

A Book Journey Is a Roller Coaster

Welcome to the right publish market podcast. If you're an entrepreneur considering writing a book to serve your business, you're in the right place. Or maybe you've already decided that's even better. I'm your host, Jodi Brandon book publishing partner for entrepreneurs and 20 year veteran of the book publishing industry on the right publish market podcast. In addition to learning from me, you'll meet entrepreneurs just like you and hear about their experiences as we explore all facets of Writing, Publishing, and marketing a book that will help your business grow in ways you might not even have dreamed of yet. I am very excited to welcome today's guests to the right published market podcast because one, this is a local Philly friend. And too I know how busy this person is because I see a lot of book promotion happening online and locally. So we're very lucky that she is squeezing us in today. So let me tell you a little bit about her. Shah hocking is a leadership consultant, philanthropic advisor, author and speaker with 20 years experience raising hundreds of millions of dollars and leading large teams and organizations such as the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Children's Hospital, Philadelphia, University of Alabama, and Duke University. Her clients include universities, national nonprofit organizations, global businesses, and family foundations. Shanna is the author of one bold move a day meaningful actions women can take to fulfill their leadership and career potential, published in November 2022 by McGraw Hill, and the book was recognized as a November nominee of the next big idea club. Shawn has articles have been published in Harvard Business Review, Fortune Fast Company, the Muse and Mother Lee, and her expertise has been featured in Bloomberg News, pi x 11, News entrepreneur, Chicago Tribune, today.com, Insider, and the Business Journal's among others. Let's dig into this conversation. So welcome, Shawn. I'm so happy to talk to you,

Jodi, I'm very glad to be here. Thank you.

I know you couldn't hear me recording your intro, because I do it separately. But I was saying that we're, you know, fellow Philly gals. And I know how busy you are, because I see you, you know, locally in the media here are talking about your book. So it has

been a joyful journey. But of course, you know that what you see is only part of the story. So we're gonna get into the full story today. tip

of the iceberg could not be more true when we're talking about books and all that goes into them. So let's go back though, like a backpedal a little bit here and talk about your the origin story for your book, you know, what made you think a book was a good idea for your business? And then, you know, how

did it sort of and I know your story's a little bit different, because you had a traditional book deal? Yes, yeah. So let us sort of dig in.

So start at the very beginning. You know, like many people, I had a dream as a child to write a book. And it, you know, was something that stayed with me throughout childhood and adolescence, I remember going to the then newly opened Barnes and Noble in my little town, and doing like open mic reading and thinking, I want to have a book on the shelf someday. And then like most people, you kind of start working, you know, you graduate college, or whatever your path is, and you put a lot of those big dreams on to the bookshelf. And I didn't resurface this idea of writing a book until around 2017. And at the time, I had a full time career leading a large team raising hundreds of millions of dollars in a profession that I loved very, very much. And this book was something that was important to my heart, rather than for a business because I worked for someone else's for someone else's organization. And I started writing it and then I turned in my book manuscript to my publisher on the day that I resigned from my traditional day job. And so when I think about this arc, it took me this book journey took me on a path I never had expected for myself. I didn't even have a business when I, you know, pitched and started writing this book. And now it is part of my full time business. And it's been really wonderful to see the evolution.

Wow, I don't think I realized that you didn't have this business all along?

Well, it was a what I call a side career in the book, and I'll talk about that. So I started, you know, back when LinkedIn blogging was a big deal. I started sharing articles on LinkedIn and writing my own articles on LinkedIn. And it became to the point where I wrote my own website, and then did speaking and teaching and more writing. And so this was all happening simultaneous to me having a day job. And so yes, I had a business but it was not full time and it was gone. It doesn't Not the level that it is today.

Okay. Okay, that makes the um, connecting the dots. Okay. Okay. I was actually having a little bit of a panic attack. Did I completely not understand the backstory? Okay.

All right. So let's talk about, did you know that you wanted a traditional book deal? Or is that something? How did that part of the process?

Yes. So in 2018, is when I really started writing this book in earnest. And I had been working with a writing coach, as an accountability partner in 2017. I knew I wanted to be more frequent and sharing blogs on my website. And I needed someone to keep me accountable to do that. And so I had hired her to do that. And I told her that my, you know, two big unicorn goals, as I call them, one was to write a book, and one was to be published in Harvard Business Review. And she's like, Great, okay, so what

are you going to do about that? So the plan was to just start writing the book. And that's, that's what I did. In 2018, I ended up with about 40,000 words of what became the first draft of the first that I pitched. And I started pitching in 2019, to traditional publishing route. For me, it just seemed like the way that I wanted to share my story, it's what I understood the best. And that was just my personal choice. And then I was rejected by every agent that I submitted to an end of 2019, beginning of 2020. And then the pandemic happened, and everything got literally put on hold. And so I explored lots of different opportunities for this book, I looked into some hybrid publishing, I talked with some people and understood the cost and the pros and cons of that. And for me, it was just not the right decision at the right time to pursue that, though. I did have lots of conversations. And it was at the end of 2021. I started again, to go the traditional publishing pitching route, and sending off a proposal and that is what led me to my book deal.

Wow. Okay. Yeah, that's a classic case. I mean, book publishing moves painfully slow to begin with, but the pandemic certainly didn't help.

It sure didn't. And it changes everything for everybody. And I think, you know, many people use that time to kind of start writing their book, which is great. And, and now maybe they're thinking, Okay, I'm ready to share this with the world. And what does that look like for me?

Yeah, I love that you are open to the different paths to publication. That's really that's interesting.

I think it's important for everyone to decide what's right for them. Jodi, and and it would be, you know, not my place to say what's right for anyone else. Absolutely.

Yeah, I know. There's no right path. And it looks so different for everybody. Yeah. Okay, so now you've got the book deal going. So let's talk more broadly about, you know, the writing publishing process. Like everybody's got a favorite part, everybody's got a least favorite part. Talk to me about what you love, didn't love so much.

You know, the best word that I can use to describe my book journey. As roller coaster, there are so many highs, and there are so many lows. And so what I really loved when I started writing was seeing what sections flowed the most clearly. And what I equally loved was really persevering. And the ones that were not as clear but felt important. Like I will always remember the chapter that was the hardest one to come together to make clear. And that when it did, and now it's in the book, that's a pride point for me in many levels, not just on the writing, but in solving what felt important in order to serve the audience.

I love that. Yeah, that's I mean, and that's sometimes hard to do without some sort of accountability of some kind, whether it's a writing coach, or a writing partner, or an editor or whatever it is, it's very much

I talk about book revision as putting a puzzle together, huh? See, same thing, right? Yeah, it's not just about it. Some people are like, Oh, just getting the chapters in the right order. And I'm like, oh, there's so much more to it than that.

Yeah. Like, what's the through line? How are you connecting and picking back up the stories that you started in the front? And how are they helping people feel like they're on that journey with you?

Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's, I mean, that's so great. And now it's, you know, in the book, so it's always there for you to know that. Yeah. That you did it. You solved it. Oh, that's great. Yeah, that's right. Did you like the like the before publication part of the process? I'm gonna say yes. Because you knew you always wanted to write a book. Do you love the marketing piece? Do you not love the marketing piece? Do you love it more than you expected to?

It's yes and right. Yes, I love parts of marketing very much. It is so incredible to share something so important to you, that you realize is so important to other people, too. I mean, that is just connecting with people. It's just very joyful and You know, you can't get too attached to what you hope will happen or what you think will happen, because it may or may not. And it may or may not happen on the timeline that you want. I had aspirations to be a Wall Street Journal best selling author. And that did not happen in the weeks that my book came out. And that doesn't mean that it won't happen. I'm something I'm still aspiring to. And I think that every author has to keep sight of that. And I talked about this in literally as the concept of waking your bold moves is that they will not all go as hoped or planned. And you have to keep following through anyway. Sometimes the timeline is just not for you to decide.

Yeah, I think that's a great point. That's a good thread line through your book, by the way. I think that's especially with books, because it's such a long game books are such a long game that people don't realize, you know, just because your book was published a year ago, five years ago, three years ago, whatever. I mean, there are still ways to I just recorded an episode. It hasn't gone live yet of this a solo episode as podcasts about you know, refreshing your book and your book marketing. You know, I mean, yes. Can you spend hundreds of 1000s of dollars to do it? Yeah. Can you do it on a shoestring budget? Yeah. Does it matter when you're doing it? No, it's, you can do it anytime. So I love that idea of, you know, just remaining open to whatever is going to happen, and obviously working toward it. But

it's the yes and right. Like I'm constantly working toward, you know, new buy lines and new opportunities to share about the book on TV. And also, you know, and I also brought in partners to do this, I did hire a traditional PR and marketing firm for my book. And I am hustling right alongside them. Because I think it's important that we don't ever turn over our journey to anyone else, we just join them in the journey. So for me, I thought, gosh, if I'm investing so much of myself, in this process, I would like to see it through to the best of its ability. And but it was a very difficult choice and a very personal

choice. And it will be different for everyone. But I think that it's good to know when you can leverage other people's expertise to make your big dreams come true.

Yeah, that's a that's a fantastic way to put that. Yeah. You're the expert at what you're doing. And then you're recognizing where other expertise will help you get to where you want to go. That's fantastic. Talk a little bit if you would Shana about your responsibilities with book marketing, and what the publisher was doing. Now, obviously, the caveat here is, again, we know this is going to look different for everybody. But I know a lot of people think that if they have a traditional book publishing deal, the marketing is handled for them. And that

that is not true.

Not the case anymore. No,

no, please. Sure. So one of the things that I did in this journey, which I'm really grateful for is that I connected with a lot of authors who became friends, and having author friends, you know, I didn't know about your podcast at the time, it would have been another fantastic resource, because it can be very lonely, and you're not really sure. You know, what's the right book deal? Is this the right agent? For me? How do I do all of these things. And for me, I did have many people tell me up front, you need to be thinking through how you're going to do your marketing, it is not what the publisher does for you anymore, like they used to back in the golden days. Absolutely. So I did actively plan and save for the marketing investment that I knew I would need to make to do this. And and I had a lot of conversations with a lot of different potential firms to find the right one for me. And, you know, I think that, obviously, every publisher wants to see the books be successful. And that just shows up in different ways. And it's not usually the kind of frontline action oriented work that's going to help you in being successful with your book.

I love when authors really take ownership of that piece of the book journey. And I understand it's, you know, these expectations people have from seeing, you know, books and movies, and TV and all of that. And I joke all the time, because my I got my start in traditional publishing, and we had a party, almost every afternoon at four o'clock, almost every afternoon, some author was in town, and there was a big party for the whole company with cake and champagne. And so when people were like, what, what happened to all of those budgets? And I'm like, well, we ate and drank them in the early 2000s. Because yeah, that's how it was that even you know, a midlist title of backless title. The budget was enormous. And those days are Yeah, unless you're, you know, Brene Brown or JK Rowling or somebody like, you know, those days are long gone. So it's so great that you want to recognize that and to like, made that a part of your plan. Super smart. Okay, so now that you this is your business full time? Yes. How are you using the book in your business? Is it in the way you expected? Is it not?

Hot. So I run a consulting business that does leadership advisory and philanthropic strategy. And one bold move a day involves my story. As you know, growing up as a nonprofit professional and the things I learned as a leader, and the things I learned the hard way as a working woman leader, but it's not directly related to that kind of work, per se. So I am just starting to see how this book can be a meaningful addition to my business. I today just signed a really wonderful keynote speaking opportunity, about one bold move a day for a company's customer conference. And I'm excited about that, to be able to see it come to fruition, with speaking opportunities, not about leadership, and not about fundraising, but like literally about one bold move a day. And so and that room will be 200, you know, Chief Human Resource Officers who also have the potential to then work with me afterwards. So I can't wait to revisit this question in a few months. And it goes back to the thing you said about the long lead time for blacks. This is, this is not something that I you know, expect it to happen right away. And it certainly didn't. I mean, it came out in November, and I'm starting to see things now. Yeah. And I feel just overjoyed by that. And I also know that there's a lot more that will come in time as the book is more known.

Yeah. First of all, congratulations. That's fantastic. That's yeah, I mean, that sounds like one of those things, the ripple effect of that could have is just incredible. So that's Yeah, that's amazing. I love to that. Yes. It's you're not speaking necessarily about leadership development or anything like that. But the concept of your book, I mean, this isn't, we don't usually dive into this in this type of episode. But the concept of your book, one bold move a day, it really is that simple. Yes, that's what I loved. I think the most about reading your book is that it didn't feel you know, like, I mean, listen, there are some dry leadership books out there. And we all know, we're not it's not that kind of I mean, it's really, it's such simple, tangible, practical advice and takeaways for readers that, I think, yeah. But then you can, you can take those small things, and then create that bigger ripple effects in your own life and work and all of that. So no, I think I mean, I think it's dangerous to say mission accomplished. So publication or anything. But I do think I mean, that kind of book, like the small the digestible nature of your book is so important right now, I think, to the people who you're targeting to read your book, just, you know, everybody's busy. Everybody's juggling all these hats, that it's, it's an easy way to feel like you're making real progress. Yeah, which

is celebrating it. And I like that's so essential for anyone writing a book, because we, you know, we have these like word count things, and we have these writing challenges, then we have these things that we participate in that reward the outcomes. Yeah, the whole fundamental part of the book that helped kept me going as a writer, was the importance of celebrating progress. It wasn't so much about what I did at the end of the day, because, listen, there was plenty of people who rejected my book the first time, and I kept going anyway. And I think that's the part where this I do think one bowl movie a day can also help people who are writing their book right now or thinking about writing a book, because it's a reminder to celebrate how far you've come already, too.

It's such a long process compared to some of the other things that business owners are doing day to day that it's it can feel, and when you're in the throes of it especially, I mean, I say that as someone who's written books as well, like I'm, I mean, it's there are some days where it's like, oh, my gosh, this is just, it's a lot. So that's important advice to celebrate those, you know, those small milestones and small victories and big victories along the way. Okay, so that's a good piece of advice. What else would you say to someone thinking about writing a book? You've given lots of little nuggets of advice already?

Sure. I mean, I do think there's a really important component to just start writing. And because that is to me that the follow through is the difference between people who have a book Dream and people who have a book plan. And so start writing, it will already differentiate you from so many other people. If you just start writing down those ideas, and it doesn't have to be the book. Just start writing what you think you want to share. And you know, my biggest advice for anyone thinking about writing a book or really any business plan or goal is to do not do not let others deter you from accomplishing what is most important to you? Yeah. Because we can easily turn over our goals and dreams to other people, and let them decide whether or not they're possible. And I just, I think that that's, that's my greatest message through this is to not let others deter you from accomplishing what's most important to you.

Fantastic. But yeah, there's so much noise intentionally that we let in intentionally and not. And it's yeah, it's very easy, I think to be deterred. So, yeah, that's great advice. I mean, obviously, for writing a book, but in general, as well. So Oh, my gosh, this was fantastic. I want to go back and just circle back on one thing that I should have asked earlier, but you just said something about it again. And it refreshed in my mind when you were submitting the book, and it was rejected by publishers. That's the same book, obviously, that you ended up getting published? Does it look the same? Or I mean, did you? I guess, do you don't know trying to articulate a question?

I hear you, I hear you want to see if this is what I think you're saying. So thank you. Okay, so the book that I was originally writing, that was rejected by all those agents, is a cousin of what I wrote, that eventually was accepted by a publisher. And I say that cousin because it is related, and some of the same concepts, some of the same DNA is there. But here's what happened, that changed everything. For me, the pandemic really brought into focus what was most important in our lives. And none of us are the same person that we were before March, whatever, 2020. And I was so much clearer, and why this book was important. And what I wanted to say, and why it was right now, it was important to publish this book, that it was a much better version of the proposal of the story of the chapters, when I did it the next time, in some ways, it looks nothing like it. And in other ways, it is certainly related, because we all evolve. And this book proposal eventually was an evolution of what I started

that it I'm so glad I circled back. Well, first of all, I mean, anytime you can have any good coming out of the last couple of years, I think. You know, that is fantastic. I love calling it a cousin also. That's really that's neat thing, because I think that happens a lot when people I mean, because also people thank

you, by the way for, you know, being so honest and sharing the story. So many people think if somebody got a book deal that it was easy, and that is

no, almost never the case. That's right.

almost never the case. So I mean, it's really interesting how the projects, you know, sort of evolve based on that initial feedback from agents, publishers, etc. So I love calling it a cousin. That's really, that's a great description. Thank you. This was a super fun discussion, we're going to leave all of the information about your book, and you and everything in the show notes. Because I it's such a great read, I think for any, any professional honestly, but especially female professionals, and especially female professionals who are mothers or caretakers in some way. Because, you know, there's a lot on everyone's plate, but we can still, there's still a lot we can

do. Maybe there's so much we can do. There's so much we can do. Oh my

goodness, this was such a fun and helpful conversation. I don't often get guests who have a traditional book deal. So this was exciting as well on that front. So I would love to as you know, Shauna, you know, I'm asking you for a reading recommendation. What do you have that you have read recently and love or are currently reading? And if you're not sure,

so here's a funny thing about me as a writer, I basically stopped reading many books at all, while I was writing my book. I didn't want to unintentionally, like, you know, borrow some ideas and things. So I am catching up on last time. I have read at least 20 books since January 2023. So I have like a book for whatever ails you at this point. But so I'm catching up on books that like everybody else has already read is what I'm going to say to you that that I hadn't. So I recently finished a little fires everywhere. And that one really touched me. I was you know, I was very moved by that. And I think a lot of people have already read that. But it was new to me. And that's on the fiction front. And then on the nonfiction front. You know, my friend, my new my new author, friend, Bobby rebel, Kauffman wrote, you know, financial grown ups and that was a really helpful read as a mother as a caregiver, but how to teach your kids about money, and how to help literally raise financial grownups. And it's not something that we really talked about much when I was growing up. So I always enjoy learning from experts on topics like that, too.

Oh, that sounds like a really interesting read. I have not heard of that. I will check that one out. I just finished I'm not positive how to say the author of a little fires everywhere. I read a book that's not also not new. But it was new to me. By her her Celeste, I don't know

how to say no energy to it. I

feel like, Yeah, anything that I will say will not be right. So I'm not gonna say it. But our missing hearts I just read by her, which I don't think is new. It's newer than little fires everywhere, but certainly not new. But I also just read that and loved it. So I'm with you. I'm always behind the eight. Which is weird for someone who works in book publishing.

While you're so busy helping other people write their books, right? Like, that's what happens.

Yeah, I go through phases, I think where I read a ton, and then I'm like, oh, no, I haven't read anything new late. Yeah. So I know a lot of people who do what you did sort of backed away from reading while they were in the throes of writing for that, you know, very reason. So I think that that that happens, so. Okay, those are great book recommendations. I thank you. Thank you, Shauna, so much for your time and your openness. I know this episode is going to teach a lot of people a lot of things.

Well, thank you for creating this space where we can learn together.

Absolutely, and continued success.

Thank you. You too.

Thank you. Thanks for listening to today's episode of the right published market podcast.

I know just how busy your schedule is as a business owner, so I'm grateful you've taken some time out of your soul journey into the world of book publishing with me today. If you are looking for even more book writing, marketing and publishing information and support, check out my mentorship membership at the author entrepreneurs lab where each month we take a deep dive into one element of the book world with education, a q&a session with me your book publishing expert resources, co writing times and so much more. You can learn more at the link in the show notes. I hope to see you inside the lab.