Robin Quinn: Hello, everybody, I’m your secretary. I’m also a book editor and book coach. I have the pleasure of introducing our speaker tonight. She is Jeniffer Thompson, the founder of Monkey C Media. She told me that she wasn’t crazy about the name, but I think it’s catchy, and she said it grew on her. Monkey C Media is an 11-year-old company, specializing in author branding, websites, and book cover design.

Jeniffer herself is a personal branding coach, an Internet marketing specialist, and a website strategist. She has more than 25 years of experience in the publishing and music industries. She loves to empower authors with her marketing and industry knowledge, and tonight she’s going to enlighten us on the secrets to creating a website that sells books.

Let’s give a warm welcome to Jeniffer Thompson.

JT: Thank you so much, Robin. So, for those of you in the back, can you hear me all right? If at any time my voice lowers, just wave or holler at me.

For the record, I *do* like my company name. This is why I don’t talk to journalists. When my husband first came up with the name Monkey C Media, I was hesitant because it didn’t seem professional enough, but it has grown on me, and I do love it. We started our company in the year of the monkey. Does anyone know what year we’re going into now? Chinese year?

Audience member: Goat.

JT: Yes, yes, which I’m kind of excited about. I looked it up—creative, which I like to think of my company and myself as creative; we have a lot of fun creating things for authors—gentle, kind, trusting. So I’m kind of excited about this year; 2015 is going to be great, but I’m not going to change my name to Goat C Media, for the record.

Again my name is Jeniffer Thompson. I started in music and went into publishing, and you know, they’re kind of the same. I’ve been watching this transition in publishing that we watched in music, and it’s exciting because it’s giving us the power. The power to get your books out there and sell them so that they don’t sit in your garage.

Hopefully tonight we’ll have some tips on how to help make that happen. I’ve got a lot to go over, and I think we’ll be able to get to it all, so I want people to be able to interrupt me if you have any questions or if something doesn’t make sense, and then hopefully we’ll also have time at the end. Let’s jump right in.

Audience member: Question!

JT: Wow, that was fast!

Q: Will a copy of your presentation be available, or should we take very good notes?

JT: Thank you. And this is your first time here tonight, right? I didn’t plant her; I swear. There are several handouts in the back. There’s my handout for tonight. At the bottom of that sheet there’s a link to download the presentation from my personal website. My business card is also back there, and I have a flyer that has some of our book covers. My company designs websites and book covers. Really what we do is we build authors and publishing companies as well.

I also have a newsletter, which I always forget. I send it out maybe once every six months if something big is happening. If you’re interested in being on my newsletter list, you can also subscribe to my blog, where I blog weekly, about this very topic—resources and tips.

We’re going to talk about five things tonight that are really important. First we’re going to talk about developing your personal brand. Can I have a raise of hands? How many people in here are authors who have written a book and you’re going to learn how to promote your book as an author? Okay. And how many here are publishers looking to learn how to promote your authors? Okay.

A personal brand kind of gets forgotten for authors. Do authors have brands? Of course they do. Steven King and Lisa See are two excellent examples. What is a brand exactly? If you don’t have one, you have a hard time reaching your audience.

The number one thing we need to talk about before we determine your personal brand is what are you selling? Are you selling you, the author? Or are you selling the book?

Often it’s the author. You’re going to have more than one book. And what do they say—what sells your third book? Your first book. So as your brand gets out there, you start to build your audience, because you have a promise that you deliver on, and that’s part of that personal brand.

If you’re selling your book, that’s a different story. You’re branding just that book. And that tells me you’re not doing it right. Or perhaps your other books are in a different genre.

How do we sell you? You’re an expert in something. Your author is an expert in something. Whether it’s travel tips, entertainment, fiction—you’re giving information, how to do something, how to publish a book for example, and well-researched content. We’re talking specifically about websites, by the way. All of this is relating to how you sell yourself on your website.

What are your goals for your website? Is it to make money? Is it to build credibility? Maybe to build a platform to get picked up by a traditional publisher? Once you have this figured out, we can go on to your next step, which is figuring out who your audience is.

Who is your audience? Most people will answer that question, “Everyone. Everyone should read my book,” which *might* be true. How many people in the room think that’s a bad idea? Selling to everyone? Yeah, that’s really a tough target to hit, right? How do you target everyone? You have to figure out who your audience is, and the smaller the audience, the easier it is to figure out where they are online, what magazines they’re reading, what kind of blogs they’re reading, what colors they like, and how they’re responding to your personal brand, because you have a niche.

What is your competition doing? This is a really great way to see who your audience is. Go out and see who your competition is, what they’re doing, how they’re attracting that audience, and what’s making them successful—and steal their ideas.

As I said, where does your audience hang out, what magazines do they read, how much money do they make—who’s the ideal reader? One person. How do you describe *that* person, and then you go from there.

Are you memorable? This is huge. People have to remember your brand, or they won’t tell other people about you. And they won’t know to come back and buy your third book.

What’s your promise? I’m sure you’ve all heard the WIIFM factor—what’s in it for me? When I land on a website, the first thing I think, maybe subconsciously, is what’s in it for me? Do I really want to be here? Do I really want to spend my time on this website?

If you know what you’re selling and you know what your goals are and you know who your audience is, then we can accomplish getting it to them right away, giving them that answer to what’s in it for them and how you can help them.

The look is also part of your brand, and the look is of course the colors, the typeface, the fonts, the logo, and a catchy tagline—so important—as is an elevator pitch. I talk about how to come up with a great tagline. We’ll talk more about those a little bit later, but you start with your mission statement, and you distill that down to your elevator pitch, and then you distill that down to your tagline: the most important thing you have to offer your audience—your promise, ultimately.

Then, of course, being consistent—you have to be consistent for your brand to be effective, or people won’t recognize it. That’s true in the voice, the promise of what type of books you’re offering, the type of information, and how you’re telling it.

Here is an example of a website. She talks about suicide, so she wanted a very calming website. That’s part of her brand, that overall feeling she’s creating when people first land there.

And this is another one—Belo Cipriani is in San Francisco, and he built his brand very quickly. He has 10,000 followers. Everything he does is very consistent. He has a very consistent look, so his audience knows it’s him. It’s part of the promise. Here is his Twitter profile and his Facebook, which both have the same look. That’s part of creating that brand and that consistency so your audience doesn’t have a break in the experience when they’re following you from one place to another.

You have to remember that some people will want to go just to your blog. Other people will want to read about you only on Facebook. Other people only follow you on LinkedIn or Twitter because we have our favorite social media areas, right? So you want to be on all of those, and you want to have a consistent look, a consistent message, a consistent voice, which ultimately is your brand.

Amy Myers has done a great job of branding herself. She’s a doctor in Austin, Texas, and she’s just doing great things. I’m going to use this slide a little later to talk about how the eye moves on the screen, but she has a brand, and she has a promise. Her tagline is, “Get to the root. Learn the tools. Live the solution.” It’s functional medicine, how to live a better life. So she has a great tagline. It tells you right away what’s in it for you.

The second thing I want to talk about—does anyone have any questions about personal brand? Has anyone thought about their personal brand?

Audience member: Oh yeah.

JT: Good. A lot of people are like, “Personal brand? What?” So I’m happy to hear that because as publishers and authors, that’s what’s going to make us. That’s what’s going to make us great and make our audience love us and want to tell other people about us.

Secondly, professionalism. When I got here tonight, Sharon and I were talking about how exciting it is that the book industry is starting to take a little bit of an upswing. People used to say, “Oh, books, they’re going to be a thing of the past. Books are dying. Oh my gosh!”

And I, like Sharon was saying, said, “Oh, absolutely not. Books are not dying. Books are big, not just e-books but even print books.” I think one of the reasons that publishing is starting to take that upswing is professionalism.

One of my favorite topics when I talk to authors, specifically independently published authors, is professionalism. You have to have an editor. You have to have a great book cover because your book cover will be judged. It doesn’t matter how great the editing was or how good the story is, they’ll never know about it.

Professionalism has been the crevasse between what was self-publishing and traditional publishing. And you know what? I look at self-published as—by the way, I like to refer to it as *indie publishing*. In the music industry, there are no *self musicians*, right? We’re indie publishers.

As the professionalism is on the upswing and it’s easier to find vendors to work with to help you develop a professional book, I think we’re selling more books, and it’s exciting. It’s going to be a good year.

So how do you create a professional website? Well, I’m going to get into that. But what is professional? Why does it matter? Well, first of all, credibility. When I go to a website that’s kind of a mismatch of colors and fonts, and I don’t understand what’s in it for me, there’s no credibility, and I don’t trust it. I’m not going to stay there to get the information.

The other thing about professionalism is that feeling—it has to fit with the feeling of the genre or the brand in order to be considered professional. You have to have a clear and obvious message. When you’re Nike, you can have a tagline that really doesn’t mean much to people—“Just Do It,” right? But does that actually sell shoes? Well, it does because they have marketing and branding everywhere, and it’s huge, and you remember it. But as an author, you have to have an obvious message, so I know what’s in it for me.

Consistent navigation. What I mean by *navigation* is the menu of your website. It needs to be easy to follow and the same on every page. The design elements that make a website professional are the color, visuals, the type, the content of your website—I don’t just mean the story arc, or the content, but the way that you present the message, the typeface—and the layout is wildly important in how people will look at your website and whether or not they will stay and read your information.

Think of your website as a funnel. So when people land on the home page, they need obvious options that will take them to the place that they want to go, but ultimately you’re leading them into a call to action, whatever that call to action is. It could be a “buy now” button, it could be a subscriber button. There are a lot of different calls to action that you want, but the point is that you have to capture them and then continue to get them to repeatedly visit your website and tell other people about you.

The subliminal message—this is one of my favorite topics. When you look at a website, what kind of a feeling do you get? Does it draw you in, and do you trust it? And why? What is it about it that draws you in? If you know who your audience is, what they want, and you’ve studied your competition, then you know what that subliminal message is and what colors people are responding to. Color is incredibly powerful, and I’ll give you a little example here in a minute.

How the eye is drawn across the page—we read in a Z-like fashion from left to right. We’re a linear society. You want to think about that when you are presenting your message on your website. These are little things that we don’t think about and that our audience isn’t thinking about either, but they’re doing it *if* we present our message properly.

So, color. Red is our power color. Red should be used sparingly. The first color that you will see when you walk into a room is red. When you go to Target, or any big chain store, what color are their sale signs? Are they light green? No, are they red? Mostly, or orange or yellow or something that really draws your attention. But if the whole store was in red, nothing would draw our attention, right? So red is our power color.

Again, it could be a version of red; it doesn’t have to be true red. It could be orange. It could be yellow. Start looking at websites. Maybe a hot pink. Your eye will be drawn to it, and what is it you’re drawn to? Probably a call to action.

Q: What about Apple? Apple’s got a muted blue.

JT: But go on and see if they have a color that is a call to action. See what color it is. Their overall brand is blue, but there will be little pieces of an orange, and that’s the call to action that draws your eye to it. You definitely don’t want your whole brand to be red because that dilutes the power call of red. You want little pieces of it to draw the eye.

Green is calming. Blue is trustworthy. So it’s interesting that you mentioned that Apple is blue.

What other websites tend to be blue?

Audience members: Government. Honda.

JT: Banks, financial institutions are most often blue. Universities, most often blue. There’s something about blue that we just trust it.

Take a look at some color psychology if you’re getting ready to choose your own brand colors, but also look and see what your audience is responding to and remember that colors come in and out of fashion. So you don’t want to choose something so trendy that in five years you’re going to look old and outdated.

Typically what you want to do is look for color opposites on the color wheel, because you want contrast.

If you stare at the color red for 30 seconds and then you look at a white wall, you’re going to see the color green. Optically it’s fascinating, but we won’t get into that.

The Iowa Hawkeyes’ visiting locker room is bubble gum pink. Has anyone heard this story? It’s a damn good story. So, the coach decided that he wanted to paint the visiting locker room bubble gum pink because it is a color that has been known to pacify inmates. Why wouldn’t it work for football players, right?

We don’t want them aggressive; we don’t want red. We want bubble gum pink, and that’s what they’ve done. They actually remodeled, and they added some Disney to the locker room as well. Can you imagine? You get to the locker room and there’s plush pink carpeting, and Cinderella motifs. It could potentially work the opposite way and make them more angry, but pink is powerful.

Think about colors that we use in schools, in elementary schools. Yellow is a nice color. Frozen food is a great example. When frozen food was first introduced on the market, the packaging was blue, with a lot of ice on the packaging, and green—and it wasn’t selling. And then they thought about it, and they did some market research, and then they changed the color to red. Red makes us hungry. And then they had pictures of steaming hot, sexy food and red, and it just started flying off the shelves, or out of the freezers, as it were.

So, think about color. Images are another powerful way to convey your message. This is a list of places where you can get free stock photography. Please know this: if you find an image on the Internet, and you love it and you just put it on your website, that is copyright infringement just as stealing someone’s words is copyright infringement. So, there are tons of places where you can get rights-free images. Make sure that if there’s a licensing agreement that you have the license to use it, especially if you’re going to use it for commercial use. They may have it available for blogging but not available for you to put it on your book cover, for example.

Images can convey a message before your audience even begins to read your content.

So if you land on a website, and the image grabs your attention, and it’s something that you’re interested in, you’re more likely to start reading. It also breaks up the monotony of the text. It’s just more visually appealing. I had an author who had a diet book, and she wanted to put pictures of people who needed to lose weight on the home page, and then when you clicked through, show the results of her diet. It’s backwards thinking, because we’ve got to get them to click through, right? People have a very short attention span online, so we have to show them what the results are right up front.

I also write content. I should say I edit content for back covers, because we design book covers for our authors. Anytime someone gives me their back cover content, I would say 99 percent of the time I rewrite. And you know what I do? I take the last line, and I put it at the top, because that’s what grabs you. We were taught to lead up to our message. Online you have to give them the punch right away, that tag line, that benefit, that promise, a solution to their problem—whether it’s entertaining them or giving them information. Think about your message.

I’ll be honest with you, my website—well, first of all, I can’t stand my website. It’s like how the cobbler’s children have no shoes. I’ve been telling myself I’m going to redo it. Every time I go to it, I’m thnik, I can’t believe I did that. It’s so obvious. I should have had the message this way. It’s good to take a break from your website, but not too big of a break.

When was the last time any of you went and really analyzed your own website? To make sure it’s working and it has the right message. In the last week?

Audience member: Every day.

JT: Every day? Are you blogging or are you analyzing it?

Audience member: Editing my website can feel frustrating, because I feel the same way you feel sometimes that the message [inaudible].

JT: So you visit daily? I say once a month, go in and reread your home page and see what it says. Does it really speak to your audience? Anda website should evolve. Your message evolves. Your audience is going to grow.

This is an interesting story: I have an author who is a cookbook author. She started when she was 18. Wrote her cookbook, came to us at 19, and by the time she was 20 she had her first cookbook and her website. She was teaching at universities. She was a powerhouse. She was so impressive.

She just called me. It’s been four years, and she said, “Jeniffer, my audience grew up, and I didn’t.” Her website is still talking to college students. Now she’s married. She wants to talk to new moms and newlyweds. She has to grow with her audience, and that’s so true of any business, but specifically in publishing we have to stay on the heartbeat of what our audience is doing.

We have to continually go look and see what our competition is doing so that we can stay on top of that message, and again have that promise of what’s in it for them and deliver on that promise.

Q: How do you find out what the competition is doing?

JT: That’s a good question. How do you find out what the competition is doing? Well, what do you think people search for when they look for what you sell? What would you look for if you were looking for what you sell, your types of books?

Audience member: I’m a dog trainer.

JT: Okay, then you’ll go online, you’ll go to Google or Bing, and you’ll search “dog trainers.” There’s got to be something more specific about what you do than just dog trainers, right?

Audience member: “Dog-training books” if I’m looking for competition.

JT: Dog-training books. What’s maybe the most important part of the message or the niche that you fall into with your dog-training books? So you really have to think about that, search what’s out there, and then Google will give you other ideas to search for. Pretty soon, you’re starting to develop a map of what you need to do. I’m going to talk more about this when we get to point four, which is search engine optimization. Yes?

Audience member: [inaudible]

JT: Absolutely. So what Michele with one L has to say is, have a brainstorming meeting and invite people over. Now, don’t invite your best friends. Don’t invite Grandma. Invite people who are going to be honest. Invite professionals. Hopefully you have a spouse or a partner or someone in your life who can be honest and, as you said, objective.

I think the worst part is when people tell you, “Oh, it’s great,” because they don’t want to hurt your feelings. So not helpful. Hurt my feelings. Let’s figure out how to make this great.

Type. Type is really important, especially online. The reason for that is that it’s a light-emitting screen. If you stare at a light-emitting screen for a long time, you start to get a headache. So the type needs to be easy to read.

Think of a newspaper and the way it’s laid out when you look at your website and the way that you are laying out your message, your text. So here we have a serif font and a sans serif font. A serif font is great on the printed page. It’s recommended. It’s easier to read because it guides you to the next letter.

Online, a sans serif doesn’t have the squigglies. The light-emitting screen is actually refreshing faster than your brain is refreshing. So, what you don’t realize is, it’s jiggling. It’s actually wobbling, so those serifs are hard to keep up with.

Easy-to-read type size—if you have an older market, if your audience is older, make sure you have a larger type size. If you have a teen market, maybe don’t make it so big because maybe that would annoying to that particular audience.

Obvious headlines and subtitles are wildly important. This is also important for search engine optimization. As spiders and bots go into your website and are crawling content, they’re looking for subtitles and headlines to tell them what the page is about.

So think about it, when you land on a page, you scan for what’s in it for you. The images, the headlines. You sort of go down until you decide, okay, well, I’ll go ahead and read this article. Same thing on a newspaper. You don’t see one article on the front page of a newspaper. There are several options, right? Think of your homepage of your website just like that.

Bullet points. Three to five bullet points, not twenty. Not even six, really. It becomes too many. It causes fatigue. Our brain is like, “Ugh, it’s too much to process,” and we skip over it, so it’s no longer effective.

Narrow columns, just like on a newspaper. If there is a long line of text, our brain has a hard time with that light-emitting, wobbly screen, it gets tired, we get fatigued, we would leave the website maybe not even knowing why. It just happens to be that we don’t have narrow columns that our eyes can follow easily.

Short paragraphs. This is so important. How many of you blog? One of the best things you can do for your blog summary page is the *read more* button. So if you go to the blog page, it’ll show the first blog, a title, in some cases it’s the whole blog post, and then you have to scroll down to get to the second blog post. If they’re really long, effectively what we’ve done is we’ve put our main article on the front page of our newspaper, and we’re making people go deeper to find other articles.

Just have enough that it’s engaging. Frankly, your headline should be enough. They’ll know immediately if they’re interested in it because your headline tells them what it’s about. Sometimes people want to be clever with headlines, and I get that, but with a headline on the Internet, search engine bots don’t understand clever. So if someone is looking for a dog-training book, and you haven’t mentioned the words *dog* or *training* when you’re talking about your dog-training book, it’s not going to come up in a search engine, and your audience isn’t going to get it right away.

So sometimes clever isn’t so good with a headline. You can be clever in the article, once you’ve grabbed their attention.

Again, now we’ve got a page that has a headline, a little bit of content, read more, a headline, a little bit of content, read more, and one other recommendation—when you add a *read more* tag, add it in the middle of a sentence: “And the way to make a million dollars in three days or less is to—*read more*.” Right?

If you put *read more* at the end of a paragraph, your reader may think that you’re done and think that’s the end of the article and not realize there’s a link because we don’t really pay attention to things we’re supposed to pay attention to, right? So, make it obvious.

Google safe fonts—it used to be we had five fonts we could use on the Internet that everyone’s computer could load. Now we have Google safe fonts, so you can brand yourself and have a little bit more fun with your look and your website. So if you’re not familiar with Google safe fonts, if you have a webmaster who’s building your site, mention that. Do something a little more fun and engaging. However, make sure that the main body text is san serif and it’s easy to read, something like Helvetica or Trebuchet or Arial. These are very common fonts that are easy to read. You don’t want Comic Sans MS or a scripty font for the body, because after someone starts to read a long paragraph, they’re going to get fatigued, and you lose your audience.

And then have helpful hyperlinks. This is anchor text. One of the most commonly exited pages on an author’s website is their bio page. Why do you think that is?

Audience member: Because it’s dull?

JT: There’s no call to action. It might not be dull necessarily, but it’s done. “I’m done. I’ve read about you. You’re a very interesting person. That’s great. Oh, I’m going to go do this other thing now.” But if you have a call to action—“the top five ways to train your dog how to not wee in the bedroom in three days,” right? If you have that tip as a hyperlink, on your bio page, linking over to a resources page, now you’ve captured your audience. They’re doing something. So hyperlinks can be used as a call to action to keep them engaged.

A sidebar, which is the right-side column of your website, should always have a couple of calls to action—social media links, subscribing to your blog, buying your book. If you have too many, fatigue. You want small amounts of information that guide people and lead people. But not so little that it’s dull.

So if on the home page of my website I have, “You can learn more about Jeniffer Thompson,” I’ll include a link that takes you over to my bio page. And on that page is “The author of *Website Wow*,” with a link that takes you over to the book page. So it’s anchoring and linking people to various pages of your site, pages of interest.

Here we have this Z-like fashion of how the eye scans a website. When we land on a website, the first thing we’re going to see is your logo, and potentially, if you’ve done it right, your tagline. Now remember that tagline I mentioned earlier? “Get to the root. Learn the tools. Live the solution”? That’s Amy’s tagline, in the upper left-hand corner. We then go over to the right, where we have a “submit” button in hot pink, which is one of those power colors that draws the eye. We then go down to the left, we see her face, we go past her book, and her “buy now” button. So many times people say, “I don’t sell my book,” and they don’t have a “buy now” button on their home page.

Make it easy for people to buy your book and make it obvious. If it’s a light blue link that’s hidden, people might not see it. If it’s too difficult to find, they might leave your website, and you’ve lost a sale for a very unfortunate reason.

Then we’re going to come back down to “join the mailing list” over to the right: “enter and receive.” By the way, when you ask people to sign up for your newsletter, or to subscribe, the language you use is really important. I mean, language is just awesome, isn’t it? How we can convince people to do things with language? So if you say, “Enter your e-mail now to subscribe,” think about the psychology of that. Why do I want to enter my e-mail? What’s in it for me? What if it says, “Top five ways to train your dog” or “Top five tips for a new puppy.” I’m sticking with dog training here; I hope that’s okay.

Now, I’m like, “Oh, I have a puppy. I need a trick. I want that.” I’m happy to enter my e-mail because now there’s something in it for me. It’s got to be about *me*. So think about the language of how you sell something or how you present it. It doesn’t have to be obnoxious. It just has to be powerful for the user, the end user, the reader, so that they actually want to follow up on that call to action.

So then we come down to the left again, and we see fashion, there’s a picture of a woman, and there’s a little bit of red in there, so it kind of draws the eye. Her testimonial, and we scan back down to the left, and here are her products. She’s got e-books, e-courses, and supplements. These are her three products.

So very quickly we can see what there is to do and what’s in it for me.

This is a yoga website. It’s the same thing. You land, you see ginseng, you see the options, you see a slideshow of their studio, and then you have a sign-up for a free class. And then down below on the left, “new to yoga,” beginner’s schedule—things that their audience is interested in.

There’s a plug-in you can place on your website if you have a WordPress website. I’m a huge fan of WordPress. It’s free. It’s open source, and there are so many free plug-ins that make it powerful. There’s a heat map plug-in that you can put on your website that shows where people click. And there’s a hot spot.

You can see what people are doing on your website, and if it’s not what you want them to do, think about your strategy and how you can move things around. Or maybe you need more of that because people are interested in that, people are clicking on that topic. You need to see what your audience is doing, or you’ll never be able to deliver on the promise.

The third thing is write often. So many websites become stagnant. Search engines will not continue to visit and index stagnant websites, so you’re no longer relevant for your topic. And your audience is going to leave. There is a cookbook author who wrote a book, a blog actually, called *Vegan Yum Yum*. Great blog. Huge following. Guess what happened?

Audience member: She stopped?

JP: She got picked up by a traditional publisher. She was so excited and so into the publishing process that she stopped. You’re right—she stopped writing. And I went to her blog, and she wasn’t blogging. Well, guess what? After a couple of times of checking, I stopped going to her blog. I just assumed, well, she’s done. She’s moved on to other things. She forgot about us. She left us on this island. By the way, I’m not a vegan, I just happen to like some vegan food. I can see some of you judging me. If it’s delicious, I will eat it.

Three months later she went back to her blog and posted , “Oh, I’m so sorry. I’m going to start blogging soon.” Nope. Too late. She had to start over with that audience. She had lost everything she had built for years. So write often and consistently.

Storytelling—this is the term of the year, for me. Websites, writing, everything we do, even with images, it’s all about storytelling. People are interested in a story. They don’t want to be sold to. They don’t want to be talked at. They want to be entertained. So what is it you can do that is storytelling? So when I land on your website, what’s the story telling me? Think about that.

You want to draw people in, make it about your reader, and give them something they can do, a path to follow.

Speaking of storytelling, what story does this tell you? What is this website about? Any guesses?

Audience member: The Middle East.

JT: Okay. “Mysteries of Crete.” So there’s a picture of Crete, and then there’s a blog title, but there’s no tagline. There’s no information. “Labyrinth ways featured in *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*?” All right. Something about the Greek Islands. Okay, maybe it’s about the Greek Islands. I met this author at a conference in Alabama. Which, by the way, really cool—Montgomery is a really neat place.

She is a romance writer. This website sells romance novels. Talk about missing your audience and not knowing what you’re selling. Yeah, I was so heartbroken by it, I was like, “Can I use your website as an example of what not to do?” She was like, “Sure!”

So, someone told her to just post beautiful pictures of Crete and talk about travel and places to go, which is a great idea, but she still needs to think about what her goals are. Maybe she would do great with travelers and people who want information about Crete, but that isn’t going to make them buy her book.

So, what is your number one goal for your website? And do you convey that message?

Does anyone have an idea about this website—fiction or nonfiction?

Audience member: Fiction.

JT: Fiction? Genre?

Audience member: Nonfiction.

JT: You think nonfiction? All right, well, here we have—it’s called *The Confessional*. There’s a picture of a man or a mouth or a face back here—I don’t know if you can see it, but it’s a thriller book, so it has more of the sense of a thriller. There’s names notched into the wood, and it says, “Psychic stays a step ahead in a deadly battle to outwit serial murderer.” So that’s her catchphrase. That’s what’s going to draw people in. They’re either interested in this type of book or they’re not, so that’s it, right? But that’s starting the story, she’s telling the story of what’s in it for you.

Any idea? What kind of books these are?

Audience member: Young adult.

JT: Young adult? Okay.

Audience member: Science fiction?

JT: Mmhmm, so this author’s trying to create a world. That’s a promise, right? A promise of what kind of story you’re going to read when you get into these books with these characters.

“Author” is a terrible tagline—who cares? Right? Who cares? We know you’re an author because we see your books. What I’d like to see is something about the promise and about the characters in the tagline. And, actually, “Journey with Sam to Orkney.” We know we’re going on a journey. We know it’s a place called Orkney. I’ve never heard of Orkney. Maybe it’s mythical. All right.

How about this one? Is there a promise in this? Is there a story?

So, we have a children’s book. “Step into a magical land where anything can happen and often does.” So we’re creating a world that you can go into if you’re interested.

All right. Continuing with your content and writing often, you have to say it well. I hammer on what’s in it for me because it’s so important. Again, “author” is such a bad tagline because there’s nothing in it for me.

If you struggle with well-written copy, perchance an editor can help. Some people are not great bloggers and they need someone to help them. If you can hire someone who can maybe copyedit and help you with your headlines, if you blog once a week and you need some help with that. It can be a college student who needs a little extra money. It’s so difficult for us to see our own mistakes because we’re too close to it. We know it. We don’t read it. We don’t see it.

If you’re going to write your own, maybe you should write it a week in advance and then take a look at it again before it goes live to make sure it’s professional and it’s edited and it’s well-written.

Powerful headlines and subtitles—these are visual tools that guide the eye, and it helps with your search engine optimization.

Imagery, I talked about the importance of imagery, which says it even before they read your content.

Video is *so* hot. Everyone loves video. But make sure it’s well-done video. Personally, when I land on a video, and the person tells me, “Well, okay, so I’m going to talk about…” Don’t tell me what you’re going to talk about. Talk about it. Get to the point! It’s gotta be quick and well-done. That doesn’t mean it has to be a professional video or that you even have to pay money for it. You can literally do it with your iPhone, but make sure you’re not in a dark room, and you don’t have raccoon eyes. A little bit of lighting shining on you, a Home Depot light for $4.99 can put some light on you, and you can play with it.

Video can be great for people who want to get a quick idea of what you have to offer. And you know what else it does? It provides that personal touch. Because when you see someone on video it’s so much more real, right? I get a feeling, I know who you are. I know what you’re about. Do I like you? Do I trust you? And do I want to know more? So video is a great way to tell your story.

And, of course, I already mentioned that your tagline matters.

Just for fun, here are some catchy taglines:

“Just do it.” Who’s tagline is that?

Audience member: Nike.

JT: Okay. “You’re in good hands”?

Audience member: Allstate.

JT: “Don’t leave home without it”?

Audience member: American Express.

JT: Okay. “Reach out and touch someone”?

Audience member: AT&T.

JT: “Behr works wonders”? That one’s not fair. But that’s a great tagline, because it has the name of it in there *and* it says what it does, right?

“King of Beers”? Beer drinkers?

Audience member: Budweiser.

JT: All right. “Calgon, take me away”, and then, of course, “Get to the root. Learn the tools. Live the solution.” I use that one again because you don’t know who she is, so her tagline tells you what she does and what’s in it for you.

John Grisham: “America’s favorite storyteller.” He could have said “author,” right? But it doesn’t, so that’s a great tagline.

We were just talking, Gary and I, about updating your photo. You know that’s part of your promise too—updating your photo and making sure it’s professional. If you have an old photo of you from when you were in college, that’s not very trustworthy. What are you hiding? I think we have to put ourselves out there a little more because we are our brand.

“Where excuses go to die.” This particular author has character all over the place. He wanted his character to come through, and I think it does. “Get character or become one.” It really gets your attention.

Okay, search engine optimization. Don’t fall asleep on me now. SEO—is anyone familiar with SEO? Awesome. SEO is actually pretty easy. It’s common sense. It is knowing what your audience wants and telling them what you have.

Google and Bing and the algorithms that they employ to ensure that we as their audience get the results that we want are always changing. The algorithms are always changing. There is no way to know how to be number one, because if we knew how to be number one, well, no one would be number one anymore. But there are constants.

Writing fresh, relevant content that speaks to your audience, that’s accessible to search engines, encourages others to share your content with their online network and link back to your website—that’s huge. Incoming links are one of the best ways for you to get higher ranking on Google. It’s sort of like being in junior high. In junior high if you have 50 unpopular friends, you were still unpopular. But if that popular person liked you, you were suddenly elevated to popular status. The same is true on Google. If MSN links out to you on their home page, your rank is going to go through the roof because Google says, “Wow, this website, which we trust, is linking to this website, there must be something of relevance.” And if that link is talking about a particular topic, dog training for example, and it links over, then they’re going to associate your website with dog training.

Audience member: What about About.com?

JT: Yes, About.com is a great example. Huffington Post is a great place.

First, let’s talk about keywords. Keywords are not words, they are phrases—three to five words, ideally. We call these *long-tail keywords*. When you go to the Internet, do you do a search for *books*? Probably not. So we distill it down. We want it to be as obvious and close to what we’re selling as possible.

So in the example here I have 2 million results for *books*. *Children’s books* is even better; I think it’s like a million something. *Children’s counting books* is even better, and the competition is lower. That’s what we’re looking for. We’re looking for keyword phrases that tell people exactly what we offer, that don’t have a huge amount of competition. The way to know that is to use Google AdWords to see what people are searching for. They’ll also give you recommendations. And then do a search on Google or Bing and see what the competition is.

I had an author who wrote a memoir. She rode her Harley-Davidson across the country, and she wanted Harley-Davidson be one of her keywords. And I said, “Well, that’s not going to help anybody because they’re going to get to your website, and they’re going to bounce right off because they’re going to be looking for websites about Harley-Davidsons, not you riding a Harley-Davidson.”

Really think about your keyword phrases and what you offer, because that promise is what they’re looking for when they do a search. So if you do a search for a keyword phrase, see what people are finding, see what’s at the top, because that’s what’s popular. And that will help you develop your keyword phrases. And then look at that website. Open Apple + F and Control + F will allow you to search on the page, so if there is an author or another website that is ranking well for something you really want to rank well for, figure out why. How often does it appear? And how do they mention it? So, again, that was Control + F or Open Apple + F.

So make a list. Make a list of 20 words. Do a search. Inspect your competition. Control + F. You’ve got it.

Any questions about keywords. These are not static, folks, they are always changing.

Audience member: Hold my hand a little bit. Where do I go to Control + F to see how many times a word is used—are you talking about a page that you’ve written? That you might want to have a keyword? Or are you looking—

JT: I’m talking about any page on the Internet. If you do Control + F, you get a little search function in the upper right-hand corner of your browser that allows you to search for a word within that content. And then you can see the density of that word. How often does it appear? And then read it. So you don’t have to read the whole page. It makes your life a little easier.

So, again, throughout your content, what you do not want is so much of that keyword phrase that it starts to annoy your readers. If you say the same thing over and over again, that’s annoying. That’s not valuable to me. Google doesn’t like it either. It’s considered spam. You want about an 8 percent density on a page.

Or, common sense—if you say, “My book will help you train your dogs.” What can we change about that sentence for better SEO? Instead of “my book,” say the name of your book. “*Better Dog Training* will help you train your dogs better.” Right? How many times do we have content on our website where we can replace a word with a keyword phrase that our audience is looking for?

The benefits and the value that we offer—your content is wildly important. This is why you want to go back once a month and analyze your website and see if you’ve made those silly mistakes: *my book* or *this book* is common as well.

Page and blog titles—this is what appears in a Google search engine results page. It’s blue, it’s often followed by an ellipsis—the dot, dot, dot. What happens is Google will show 66 characters, including spaces. I see all your eyes rolling. You want to keep that title short and what is that title? It’s the title of your page that’s on the back end. Your webmaster has to do this. Or, if you have a WordPress site, you can do it with a plug-in called Yoast, which I’m going to pull up here in a minute.

So your page, your blog titles, I talked about this a couple of minutes ago. You really want it to be obvious. So I have a very popular post on my blog called “What Is a Good Bounce Rate?” It gets a ton of hits. I could have labeled it something clever, like, “We Don’t Want People Bouncing from Our Site,” but people aren’t going to find it unless you’re obvious.

So good blog titles, headlines, subtitles, bullet points—when a bot (search engine spider) goes into your website and scans your content, there’s going to be a hierarchy of your content, the page title, the blog title, the headline, the subtitle, and the bullet points will be scanned first. So make sure your relevant content and those search engine words are within those pieces. Does that make sense?

I mean, really, it’s common sense.

Audience member: Can you say the hierarchy again?

JT: Page title, which you won’t see—but when you hover, it depends on the browser. Sometimes it’s above the address bar in white. In Internet Explorer and Chrome if you hover on the tab, it’ll show it to you. Don’t worry too much about that. It’s kind of a webmaster thing.

Blog title, the headlines, the subtitles, and the bullet points, then the content—that’s the order in which your content is scanned and indexed by search engine bots.

Blog tags—if you’re blogging, you can add tags. What are tags? These are the things that tell search engines what this content is about. So on my website I have a tag cloud. A tag cloud shows the most commonly mentioned topics by hierarchy. So tags tell the search engine the most commonly mentioned topics by hierarchy, the most important. What is your website about? Is it about Internet marketing? Is it about dog training? So tags are a great way to help optimize your website.

Image titles and alt text is huge. If you’re a speaker, and you send your photograph, as I did, to PALA, and you haven’t changed the name of your image, you’ve missed a huge opportunity. So my image is called Jeniffer-Thompson.jpg. Now when my husband took that photograph, it was DSC43569 coming out of the camera. So when you have any images on your website, before you put them on your website, rename them with the words that tell anybody what that picture is about because that becomes part of the code on your website. That’s huge.

So if someone does a search for “Jeniffer Thompson,” they’re going to see my pictures because I’ve optimized my images.

Alt text is what the blind hear if they’re using a reader like JAWS to read your website. It makes it accessible to the visually impaired, and it’s also indexed by search engines.

Blog categories are also very important. So on a WordPress site, it will be the name of your site, JenifferThompson.com is my example, forward slash, and then the category, “Internet marketing.” WordPress has a default category called “uncategorized.” Most authors don’t know they can change that. You can edit it, and you can call it “dog-training tips.” If you forget to place a post in a category, it’s going to be uncategorized, and that’s not helpful when search engines are trying to determine the content on that page.

Then we have the title, JenifferThompson.com, that’s my main URL, forward slash “Internet marketing,” that is the category I write in, forward slash “What Is a Good Google Bounce Rate?” That’s the headline or the title of the blog. It’s also the URL. So it’s indexed in more than one place.

You want to make sure that whoever set up your WordPress site has included something called permalinks. Otherwise it’s just a bunch of gobbledygook because WordPress sites are database driven, which means it comes from a big database and there’s numbers, but permalinks allow us to have categories and titles in our URL, as opposed to a bunch of question marks and symbols and numbers. So permalinks are really important, and that you need a little bit of knowledge for. I’m sorry there’s not a quick thing—although I think SEO by Yoast, which is again my next slide, may have an option for you for that. Well, it does, I just hope it’s user friendly; let’s put it that way.

Also, your URL is really important. So my URL is JenifferThompson.com, as we said earlier. Jeniffer with one N and two Fs is pretty uncommon. So, if you have a name—or like Monkey C Media, my company name. Is it Monkey C? Is it Monkey See? Or Monkey Sea? Which is it? I own all three. So if someone does a search for “Monkey C Media,” obviously my company is about that because it’s in my URL. I have a book called *Website Wow*. I have a page dedicated to that book, called [JenifferThompson.com/WebsiteWow](file:///C:\Users\Awesome%20Amy\Downloads\JenifferThompson.com\WebsiteWow). I know this is a lot of information I’m trying to fit in, so I apologize if your head is spinning, but you will have the slides and hopefully if you get just a couple of things I’ve said, that’ll be fantastic.

So Website Wow is my landing page, and guess what that page is about? It’s about my book—*Website Wow*. My headline says it. My subtitles say it. My image is labeled “Website Wow.” So if someone does a search for “Website Wow,” they’re going to find that page, because it is *the* most relevant page on the Internet for that particular thing. That’s what we’re trying to do. It really is common sense in how you label things.

So, your Yoast plug-in for SEO. You simply do a search for Yoast plug-in in WordPress. Here’s what it looks like: this is what you see in Google. You always get a blue headline, sometimes it’s followed by an ellipses, the three dots, that means it’s too long. Here, I can name it—my SEO title is here. So I determine the title of this page here and watch it grow here to see what it looks like in Google.

There’s an interesting thing that happens when I’m writing SEO titles. I’m thinking that this will be great, and then I look at it, and I’m like, “This is terrible.” When you see it visually, it makes a difference. Just like when I’m blogging, and I’m reading it in the back end, and then I publish it—all of a sudden I see all the typos. Now that they’re live, I can see them.

So this is a neat little tool because it shows you what people will see in a Google search engine results page if they find you. Does it speak to your audience? Is there something in the title that makes me want to click on it? Or does it say “Home Page,” which, by the way, that’s what your title tag will say. It’s “Home Page,” because back in the olden days when we developed websites with HTML, it was so coders knew what page they were editing—Home, About. Now we can control that and hopefully get better ranking and better relevancy in the search engines.

So the next thing is, of course, the URL here and then the description. So we have the SEO title, and then we have a place for the description. I left mine blank on purpose because what this plug-in does—and actually if you don’t have the plug-in this is still the case—the content that you see, this description in your Google search engine results page, is the content on the page where it first mentions the keyword phrase that they searched for.

And this is pretty good: “*Website Wow* is your definitive guide to building a website that sells.” So, if I wanted something better, I could dictate that in my meta description in this plug-in. You know what? You can’t really make mistakes with this. You try it, and you see what happens. And then you track it. Speaking of Google Analytics—yes?

Audience member: You said something about the home page. How is the home page—

JT: So, the question was, how is a home page connected to an SEO title? So, it’s really a page title that’s good for search engine optimization. The title of that page comes up in a search engine, and it looks like this snippet preview at the top. The only way to title that page is to have that plug-in or to go into the HTML code. Yes?

Audience member: So if you’re not using WordPress, you don’t have access to that?

JT: Not unless you have Dreamweaver or something that allows you to do—so, the question was, if you’re not using WordPress, can you control these? The answer is, yes, if you have Dreamweaver or a way to write code, really. But your webmaster can go in. I mean, what do you have, seven pages on your website? If you had a regular, static website—the main ones, maybe there are pages that are deeper, but those top menu items should all be optimized with the page title, images that are optimized, and of course we already talked about optimizing the page with content and headlines and such.

Is this good? Fabulous.

So, tracking it all. Google Analytics is amazing. If you are not using Google Analytics or Google in general, I recommend that you do. There are many tools, webmaster tools, on Google, that allow you to see what people are doing on your website. Once a month, go in and take a look at it. When you first go in, you’re going to think to yourself, what the heck is all this? But just look at it, and click around. There are also tutorials, tons of tutorials. If you have a question, Google has the answer. There’s probably a YouTube video to show you how to use Google Analytics.

What are we looking for? How long do people stay on your website? Is it a high bounce rate? What does this mean?

Harley-Davidson—by the way, for the record, there is no way we’d be able to optimize an author site for Harley-Davidson because the competition is way too high because there’s actually a company called Harley-Davidson, but let’s say we did. Let’s say when you land on her website, after doing a search for Harley-Davidson, you see it’s a site for a memoir. What are people going to do? They’re going to bounce off. That’s what a bounce rate is. If you have a high bounce rate, that means that people are not staying on your website.

There are a couple things you want to take into account with the bounce rate. Where is your traffic coming from?

Audience member: What kind of numbers are you looking at with the bounce rate?

JT: That’s a very good question. Sharon’s question is, what is a good bounce rate? Typically, between 45 and 65 is a good bounce rate. If it’s lower than 45, that tells me you’re not getting organic traffic because you’re going to get a bounce rate if you’re coming up high in the search engines. People are going to find you, and they’re going to go, “That’s not what I was looking for,” and they’re going to bounce off. We want organic traffic.

So how do people find you? There are three ways: they find you organically in a search, they linked to you from another website (clicked a link and went over—that’s called referral traffic), or direct traffic, which means that I know your address and I type it in the address bar or Google, and they take me to your site.

If all your traffic is coming direct, and you have a high bounce rate, yikes. You have a real problem. That means people *wanted* to be there and still left.

If they’re referred to you, kind of the same thing. If I was interested enough to link over, and I leave, I bounce right off, we’ve got a problem. We’ve got to change your story. We need to change the brand and the overall experience that people are having on your website.

If they’re finding you organically and they’re bouncing, that’s okay because it’s going to happen, but we don’t want it to be too high, right? Eighty percent, everyone’s bouncing. So take it with a grain of salt. We don’t want it too high. We don’t want it too low.

The number of visitors—how many people visit your website. Now, there are visitors and hits. One person walks into a brick-and-mortar store and picks up 50 items. That’s one visitor and 50 hits. The same is true on your website. You might have one visitor who clicks 50 different things and looks at 50 different items on your website. So know the difference. You want lots of hits. You also want lots of visitors. But understand the difference so you know how much traffic you’re getting. And you can see where people are coming from—how much time they spend on your pages, and where they go next. You can see what page they come in to.

It used to be that people found your home page and then hopefully clicked through. Now people find me through my blog posts and then hopefully from there will go into the rest of my website because I have a sidebar that tells them about other things I do and offer and that links them in, those hyperlinks that people click anchor them to another page.

Popular posts and exit pages. I talked about the author bio page—people leave because there’s nothing else to do.

The last thing we want to do is connect with our audience. We’ve got a great personal brand, we’re professional, we write often, consistently, we’ve optimized the website—how do we connect with your audience? How do we get them to go to your website? Well, value equals engagement.

The more you give away, the more partnerships you have, the more guest blogging, the most exposure you have, the more likely you are to drive traffic to your site and to get that audience.

One of the best things you can do is give everything away, especially in the beginning. Think about it for a minute. When there’s an Internet company that’s starting up, like Facebook for example, it’s all free. So what do you do? It’s all free, and then as soon as you love it, we start charging you for it. And then we start monetizing. You should think the same way on your website.

Give away your information, as many of those dog-training tips as you can. Why? Because I will trust you, I will come back for more tips, I will tell my friends about your tips, I will sign up for your newsletter, I will be engaged, and I will be a fan, a true fan, because you’ve given me so much. And then when you write your second book, I’m going to buy that book.

I would say that they’ll buy even your first book. When I go on a website and there’s so much great information, I’m like, “I want it all in one place, I’m just going to buy the book.” And that’s how we get people to commit and to be on our site and to be on our team, right?

That viral marketing where they tell other people about you—partnerships are huge. So let’s say I have a book on Internet marketing, and I partner with four other authors of Internet marketing books. Well, you might think to yourself, that that’s a terrible idea, because they’re going to buy *their* books. Well, frankly, if you’re interested in the topic, you’re going to buy more than one book on that topic, right?

So now I’ve partnered. We package it. We share each other’s newsletter lists, mailing lists. We promote each other through all of our different channels. So, now, if I have four other people I’m working with, my message is five times more likely to get out there. My 500 people, or 5,000 people, or 45,000 people will see this person and, conversely, you want to partner with someone who has something to offer. You don’t want to partner with someone who has a list of 500 if you have 45,000. Make sure it’s a good partnership.

Resources, lists, best value. Best value could also be resources of things you find elsewhere. Maybe you become a source for good information because you’re always researching and looking for articles on your topic, and you share them with your audience. So, a blog post could be, “Hey, I just read this great article on Internet marketing, written by Jeniffer Thompson, here’s the jist, and here’s the link.” So now I have good content that talks about my topic, and I’m going to link over to a great article. That’s value for my audience.

Contests and giveaways. Cookbook authors do this all the time. Partnerships with lots of different cookbooks, or they’ll do a contest, like a recipe contest, or a giveaway where they give away a KitchenAid mixer or an iPad—iPads are huge to give away.

Social sharing and bookmarking is huge. So, you want people to be able to share your content. People used to say to me, “Well, I don’t want someone to steal my content.” Oh yes you do. The more they steal it and the more it’s shared, the more likely people are to find you, so with that said, always have a byline: “This article was written by Jeniffer Thompson at Monkey C Media, Internet marketing and website strategist” with a link, right? And a place for people to subscribe to *your* blog: “For more tips and resources, visit—” and then there’s a link that goes directly to that landing page.

Video, Internet radio, social media is huge…. Social media takes up so much time. It is such a necessary evil. When you get into social media, don’t be peer-pressured into doing all of it. You should have a presence in all those places, and you should automatically feed your content to all those places, but watch the engagement. How much content are those people actually looking at? And you can tell this from your Google analytics, who your top referrers are. Are people going from Facebook to your website? Is it working? If it’s not, maybe change your strategy or maybe just don’t spend as much time on Facebook. Maybe your audience is on Twitter. Maybe your audience is on LinkedIn.

I recommend that you spend enough time as is comfortable for you and you set a schedule. And you have to really be dedicated to that schedule because it’s easy to spend three hours and forget where you were or what you were doing. So, on Mondays, I spend time on this for 15 minutes. And you stick to that schedule, so you don’t get overwhelmed. But you have to do a little of it. And you have to be strategic about it. And it can’t be just about you.

Ultimately the number one thing that works on social sharing is intimate information. People actually want to know a little bit about you, about your dogs and how cute they are. Speaking of dogs, I saw a dog on the freeway, alive. Running, straight forward, and all the traffic was stopped. I wasn’t sure if I was going to make it here, and I was driving about 10 miles an hour, and this little dachshund was just running straight forward like a deer in the headlights for like 10 minutes. It was the saddest thing ever. But if you posted something like that on Facebook, it would get a lot of comments and shares. I mean my heart was just pounding, right?

Audience members: What happened? What happened to the dog?

JT: He ran off to the side! And everyone got out of their cars, and he was totally rescued. So it was awesome. And I was shaking forever.

Audience member: Can I go back to something? You talked about linking and gave the example of if MSNBC linked to your site. Would you walk us through how to get somebody like MSNBC to link to our site?

JT: Okay, well, MSNBC might have been a terrible example, but they are wildly popular. So, how do I get people to link to my website? If I’m partnering with somebody, if we have a contest, then each of us would talk about the contest and link to our partners, so now I have four links from my four partners, where their audience sees it and links over.

Anytime I speak at a conference, they link to my website. You can search for a link checker on Google and see how many pages link to you. Any local press or media, they have an online paper, they will link over to you if you give them your URL. So many people forget. “Oh, I was interviewed by *Such and Such Times*.” Oh, did you get a link? “Oh, I didn’t think about it.”

Always think about the link. Everything you do is leading people back to that home base. Your website is your home base. It’s constant. If there’s an article in the *New York Times*, the newspaper,about your book, it’s going to be lining someone’s birdcage. But that *link* from the *New York Times* online edition, to your website, is forever. And the more links, the more popular, the more valuable, it appears to search engines like Google.

Not to mention the fact that people will see you—“Oh, who’s this speaker? I’m going to click on this and go to her website and see what she’s all about.”

There are a lot of ways to get those links. StumbleUpon and Reddit are two great tools. They are social sharing. A lot of our clients get a lot of referral traffic from these. So what happens is, I have an account with StumbleUpon. I see an article I like, and I share it on my account on StumbleUpon. So, if I share an article about dog training that I really liked, other people will see it there when they do a search for dog training, because you’ve used your great headline that mentions the keywords that people are looking for, so it’s part of that content, and that links it to the source because they don’t want duplicate content on StumbleUpon, but they want a little bit that then links to your website.

Audience member: Can you do that for your own articles?

JT: You sure can. Absolutely. However, if all you do is link to your own articles, StumbleUpon will shut you down. They’ll just take your account away. So what you have to do is dedicate a certain amount of time every week, whatever that is, 20 minutes, or have it in your toolbar. If you’re using Chrome, when you see an article that you love, you just click StumbleUpon, and it automatically submits to their website, it’s just part of what you’re already doing.

Audience: So how many articles could be yours? One out of ten?

JT: One out of ten articles could be yours, absolutely. Same goes for any social site that you’re on. So, on Facebook if you talk about other interesting things nine times and then once you talk about an event you’re promoting, that’s a nice balance for your audience.

So they stay engaged. It’s really about engagement. Would you walk into a room and say, to a bunch of people you don’t know, “Hey, everybody, you should buy my book”? You’d *never* do that in a social setting, but so many people do it online. Think of online as a social setting. What makes you interesting? What kind of conversations can you have with people? The best way to get people engaged with you is to ask questions and ask for advice. People love to give advice, especially if you’re a new author, or if your author is a new author.

By the way, Goodreads is a fantastic place. All of you should be on Goodreads. Not only should your book be on Goodreads. That’s part of it, but you should use Goodreads as a social place, where you go into books you love or authors you love and you review their books, and you share book ideas.

Go to your competition, and review their books and ask them for advice. Then when your book comes out, they’re more likely to tell their network, “Hey, my colleague just released this new book. First-time author. Go check it out.” They’re more likely to review your book if you review theirs. So it’s a place you can kind of share the love. There’s a lot happening on Goodreads that most people don’t realize. Also when you release your book, you can have a short time where it’s discounted or you give it away for free.

Free is best. That’s how we build our audience. We give it away.

All right, I mentioned easy to buy. Encourage repeat visits with lots of products, easy to find, easy to buy—downloads, audio, video, free stuff, free stuff, free stuff, resources, tips. Of course, they should be entertaining, especially as fiction authors.

And then obvious call to action and follow-up, by the way. If someone buys something from you, follow up with them. Ensure that they’re happy, that they had a good experience, especially in the beginning as you’re building your audience. They need to be on your team or your tribe, as Seth Godin would say. And the only way to do that is to stay in touch with them with follow-up.

Okay, we’re getting close. Conversion and community. So, how do we convert our community? Zemanta is a great tool to get some of those links, Sharon, that we talked about. What this is—it’s a couple different things, actually. It’s a plug-in for WordPress, and it will show you—let’s say you’re writing a post about the Fourth of July. It will show you rights-free images that are of or related to the Fourth of July. Whatever your content is, it sees that content and gives you images as recommendations to put within your post. You click it, and it inserts it right into your post. So it’s a great way to get free images quickly. That also links over to the person who owns that image.

Flickr is another one. If you’re a photographer, I recommend that you’re on Flickr as a great way to build that audience. And let people use your photographs for free, because then they will put your photos in their blog post and link to your website. Those are some more incoming links that you can get.

I already said encourage sharing. Encourage conversation. Often when we blog, especially as nonfiction writers, we tend to be authoritative. I recommend that you make it a little more conversational and you ask the opinions of your readers, or for the experience of your readers. “Have you experienced anything like this? I’d love for you to share any other ideas or resources.” Get them in the conversation. They’re more likely to come back, especially if they share something that you allow on your blog. Now they have a link back to their website, and they’re part of your team, and they’re more likely to tell people about you.

Easy to buy, free stuff, I know, I keep hitting it. But I think you get it. And social media.

So, I have some free tools and plug-ins here. There’s one that didn’t make it, it’s below the National Archives: [freeimages.com](file:///C:\Users\Awesome%20Amy\Downloads\FreeImages.com). It might have been on that other slide. Bitly is a tool that allows you to shorten a link. So let’s say that you write a great post, and you want to share it on Twitter. You want to link back to your post on your website. You can shorten the link with Bitly, Twitterfeed also. TweetDeck does the same thing. So those short links make it easier for people to link over to you, and it’s not this obnoxious, long URL.

Hootsuite is a fantastic tool for you to manage all of your social media accounts, so you don’t have to log into all of them separately. It’s all in one place. As is TweetDeck, and you can see what’s happening.

I want to mention one quick thing about Twitter. I was at a conference recently, and there’s a doughnut shop in Canada, and they were monitoring anyone who said, “worst day ever” on Twitter within a geotag of a mile. By the way, there happens to be a lot of people tweeting “worst day ever.” Anytime that happened, they would tweet back, “We can’t have that. Come on in for a free doughnut.” Talk about cool marketing, right?

So if maybe you’re dog training, you can track and follow hashtags or trending topics to see if those are people that you need to get into conversation with that are looking for a good dog trainer or a book on dog training. So use these tools on Twitter and Facebook to follow trending topics and then TweetDeck and Hootsuite allow you to manage that more easily.

ShareThis is a plug-in that lets people share the content on your website on their social pages. So if you have a ShareThis on your website and I want to share that article, I click Facebook, it opens up a new window, I talk about why I like it, now it’s in my timeline and most of my audience will see it, although Facebook has made it where now you have to pay to have *everyone* see it.

The National Archives is a great place to get photos. Let’s say that you happen to be writing about romance or love, there are some great photos in there that you can use to add something kind of fun and free to your blog posts.

Audience member: Don’t you have to pay them?

JT: National Archives are free. The National Archives belong to us. If you wanted them to send you a picture, yes. But if you just wanted to take that image and put it on your website, we own it. It’s in the public domain.

WebResizer.com, so if you are posting images to your blog now because I told you to, make sure that you optimize them to the right size. If you don’t have Photoshop, you can use a free tool called [webresizer.com](file:///C:\Users\Awesome%20Amy\Downloads\webresizer.com). This allows you to upload the image, crop it, downsize it to 72dpi, that’s dots per inch. What that means is, when a photograph comes out of a camera at high resolution, there are a lot of dots per inch, pixels, so that when it prints, it’s beautiful.

Well you don’t need that high resolution on the Internet, so you want to downsize it so that it loads quickly. We want it to load quickly so that our website loads quickly. Because if your website is bogged down by images that take so long to load, your audience will get bored or tired or waiting and leave your website. So optimizing your images is huge.

Audience member: What is the optimal, not the dpi because, high-resolution photographs—

JT: 1,200 pixels. So you’re asking the optimal pixels? That’s a great question. What this means is, how wide is the browser that someone is looking at? I would say no wider than 1,200 pixels, maybe even 900 pixels wide. And it’ll show you, WebResizer will show you the pixels. So at 72dpi, you might have thousands of pixels wide, and it’s still going to be a huge image, so you want it to be the width of your browser. So, 900 to 1,200.

And I like my images to all be the same size on my blog posts, so then when they’re scrolling down, it just creates an easier visual experience for your reader, so you don’t cause that fatigue. It’s okay to have a couple smaller images, but I like to see one big one at the front of the post.

Audience member: 900 to 1,200 what?

JT: Pixels wide. And that will determine your height. Yes? Two minutes? Last two questions.

Audience member: What is Animoto?

JT: Animoto is a place where you can create your own videos. You can upload it, you can add music (hopefully not copyrighted). You can add photographs and put them into a video to whatever song you choose. It’s a pretty cool tool.

Audience member: Besides arbitrary, is there a formula, or is there a rationale that can be implemented to determine when you stop offering free stuff, or to cool the free stuff and start putting the paid stuff in?

JT: Is there a time at which you stop giving out free stuff and start monetizing your website?

Audience member: Is there a model to—

JT: Is there a model? I don’t think there’s a model. I think it’s personal preference, and it depends on how large you’ve built your audience. So, I now have 20,000 followers.

Audience member: And how much of that audience is repeat?

JT: Yeah, how much of that audience is repeat business? Yeah, is there a model to monetize your site? I mean you really have to think about what your goals are and what your audience wants. I recommend having enough paid stuff that you can stay in business and enough free stuff that people continue coming back. And they’ll either get the free stuff or buy the e-book or get the whole package or the workshop or the one-on-one with you—it’s dependent on what they need for their own goals.

And with that, thank you.