books or carried some books, that they made sales from it, so they felt pretty good about it. And again, you say, well, would you like three or 20 copies.

Q: Well, that's pretty cute. Now, number three is be organized and I think you are because I'm looking at all these materials and clearly, there's a lot of work and planning that goes into putting this together, and one way of thinking about it is the marketing doesn't begin when you finish the book. It probably begins far earlier, maybe at the moment you think, oh, I'm going to write a book about this.



A: I just read something in *PW Daily* today about there's a new company -- I believe it's called FiledUp where they will –

Q: FiledBy.

A: FiledBy.

Q: Acutally, we're familiar with FiledBy here at Beyond the Book.

A: Oh.

Q: Absolutely. Yes, FiledBy are friends of ours. They offer a service to authors where you can sign up and get your own author's site, if you will, and it's a great opportunity for networking, and they're trying to really latch on to some of the social media excitement and so forth. But you were going to tell a story.

A: Great, because I believe that's very important. I just read about that today. I think that's fabulous, but it's also important to send out reviews and then follow-up and follow-up and follow-up. Two of my top clients in my sales business I followed up 14 to 24 months with them to capture their sales one again after initially selling to them. And I keep 5 x 8 colored index cards because I can locate a customer or client more easier by being able to know that that client is on a yellow index card or blue index card.

So, what I do is I write down notes, I write down what their birthdays are, what their manager of the store's name is – anything on that card that makes it more specific to that particular client.

Q: Right. Now, number two – and we're getting almost to the end here – is reorders. And again, I can identify with that. I know that – I've heard that sometimes a book isn't available in a certain bookstore or something and it's frustrating. If you want to buy that book right there and then, you want it right there and then, and so, as the self-published author here, you're also the distributor and you want to be sure that the book is there for the person.

A: And that was one thing in all the different book expos or Publisher's University or conferences I have been at – maybe I wasn't listening, but that people never spoke about reorders. So, last summer, because my book is primarily for anybody who loves the beach any time of the year – I would call back stores every month, particularly after certain holidays, such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July, even the beginning of August, because August is one of the busiest vacation months. And you could do that for any book. You can create a holiday. Try to get in touch with Hallmark to do.



John Kremer, who's BookMarket.com, he has a listing of all these different ridiculous, funny holidays, such as in May, there was Grape Popsicle Month. I love grape popsicles, but you could create any sort of buzz around your book. If you have a cookbook, during Easter or the Jewish holidays or Thanksgiving, contact the book stores and things like that. Pay attention the news and what's going on.

Q: And you need to call them, not on August 1, but a little bit ahead of time. You don't want to call somebody Christmas Eve and say, I've got a great book for you because it's really too late at that point.

A: I'm glad you mentioned that because that was the other thing that I wanted to mention was that never try to call a store on a Saturday or a holiday.

Q: Right, right, but I think, too, what happens is if you're thinking about features – so, for example, if somebody was going to be doing a feature on beach time activities or reading lists or whatever, the journalists are going to be thinking about such a story and pitching it to their editors, not June 30, ahead of the July 4th weekend, but maybe sometime the beginning of June, so you really have to be ready far ahead of time.

And so here we now are at the end and I guess, again, it's just evidence that you practice what you preach. Number one on the list is promote all the time.

A: People actually laugh at how much I give out my postcards and bumper stickers and everything. I also have these book plates, which is something to help me with reorders, and I had specific done – I had specific ones done by a company that has a beach chair and a wave and a sun on it, and so I, what I do is call up book stores and say have you got copies of my book and are they signed? Would you like me to send you signed bookplates? And then I also found a great company, called BookCrossing.com, which is really unique because you can send out these bookplates with your book and then it says for the person to go to this website at BookCrossing.com to tell them where the book is.

Q: Well, that's great. Well, we'll put all of these valuable tips on our site at BeyondTheBook.com, but now, I'm going to put you on the spot, if you will. We've got a copy of your book here, *Beach Chair Diaries*, and so maybe a little bit of playacting. What do they call it – role playing? So, I'm a book buyer at the store and you've come in and maybe you've called me on the phone. Give us the pitch for *Beach Chair Diaries* and maybe if you will, read a paragraph or two that gives us a better idea of what's actually inside.



A: *Beach Chair Diaries – Summer Tales from Maine to Maui* is a collection of short, humorous travel essays from the warm waves of Maui to the cool waters of Maine. It's about how I learned to surf at 44 years old in Hawaii, walking the beach in Nantucket, riding the wave at Martha's Vineyard, eating lobster or eating ice cream or just wearing flip-flops, and it's to capture summertime anytime, so that even if you're in the midst of a February blizzard, you can read my book and you can feel summertime in it.

Q: Well, give me an example of how I would feel summertime during a nice February Northeaster?

A: This is from *Finding the Perfect Wave*, and I'll just start from the middle. It's about body surfing on South Beach in Martha's Vineyard.

When I turn back to shore, a wave knocks me off balance, salt water invades me stinging the inside of my nose. Small strings of green seaweed float near me. The warm winds caress my face. The cloudless blue July sky stretches summer around me. I push off the sandy floor and dive dolphin-like once again into the silence below.

Q: Well, if that doesn't put you at the beach, I'm not sure what will, except maybe a special, a specially-arranged limo.

We've been talking with Janet Spurr, who is the author of *Beach Chair Diaries*, but also someone who, as I've mentioned throughout this, practices what she preaches here and provides a number of tips on marketing your book for authors. She calls it sales boot camp for authors and others and we'll provide all of this online at BeyondTheBook.com, 10 of the best ways to learn how to turn cold calls into hot book sales. I like that. Even in the title there's something in there about beaches, right? Cold and hold and all of that. You're always thinking about that, I'm sure.

Janet, it's been a pleasure chatting with you. Thanks for joining us.

A: Thank you, Chris. This has been fun. Now I have to get back to the beach.

Q: That's right. Well, we all would like to be there at some point, and this is Chris Kenneally for Beyond the Book, and we look forward to having you back again very soon.

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