

Get Your Book Seen and Sold Podcast: Book Signing Event Tips & What a Publicist May Do For You with Book Marketing Expert, Allison Pottern Hoch (March 30, 2023)

Transcript:

Claudine: Welcome to Get Your Book Seen and Sold. I'm your host, Claudine Wolk. With us today is Allison Pottern Hoch. Allison is a book marketing, publicity, and event planning consultant. She's a writer and a teacher too. You can find out more about Allison on her website, www.pottern.com, and at her Substack which is titled Books Marketing and More. Welcome, Allison!

Allison: Thanks so much for having me, Claudine. I'm really honored.

Claudine: We are soul sisters, I promise you that, in book marketing.

Allison: Yes, 100%.

Claudine: So, going a little deeper into some of the things that you are an expert at, two things. One: I wanted to ask you, for anybody who's listening and maybe they have a book deal with a traditional publisher and they're thinking that the publicist that they've been assigned is going to do all of their book marketing for them. Maybe just the broad strokes on that subject. And also, if someone self-published or traditionally published or hybrid published, who would really like to do a book signing.

Allison: I love talking events. That's my bread butter.

Claudine: That's it. That's it. So, when you said that two weeks before the author saying, well, how can I promote this? I'm going, oh, no. Oh, no. Weeks before, no. So go ahead, speak to those.

Allison: Sure, okay. So, your first question was about a publicist and what to expect from them.

Claudine, I can't tell you how many authors I've spoken to and the wide range of things that their publicists are willing and able to do. I have worked with authors who've published dozens of books whose publicists do nothing. And I've also spoken to brand new debut authors who have beautiful, dedicated publicists and are having lots of marketing money thrown at them. And then I've, you know, I have people everywhere in between. So, your mileage may vary, is what I'm gonna start with.

But in general, as somebody who's worked in a publicity department, what a publicist's job is, essentially, is to be your advocate and to be your book's evangelist and specifically to convey the value of your work to the media and to various media outlets. In this case, that also includes bookstores, but not from a sales point of view. That's what your sales rep does, that's a different conversation. But their job is to market your book to the bookstores to convince them that buying your book is a good idea and to help promote your book through events.

Now, if an author is wondering, well, so I am traditionally published. I haven't been assigned my publicist yet, but I'm feeling like I should probably do some marketing stuff, what are they likely gonna do for me? Likely they're going to help you get national review coverage. So they're going to be the ones to reach out to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, all the places that do big book reviews. And if you're writing in a specific niche, for example, if you're publishing in romance or you're publishing in science fiction and fantasy, they should also be reaching out to large media outlets in those specific genres.

A lot of them will have, like I know romance, for example, like Upmarket Romance, a lot of those publishers have very specific rollouts for who they pitch to and how they get those reviews. And that's going to be different depending on your genre and your age group.

So that's a big part of what they do. They may help with book events. Book tours, if there's a lot of marketing money being thrown your way, you might get a book tour. That doesn't really happen a lot anymore, but you never know. Fingers crossed for you. They also can help you get on things like podcasts and radio interviews, and you know, other kinds of Q&A's.

They can help get excerpts posted in media outlets relevant to your genre. And they're the person that you can turn to if you are planning an event, if you are planning some kind of a marketing strategy that you can turn to them and say: Hey, I'm doing this, I need support. I need to make sure books get there in time. I need a poster. I need bookmarks. And they should, theoretically, be able to facilitate a lot of that for you and be your liaison to the marketing department at your publisher.

The reality is sometimes they do more than that. Sometimes they don't do any of that, and that depends on who your publisher is, their size, their budget, how many other books that publicist is working on, how new they are, and again, the marketing dollars that are being put towards your book.

Claudine: You know, as an aside, real quick, I'm just wondering why is the book marketing part of publishing so often the lag, you know, it's kind of lagging behind. Why do you think that is?

Allison: That's a good question. I think that what winds up happening or my understanding... this is evolving constantly because publishing in general is lagging behind the needs of writers and authors currently, in my opinion. And I think what often happens with marketing is that so much now becomes dependent on pre-sales, on pre-pub buzz. It becomes dependent on, well, this person already has a platform so we think their book's gonna do well.

And what publishing will often do, at least the big publishers, they'll often throw money at the books that they already think are gonna be successful. And while that's good at helping those books rise to the top which is wonderful, it means that a lot of books in the middle, in the mid- list as it's known, right, don't see those dollars and don't get the boost to get them from that sort of middle range of you know, marketing, to the level that might get them more coverage, a little bit more sales, that might get them just over that hump.

And so it winds up being this weird self-fulfilling prophecy where the publishers don't give money to some of these other books that they're taking a chance on. And so those books struggle to reach the same heights as these other books that they are giving a lot of money to. And so the money then gets siphoned away. And I think that, you know, that's a cold reality for a lot of authors. Again, it's not true of every publisher but I have seen it happen and that's where I feel like having an understanding of publishing's marketing engine is so important because if you wind up getting stuck in that mid list cycle, it's saying: if I want to level up, how do I do that on my own? Because the publisher's not helping me, or you know, what steps do I need to take, knowing what I know now about publishing and about what I'm capable of, what steps do I need to take to achieve the goals I have. Or do I wanna rewrite those goals knowing what I know now. So much of it is just education and knowledge.

Claudine: And that's why I love your message because you're empowering authors, saying: Hey, you know, this book marketing thing, it could be a little scary and overwhelming, but if you understand what your role can be, you can feel better about what your giving your book the best chance to be seen.

And I also think authors don't understand that they can partner with their publishers.

Allison: Yes, definitely. And I think a lot of that feeling that they come into this process and they're like —oh, well they know best, so I'm just gonna let them do everything—can work against you because if you have connections to podcasts or bloggers or other writers and you want to leverage those, your publicist isn't gonna know about those.

I know at the beginning of the process, a lot of authors get given a marketing questionnaire that's like 50 pages long and they want you to write everything down and it makes authors feel very overwhelmed and that their publicist has everything under control. And those two things are not necessarily true. Right? Because the publicist then puts that in the file, they may look at it once they put it in the file, they use it to sort of create their pitch to their own department, and then they may or may not refer back to it.

So it's really important that, even if you've told them that one thing, or you emptied your soul into this questionnaire and felt like you have a million marketing faults, there's still a conversation to be had constantly. As the market evolves, literally, between when your book is bought to, when your book is published, usually a year or two goes by. The market can change drastically. What people want to read and how they read can change drastically. So even just being in touch with your editor or your publicist and the marketing team is so important.

And a lot of authors are like, oh, well, I'm nervous to write to them. What if they think I'm judging them or telling them they're doing a bad job? Absolutely not. If you have a connection, if you have some kind of marketing idea you wanna run by them or get support on, reach out to them. That is what they are there for.

If they don't respond or they're not advocating for you the way you want them to, that's when it's a really great idea to seek out somebody like me or some other marketing consultant to find out what it is that needs to be done. And you may not need to jump straight to a publicist or a PR firm if

that's outside your budget, you can start with, again, someone like me who can just get you on the right path and help you figure out what the next steps are.

Claudine: Could you, even as an author, could you ask your publicist to ask the publisher to maybe contribute to something that they book promotion that cost a little bit of money that you think is a good idea?

Allison: Yeah. I would say so. Sometimes you can kind of go around the system a little bit too.

When I was at the bookstore, a lot of times I got put directly in touch with the publicist, so even if the author and I were talking about ways to promote their event, you know, I could say, okay, well I will ask them. I was like, we have big picture windows in the front. We love getting big book cover posters so that people can see the book cover from across the street. I'll ask as the event coordinator at the bookstore, I will ask the publicist for a poster, I will ask the publisher for bookmarks because sometimes the author can ask and they'll be like, mm, if I give it to you, I have to give it to everybody. But if the bookstore asks right, then they're like, sure, yeah, sounds great.

Usually when the author would ask, it would be fine, but if you have those kind of personal connections with your marketing partners, if it's a bookstore, if it's a podcast, interviewer, whatever it happens to be, you can use that as leverage. If you have a good connection with your publicist, definitely leverage your publicist to get the things you need and to get you into the interviews, the review coverage, the events that you want.

I talk a lot also about conferences and conventions that can be useful for authors to participate in... literary festivals, stuff like that. And some of those you have to pitch yourself as an author. But certain trade conferences, definitely ask your publicist, say: Hey, I really wanna go to the American Library Association meeting, or I really wanna go to Book Expo. What would it take? Is this something that the publisher can help me with? That the publisher can pay for that we could make an event out of and have books for sale?

So those are things you should definitely advocate for if you feel like they're gonna support your goals and your book. And also asking for information like if you're already going to a conference or a literary festival to say: Hey, are any other Harper Collins authors in my genre going to this thing? Can I connect with them? Can we do a joint thing? Can I meet them? Can I network? Is a sales rep going to be there so that I can meet the sales reps for my area so that they can see how awesome I am, and then they can sell my books to more bookstores? So there's a whole kind of snowball effect that can happen as soon as you feel empowered to reach out to these people and make these connections. There's so many options available to you.

Claudine: Yeah. Yeah. It's not black and white. You can offer ideas, you can share, you can pitch stuff. I mean, what's the worst they're gonna say is no.

Allison: Right. Exactly. And that's the thing. This is a business, right? You are a business person, as a writer, as an author, and that's, again, a whole nother conversation.

Claudine , I'm not sure we have time in here to go into that in too much depth, but, you know, remembering that you're a business person as a publishing author can be really crucial in how you engage with potential marketing partners, right? Because you're saying: I'm a business person asking for this business transaction. Recognizing that the other person is also a business and that some things may work for their business and some things may not. They may have the budget for things, they may not, just like you do.

A lot of authors get really icky about publicity, about sales, about marketing because it feels like, ugh, I'm having to market myself. I'm having to market to tell people how great I am. That feels weird. And I have to tell people how great my book is and my book is an extension of me. There's a lot of really personal complicated stuff mixed up in that.

I practice a lot of different strategies with the writers I work with about how to untangle some of that so that it becomes easier to market. One of those ways is by saying: okay, yes, my book is a personal extension of me, but also I am a business person trying to get this book sold out into the world. So if I'm a business and they're a business, then if they say no to me, it's not personal. It's not them rejecting this beautiful thing that I created. It's them saying my business is not gonna work for their business.

Claudine: Right.

Allison: So that is one way to sort of think about the process as well, if you're struggling to advocate for yourself, right, whether it's with the publicist at your publisher or with a bookstore or a business that you're trying to get to shelve your book or promote your book. Just recognizing that nine point five times out of 10, it's not personal.

Claudine: Right, right. Okay. So you mentioned the book signing and I think that is the quintessential dream of many an author, to have a book signing. I didn't have you in my corner to help me. I published a book a while ago and the publisher was very helpful, but I, you know, picked the wrong— I didn't have an audience for the book in the area, and three people showed up and it was horrifying.

So tell us, give us some tips for someone who wants to plan.

Allison: Claudine, I just want to give you a big hug. Because, you know, the first thing to understand is that you can do everything right and three people can still show up.

Claudine: Yep. Right.

Allison: I just need to get that out there. I know that's disheartening. But it can still happen. But like you asked, I'm gonna give some tips for how to, as I say, give people the most opportunity to say yes to your event or to your book, right? I cannot guarantee anything, because who knows if the weather's gonna be beautiful and suddenly everybody wants to go to the beach on the day of your event, right?

Claudine: Or it's gonna snow and no one can come,

Allison: Exactly, or it's gonna snow or there's a blizzard and nobody can come. So there could be any number of factors outside of anybody's control that can affect how many people come to your event.

But to start from the best possible place, the first is research, research, research. So you're excited about launching your book. You're super excited about your book signing, and you think, okay, clearly I need to do it at a bookstore. First of all, is your book the right book to do a book launch at a bookstore?

That's a great first question to ask yourself. I worked with a client a number of years ago whose book was like a holistic, self-help health sort of memoir. And she was hybrid published or small press published and we were talking about it and she was like, yeah, I'm like trying to figure out which bookstore to go with.

And I was like, you know what? I don't think a bookstore is the right answer for you. Even though bookstores are fantastic, I love them, and they are all set up to sell your book and promote your book... not every book, in my opinion, should be launched at a bookstore. For her, she found a lot of success doing a book launch at a yoga studio and at a health food store, doing book signings there, where her audience actually goes.

So that's the first step is researching venues where your audience actually will go. And a piece of that, again, something I say often to my students is "go where your people are." Your people can be your family, your people can be your audience. They can be the folks who read in your genre. If you are publishing a romance novel, but your only independent bookstore nearby is a cookbook bookstore, just because they're a bookstore may not be an excuse, may not be a good reason to do it there. You know what I mean? And if you just moved to a new town where nobody knows you, it may be best to go back to your hometown or where you just moved from, to do your launch in order to reach the most number of people who are gonna connect with you and your work because they know you already. Especially for debut authors who are still building that platform.

So research your venue. Know your audience and where they are. And then there's some really nitty gritty details like scheduling. Once you pick a venue that you're excited about or a couple venues you're excited about, look at when they actually do events.

Do they do them on weeknights? Do they do them on weekends? Do they only do them once a month? Do they tend to do joint events? Do they do individual events? What do those look like? You can see their event calendars online and once you have those details, you can say, okay, does that fit my schedule?

Cuz it's no use pitching this to a store that's gonna have to say no to you because your schedules don't align. You can figure that out, as best you can, beforehand. And do you think your audience is gonna show up in the time slots that are available? If they only do events on Sunday mornings, are your folks gonna show up on a Sunday morning for an event?

It's also important to think about seasonality as well. Again, I'm in Massachusetts, so the, the bookstores in the Boston Metro West area, their big time for events tends to be fall and spring. But on the Cape, it's in the summer. So it's really important to think about, okay, maybe my book launch is best served, not by the store that's closest to me, but by the store that's gonna be the busiest during the season, right? So, those are some things to think about with scheduling.

And so once you have your schedule set up, you've picked the store that works best for you, where your audience is, you've picked a date and time that works for you, for the store, and for your audience. Then it comes down to working with the store and your publicist, if you have one, to reach your audience, the audience that you've pegged, right? And your bookstore, knowing what their marketing channels already look like, knowing who they pitched to already... because for example, I would send press releases to local media. And I tended to try to find different, really beautiful symbiotic relationships that I could form with local businesses or local groups. I would do a lot of that on behalf of my authors as a book event coordinator.

Claudine: That's important.

Allison: Now, a book event coordinator wears a million hats and they're coordinating events that are tonight, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. So not every book event coordinator is a scheduling glutton for punishment, like I am. But they're the ones who know their community, right? They're the ones who can tell you, oh, you want cupcakes at your event? I can get you a hookup with this cupcake shop in town because we're in the same business association. They're the ones who can help you fuel some of those local connections in ways that you may not be able to or may not have thought of.

So working closely with them, working closely with your publicist, and then just leveraging all the personal connections and professional connections that you have to let people know about the event.

And then for planning the event itself, I always like to suggest offering something a little extra. Now that doesn't have to be swag per se, but my favorite kinds of events were the ones where we could do some sort of an event tie-in to whatever the book was. If it was a children's book, you know, could we have themed treats or could we have some sort of a coloring page or an activity or a craft having to do with it.

For adults, was there some sort of, again, like a cupcake shop or could we have champagne? Could we do it as a luncheon? What kind of different things could we do to give that little bit of added incentive for people to come?

Claudine: Right. Makes sense.

Allison: I loved doing events with cookbook authors because we would try to set up cooking demos or samples, all kinds of different things. We did a barbecue one once, out on the back patio. We did one at a demo kitchen in town at the local kitchen and tile store that had a demo kitchen. There's

all kinds of ways that you and or your marketing partners can help create really fun and interesting events. So, worst case scenario, not a lot of people show up, but you still have a really good time.

Claudine: Right, right. Yeah, I was gonna say, and you're creative too. It helps to have a book coordinator or someone at the bookstore who's creative or you're creative yourself and you can work with them.

Allison: Exactly. That's something else that comes as a real surprise, to a lot of authors who get into the marketing side of things: that you're a creative person because you wrote a book, you had to come up with those ideas out of nothing. Even if it's based on a true story, you had to formulate that into a creative whole, which means that you have the potential to come up with creative ideas. And now we just have to apply that creativity to this new direction. How can we make your event just a little bit more? How can we do that on a budget? Or maybe you have some money you wanna throw at your event. Fantastic. How can we take advantage of that and make it something truly special?

Claudine: Right. Do you think it's a must to do a book signing?

Allison: I think that having some sort of launch event is really important and here's why.

It helps if it's around the publication date because, the whole idea behind the publication date is that's when we're building momentum towards a specific event or date with all of the publicity and marketing that's happening. So that's when book reviews come out; that's when interviews come out; that's when the book goes on the shelf, et cetera, et cetera. So suddenly people are seeing you everywhere. That's the idea behind doing a launch near the pub date.

Especially for self-published or hybrid and indie published authors who are not, you know, part of traditional publishing marketing, it's not necessarily critical that that happens right when the book comes out, because you can sort of do a soft launch, right? Because, unless you have specific sales deadlines you've set for yourself, there's no hard and fast rule there. But I do think it's really important to do some kind of a launch event because that's the opportunity to celebrate your huge accomplishment of publishing a book.

And you deserve to be celebrated. And that's an opportunity to tap into all the people who have helped you get to where you are. All the people who have either always said, oh, you'll never write a book, or all the people have said yes, I can't wait till you've written a book. And to let them know that it's here and they can buy it and there's energy around it.

I think that that's really important. I think that a book launch doesn't have to look like a book signing. It can look like a lot of different things. It can be a private event you hold at your house, with stacks of your book that people can look at and buy, but you're also, you know, having passed hors d'oeuvres or something entirely different.

In my opinion, it's an opportunity to use that momentum to celebrate your book and sell it to all the people who know you and wanna support you. And you can do more than one too. I've had

people who do more than one book launch because they have communities in different places and they wanna go there in person to do those. You can certainly do them virtually as well. I think the energy is different, but that's not a bad thing necessarily.

Launches can also be opportunities to connect with your writing community and connect with your local book community, the bookstores, the libraries, all kinds of things. And if you're looking for a date to do one— maybe you're like, oh, well, I'm releasing this book because I really want it ready for a convention I'm going to, or a conference I'm going to. But the launch time is weird, you know, it's like early January or something, and that's a little hard for me to do. I don't wanna do a launch in January where it might snow. What do I do?

It's then a good option to look for another date or event that you can build your launch around. If you've got a romance novel be like, okay, I'm gonna do a Valentine's Day launch or something like that.

Claudine: Yes. Right.

Allison: Or if it's a beach read: okay, we're gonna do a beach read book event in early June, I'll snag a few other writers I know who are also writing in the genre and we're gonna do a panel, or we're gonna do a big event with drinks with little umbrellas. It's gonna be awesome. And it can be as involved or not involved as you want. That's the cool thing about building your own events, they can look like however you want them to look.

Claudine: I like that. I think you've, opened a lot of doors, Allison, for authors who want to market their books. Thank you so much for that great information. So tell us about, helping authors with book marketing. How did you get started with that as a career? And then I wanna get into what you offer.

Allison: Sure. Yeah. So I have a colorful background in the book world. I have a degree in creative writing. I have worked at university presses doing publicity and promotions. I took a little bit of a left turn and came and worked at an independent bookstore as their children's events coordinator, and eventually their all around marketing coordinator.

And while working at the bookstore especially, I would encounter so many authors that would call me up after I booked their event. They'd call me up a week or two before and they'd be like, great, I'm so excited. What do I need to do?

You know, having been through the process both at a publisher, seeing at what point the publishers start the publicity and marketing process, six to eight to 12 months before the book comes out, and seeing what the authors actually knew coming to me at the bookstore two weeks out and wondering how do I market this event, it was this really profound discrepancy. And so when I eventually left the bookstore to pursue my own projects, I realized I had this huge body of knowledge that a lot of authors did not have access to. And I wanted to share the wealth.

I wanted to make sure that people at that point in their careers and slowly as I began sharing with writers—both through blog posts and through workshops and through one-on-one coaching—when I started to share with authors who were at the book contract stage, I realized that I could offer something even earlier, for authors who were not even quite there yet, but wanted to know: how do I start talking about my writing? How do I start talking about myself in connection to my writing?

A lot of people have questions about platform. A lot of people have questions about what do I expect if and when I get a book contract? And I realized I had insight into those different questions. And as somebody who's also a writer, you know, having this sort of insider view on both ends I think has proved really helpful for the readers of my newsletter and my students throughout this process. So that's how I wound up here.

And I also just want to speak a moment about the idea of coaching versus being a publicist, because I do get that question a lot as well. I call myself a marketing coach because I see myself as someone who is teaching a person to market rather than marketing for them. So you know, teach a man to fish, and they'll know how to fish forever. So it's that kind of idea, where I am teaching and showing and brainstorming with authors and writers about different aspects of marketing so that they can feel empowered to take those tools and do whatever they want with them. But, ultimately, to advocate for themselves in the publishing world and beyond.

Claudine: Absolutely. And it's so needed now. I mean, do you must feel that with the advent of print on demand and all the ways that you can publish yourself and distribution that's opened up for authors that you've become more busy, I bet.

Allison: Yeah. There's definitely a wider range of questions. I feel like, when I started out (and some of that's my growth too, as a coach) working at a publisher and then a bookstore, for a long time my understanding of publishing was fairly limited to traditional publishing or small press publishing. And it's only in the last eight years or so, when I started teaching workshops, so many of the people coming to me are self-published or hybrid published or have tried one route and wanna try a different route, or doing both routes simultaneously.

And I find in that case, it's less about—I never see myself as someone who's gonna tell you: this is what you have to do in order to get published. I don't see that as my role. I see my role as saying these are the options available to you. What are your goals?

You probably know this from my from my newsletter, because I talk about goals and I also talk about energy and bandwidth a lot too, because so much of the most successful marketing is gonna be the marketing that you are excited about and the marketing that you have energy to do.

If you are sinking all your energy into stuff that doesn't give back to you, then I don't believe that's gonna be as successful as the work you do that supports your ultimate goals, right? If your goal is to sell as many books as possible, fantastic. These are paths and strategies open to you. If your goal is to just to inspire people, but maybe you don't care how many books you sell, then that opens up other avenues. And so, as I got to meet more writers who were writing across all different publishing paths, it unlocked for me this ability to say, oh, okay, well if you don't care about these

things that traditional publishing requires you to care about, then let's talk about what marketing opportunities are available for you. How freeing that can be for writers who are already trying to go like a more independent direction.

So: helping authors understand what distribution means even, and what lies in the choice of choosing traditional versus indie or self-publishing, is, I feel, a large part of my job because a lot of people come to me and they're like, I don't even know where to start.

Claudine: Mm-hmm.

Allison: And so I try to let them know what the options are.

Claudine: And you're filling in the gap so beautifully and it's so, so needed with authors. And do you find that your help when you do coach and mentor someone saves them money, right?

Allison: I would say so. You know, especially if authors feel like they have to go— especially independent authors, but traditionally published authors too— they hear, oh, I don't know what to do with marketing. Clearly, I have to go hire a freelance publicist or a PR firm.

Well, that might be the case; for some authors that that could be really useful. But that's really expensive. And understandably so, I mean a lot of these firms, they have the resources, they have the institutional knowledge of how to get specific kinds of books the kind of coverage that they need.

But your book may not be a book that needs that or that may not actually align with your marketing goals, your budgetary goals right now. So a lot of what I do is help the writers identify the gaps in both their marketing knowledge, in their abilities, and in what they actually want to do.

So if they feel like, Ugh, I really don't want to be the one to go and get myself on podcasts, I don't wanna be the one to try to go get myself, review coverage, et cetera, et cetera. But I like building websites. I can build myself a website, right? I'll say, well then don't hire someone to build you a website. We're gonna hire, if you want, an admin assistant; you, let them know which ones you're interested in, they'll do the emailing, right? Rather than saying: I need a publicist or a PR firm to do all these things.

For me, it's what things are you excited about? What things do you want to do or that you have the energy to do? What don't you have the energy to do, and how can we fill that specific gap, rather than trying to put a bandaid over the whole thing?

Claudine: Right. It's very intimidating, all the options. And I love the way you put that. Like, what is the individual author excited about? You know, what do they bring to the table? What can they put their arms around from their personal experience that's going to reach the audience that they wanna reach?

Allison: Exactly. I tell my students often that everybody in this room is an expert. You know, everybody's an expert in something, right? Especially for the authors who've completed a book or are on their, publication journey already, like you've written a book! And it can feel like when you're surrounded by other authors and writers that that's not a unique accomplishment. But in reality, very few people on this earth have written a book, right? So that already makes you an expert in a process. Everybody has an expertise in something. So how can that expertise be a boon to you in your marketing process? Either in how you sell your book to others, how you talk about your book, or how you connect with other people?

I think so much of what I do is really confidence boost people and help them understand that they have the tools to do this. All they need is knowledge and a little guidance and sometimes accountability. And somebody to say: okay, let's get this organized for you, let's figure out what you need, what you want, and then let's put it in a form that you can then reference and go back to.

And, you know, they can always come back to me, but a lot of times authors will come to me for a couple of intense sessions and then they're off and running. And I love that. For some authors, I'm a long-term coach and for other authors I'm just that infusion of knowledge that they need to take over on their own. I love both options.

Claudine: Okay, so for anybody who's listening right now in the audience, and we're speaking to Allison Pottern Hoch, and she can be found at her website, pottern.com, [pottern](http://pottern.com), and also her Substack newsletter, "Books, Marketing, and More."

What would you say is the starting point with you if they say, oh my gosh, I love what she's saying.

Allison: Well, I always recommend folks take a look at my newsletter first because that's a great way to understand my style, my approach, a little bit of my personality, if you haven't already gotten it from this interview. I would say to start there because I do know that it's an investment, if you're going into any kind of coaching or marketing assistance. So start with the newsletter that's free and I plan to always, always keep that free. And that involves, in addition to getting, stories and tips from me specifically, I also include interviews with authors who are currently marketing their books as well as resources and industry news and book recommendations and tea recommendations and recipes and all kinds of fun things. So hopefully you'll get something out of it.

And then if you're still psyched about working with me, I'm psyched too. So you can go to my website and you can fill out a book a session form. If we haven't interacted before, we'll do a quick exploratory call just so that I can make sure, and you can make sure, that we're the right match for each other. There's certain things that I do help with. There's other things where, again, identifying those gaps, there might be somebody who's better suited to assisting you with your need. So I just like to get that all out of the way at the beginning. Again, that exploratory call is free.

And then after that, depending on where you are in your process and what your needs are, I have a variety of packages, but to summarize it: it's basically an hour or an hour and a half brainstorming or focused session, depending on what you need, over Zoom or if you're in—I'm in the Boston area, if you're in this area, we could do it in person.

And then beyond that, if you're further along in the process, I have what I call an in-depth course, which is where, after we've done a brainstorming session together or after you've taken one of my workshops, we really dig in and make you what I call a Marketing Roadmap: a plan for the next 4, 6, 12 months, depending on what you need. That works especially well for people who have specific marketing goals, either related to a book launch and they're like, I need to know what to do every month leading up to that. Or maybe they are planning to roll out a series of publications or they're trying to figure out where they're going in terms of a self-published project et cetera.

Then I also have long-term coaching options. But I'd say most of my clients start with a brainstorming session and then we take it from there. I also teach workshops periodically. I don't have any marketing ones on the calendar right now, strangely enough, but I should have some on the calendar for the fall. And if you subscribe to my newsletter, you'll find out about all of those. Those can sometimes be a little bit more affordable than the one-on-one coaching just because it's a group session. But the personalized sessions, it's all about you. It's all about your book and all about what you need, specifically, right now.

Claudine: Perfect. Okay. And we'll put your information in the show notes about what you offer there. Listen, before we, we run out of time, you are an author yourself. Can you tell people what you've written and where they can find your books?

Allison: Well, I appreciate your enthusiasm. My books, shall we say, are pre-published. I'm still working to get them to a publisher, but I have an agent and we've been shopping my work around a few places, so I'm in the trenches with those of you who are in the query and submission trench mode at the moment.

Claudine: Nice. Do you, do you write about that on your Substack?

Allison: I do sometimes. Yeah. I've taken a little break from it because, it can feel... it can feel really tough because sometimes these things can take much, much longer than you think they will. But I definitely talk in my Substack about the process of going on submission, the process of confronting the fact that these things take a long time. I write it as much for myself as I do for my readers, the idea of how do we stay creative, how do we stay positive about this whole writing thing when these other aspects of the publishing process take so long and feel so often demoralizing?

Claudine: Yes. Right.

Allison: Even the marketing stuff.

Claudine: Right.

Allison: I put a very boppy spin on it because I like to empower people, but it can be really demoralizing and I think, you know, finding what positive things we can in both these hard times and the tough publishing world is really important.

But in terms of my writing, I'm having an essay published in the newsletter, Stone Soup later this year, which I'm really excited about. You can read a lot of my essay-style writing in the Substack, and that will be the first place I announce when, and if, one of my beloved books gets published or if there's any excerpts or anything available.

But I will say that I primarily write science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction. So you'll see a little bit of that bent in my Substack as well, in terms of writers I love to highlight and my book recommendations and things like that. I do a lot of supporting in those communities as best I can as well.

Claudine: Thank you. And thank you so much for being with us. We've been speaking with Allison Pottern Hoch, and you can find her at her Substack, "Books, Marketing, & More," or her website where all of her offerings are available: pottern.com and I'll have all the that information in the the show notes. Is there anywhere else where you like people to find you, Allison?

Allison: You can also, for the time being, find me on Twitter. That's at [@apottern](https://twitter.com/apottern). And I'm on Facebook as well. I have an author page on there. But if you're on my website or on Substack, that's probably the best way to get in touch.

Claudine: Fantastic. Thank you so much for being with us.

Allison: Thank you so much, Claudine. This was a real treat. It was so much fun.

Claudine: Thank you. And you are listening to Get Your Book Seen and Sold .