Announcer: Get ready to find your recipe for success from America's top business owners here at Onward Nation with your host Stephen Woessner ...

Stephen Woessne: Good morning. I am Stephen Woessner, and welcome to episode 664 of Onward Nation. Before I introduce you to our very special guest today I just want to give you a quick update about how we're trying to make our content even more accessible, trying to get it into every single channel, so that wherever you are, wherever you want to listen that you have that opportunity. All of our Onward Nation episodes are now available on Spotify, so please give it a try, and please know if you have any questions or concerns, you can always drop me a line at stephen@predictiveroi.com, again, that's stephen@predictiveroi.com, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, @predictiveroi.com and I'd be happy to help.

Now for today's episode. I invited a very, very special guest to help address some of the questions that I often hear business owners ask about writing a book, or how to write a book, or how to promote a book, so it reaches bestseller status, how to find an agent, or is an agent even necessary to find a great publisher, and the list of questions go on, and on about this really important topic. In all of these important questions, I mean, they impact time, and you need the right answers, they could potentially impact revenue in your business, and eventually the success of the book, and how it adds value into your core business, because all of that is critical as a business owner if you're going to invest the time and effort it needs to be able to drive your business forward.

To share her expert insights on all of these questions I invited Wendy Keller back to Onward Nation. Wendy is an award-winning former journalist, a respected literary agent, and author, a speaker, an acclaimed book marketing consultant. She has sold nearly 2,000 rights, deals worldwide including 16 New York Times bestsellers, and nine international bestsellers, and I have personally had the good fortune of working with Wendy side by side on my current book, Profitable Podcasting, which was really born out of a conversation I had, had with Wendy after one of our episodes. She completely blew me away, and then when we released the book it became a number one new release on Amazon in just 18 hours, she really knows her stuff, Onward Nation. Without further ado, welcome back to Onward Nation, Wendy.

Wendy Keller: Oh, thanks for having me, Stephen. I'm so excited. Thank you, and hello again to all the great Onward Nation listeners.

Stephen Woessne: I am so excited to have you here, too. You're obviously a literary agent, you're a darn good one, but we've all got some bias, and I get that, but you've always impressed me in how you're able to objectively assess the advantages and disadvantages of publishing or is it going to be a self publishing, so let's get some foundation in place for Onward Nation business owners. Let's talk about, or actually you talk about what an agent does, and then can business owners get a deal with a publisher without working on an agent? Let's start there. That would be a good foundation.

Wendy Keller: Okay. That makes a lot of sense. An agent's role is to really be sort of the hound dog for the publisher. Right? We're looking for books that we know. Publishers want to take my agency specializes in nonfiction books, set up just for adults. Right? We don't do kids nonfiction, and most of our success is in the category of business, self-help, and science. What I'm looking for are books that the publishers who publish business, self-help, and science are most likely to buy. I'm looking for a combination of factors, the author, their idea, and most importantly their platform, their presence in the world, how many people know about that author, how successful that author is in that category, et cetera.

My job then is to find those authors, or accept those authors as they swim by, and to make them look pretty, basically. Then, present them to the appropriate publishers in the United States or in some cases anywhere in the world, and then negotiate the deal, so that the author is treated fairly, so the publisher is enthusiastic and engaged, and so those two people can come together, and create a very successful product that achieves the authors specific outcome. Most people come to me because they either want to use the book to become a paid speaker, become a paid consultant, bring more people into their business whether that's sales or service, or whatever it is, and/or because they have some important message that they want to share.

All those things together kind of work, and I'm the guy who kind of greases the wheels throughout the entire process, finding them publishers, because publishers legally cannot look at a manuscript that's un-agented because five years from now when they publish something similar an author can just say, “Well, that was my idea, and you gave it to somebody else, and now it's famous, and I should have made this,” they don't really want to deal with the lawsuits, so they use us as their hound dogs. I think that covers it.

Stephen Woessne: Wow. Okay. I didn't realize that, so I didn't realize, so then the followup piece to that is I want to know is it possible for a business owner to get a deal with a publisher without working with an agent, but it sounds like, no, that a publisher is going to say, “If you're not represented, we're not even going to touch you.” Am I getting that right?

Wendy Keller: Well, yeah, because in the case of the small publishers who are too little to really realize their at legal risk they may take the book. Right? They may decide to publish it, and give the author what's called a boilerplate contract, there's actually a midsize business publisher that does this, now, and causes a lot of problems for agents later who try to pick up the pieces, but they'll go unnamed. But most little houses if they pick up a book, they're going to offer the worst possible terms to the author, because the author doesn't know any better, and the author is going to sign their rights away, and leave a lot of money on the table, but also leave important deal points exposed, and cause a lot of problems for them.

If you could get a deal with a little Podunk publisher in the long run you'll find out to your unhappiness that you've made an impetuous decision, and I'm not saying everybody has to find a publisher, or everybody should self publish, or you should never work with a small publisher, because there are different circumstances for all of those, Stephen, but the truth is that authors really need to be clear on what their ultimately outcome is if they want to create the kind of success that will carry them forward two or five years in the future. Every book is a two to five year focus investment.

Stephen Woessne: Okay. Let's think about that. The ultimately outcome, and is that really, so if you were sort of counseling, if you will, Onward Nation business owners would that be the first step that you would suggest? Like, getting really clear on the outcome?

Wendy Keller: The very first question I ask an author who comes to me, most of my clients fortunately at this point come by referral, but if someone comes through the website, or some other method, the first question I'd ask is what do you want this book to do for you? People will go, “Well, might want to read this,” and I'm not interested in that, I'm interested in what you personally want out of this. Do you want to become a paid speaker? That's my specialty. Do you want to become a consultant? Do you want to sell more widgets? Whatever your thing is, that's where you start and then you build the book, the content of the book, the strategy to promote the book. You build the platform leading up to the book sale. All of that is built into that particular answer.

Stephen Woessne: Got it. Okay. You mentioned platform, now, a couple of different times-

Wendy Keller: It is my holy grail.

Stephen Woessne: Yes, it is, and you have written a book on it.

Wendy Keller: I have, indeed.

Stephen Woessne: Let's maybe slice that apart, and I know that, that could take an entire-

Wendy Keller: Yeah.

Stephen Woessne: Interview in and of itself, but what are-

Wendy Keller: That's why I wrote the book, so I don't have to say it.

Stephen Woessne: What are a couple of the highlights for business owners? When you're thinking platform, first define it for Onward Nation business owners, and then maybe just a couple of the highlights.

Wendy Keller: Sure. First of all, all this stuff is in the book, The Ultimate Guide to Platform Building, which I wrote for Entrepreneur Press, but the short answer is a platform is a fan club, basically, or a base of enthusiastic, and engaged individuals who are growing in number, who believe in you, and your subjects. For instance, you could tell me that you're the world greatest expert on online marketing, but if you're numbers aren't there, if you don't have a large Facebook, or Twitter, or Instagram, or something following you're going to look like you may not be exactly what you're claiming to be. Right?

But, if you came to me and you said, “Look, I've got this website, and I've got all these people,” or “I'm an attorney and I want to turn into being a speaker for people, going out and doing paid business speaking,” well that's great now I'm going to look at your platform and say, “Okay, well are you an expert in the country on your subject?” Let's say it's on how to avoid lawsuits in business, okay, “Are you an expert?” Okay, “No.” “Are you an expert in your state? Are you an expert in your city? Are there people who come to you? What kind of following do you have? How many people do you have?”

And heres why, when a publisher gets that proposal, Stephen, as you so well know from the process we went through with Profitable Podcasting, what the editorial team does is they basically rip apart your proposal, and the marketing team looks at your marketing plan, and the acquiring editor looks at your content, and other factors, and then they make a decision based on how successful your platform is, they literally do the math, and say, “Will this book make money for our publishing house?” For instance, we know if you're a marginal speaker, you will sell 30% of the audience on any book that you're pitching at the event, so if you're speaking, you sell 30%, you speak to a 1,000 people, okay, you're going to sell 330 books at that event, give or take.

If you're a fantastic speaker then that number may get up as high as 70%, but they're going to figure on 30% because they don't even know if you're a good speaker or not. Okay, so 30%, so how many, if you're going to sell 333 at that event, how many events did you do last year? They're literally going to do that calculation to figure out if your viable economically, and also if you are likely to make them more money in the future. Are your numbers growing?

Which also means your social media. Okay. You've got 500 Facebook friends now, will you have 750 by the time we get to the contract, and 5,000 by the time you get to the release date of your book. What elements? And it's kind of unique for each person based on their skills, and their talent, but we're looking for those so that the publisher can make a numerical calculation to determine your economic viability for the house based on known predictors, and then make a decision. Are you a $100,000.00 book advance? Are you a $10,000.00 book advance or are you a pass? That's kind of how it goes.

Stephen Woessne: That puts in such great perspective of economic viability, and in tying that back into, I love how you described that as your fan club, and just to put it also into the right context for Onward Nation business owners because there's a lot of responsibility on the author himself, or herself to do a lot of the promotion. Right? It's up to them to move books in many cases. Right?

Wendy Keller: Yes and no. If the author is with a major house, so Harper Collins, Penguin Random House, whatever, if they're with a major house and the authors books start to move right away like within the first 90 days, if the author can do the things that will work, the platform work that will require those books to start selling right out of the gate, the publisher will slowly allocate more and more assets to that author. Some authors come in, and if you were Mrs. Clinton, and you come in, obviously, they know you're going to sell millions of copies, or hundreds of thousands of copies, so you've already got the platform. If you come in far below that, like most people do, like most business people do, what can you show, and what can they do, but they're going to put their money on, let's say that put out 30 books in that season, most publishers publish two or four times a year.

Let's say in that season they've got 30 other books, well, if three of them start to take off, and the authors are really doing things right, and they're putting things together, and your platform is growing, and they're selling books, and everybody is getting excited, and then they find out they're going to be on a national TV show, or they're going to be on an important podcast like Onward Nation, wahoo, then all of a sudden the publisher starts to allocate resources, they say, “Oh, well you got on that podcast, let us help you. Let us do this. Show us that you're really going to do something, and then we will supersize what you're capable of.” It didn't use to be that way. There's a rumor that publishers do nothing, and that they just sit around, so you might as well self publish, there's 10,000 reasons why that is wrong, especially since 2006 when the industry got slapped pretty hard by the onset of Amazon.

Stephen Woessne: Okay. Let's talk about that, because I've heard that rumor, misconception that myth as well, so let's break that down as well, and I don't know maybe we can do it as simply as saying the advantages and disadvantages of either, I think that's kind of deeper, maybe we'll get there a little bit earlier, or later, is what I meant to say. But tell us a little bit more about the myth, or the misconception.

Wendy Keller: I've heard that the excuse for self publishing, which in my opinion is kind of lazy to self publish without even taking a shot at traditional publishing, and I'm not saying that because I'm an agent, and there are people who should only self publish. I'll be happy to address that, but the point is if you don't even take a shot, then chances are that you don't have a platform or you don't know how to build a platform, or you're lazy, and you don't want to build a platform, which means when your book is self published and it becomes one of the 787,000 books that were self published last year-

Stephen Woessne: Wow.

Wendy Keller: I know, right? You have this incredible opportunity to sell the average number, which is a 117 books. That's the average number of books that a self published book sells. Now, if you have done all the platform building, you may as well approach an agent, who will look at your platform, know how publishers are going to calculate this, shop your proposal for free. A book proposal is just a document that's like the business plan for your book, you give that to an agent, if you've got a little platform growing, if you've got a midsize, a large platform let an agent go out and shop it for you, because we don't charge anything, we're pure, pure commissioned sales people, so we got some publishers while we're doing that, you're going to write the book anyway, finish writing the book while we're out there selling it.

Most good agents, like me, and my company we sell it in six, maybe 12 weeks, somewhere in that window, you'll know in three months if you've got a deal, because you've got a platform. Now, if your platform has been growing in those three months, you're going to be even more exciting to a publisher, and I will certainly use that to get the money the publisher pays you up even higher, so that they can get more enthusiastic about supporting you when the book comes out. People have this theory, well, I'll just self publish, well without a platform the book won't sell, which means it won't sell if you self publish, it won't sell if you e-publish, it won't sell if you put it in leather bound with gold foil stamping, it's not going to sell unless you have a platform.

You got to build a platform, first, and if you go, "Well, if I have to do all the work, then what's the advantage of a publisher?" I have a long answer to that, because it's such an important decision. Understanding the ramifications of those two choices, and again, there's nothing wrong with self publishing if you do it right. Understand the ramifications will affect not just this book, but all your future books for at least 10 years. That's a pretty serious consideration.

Stephen Woessne: Okay. Tell us a little more about that, because I didn't know that either as far reaching 10 years, so tell us a little bit more why you're mentioning that timeframe, and that horizon?

Wendy Keller: Okay. Like I said, a book is a two to five year focus investment. Right?

Stephen Woessne: Yeah.

Wendy Keller: Which might mean you're spending a year building your platform to the point where you would be attractive to a publisher, and/or you have a large enough audience that if you do self publish your book will sell well. Let's say your book is on something obscure like how to build your own septic tank. Okay. The publisher is not likely to rush out to buy that, I mean, they're actually, now, that I'm saying that there are probably two or three publishers I can think of who might buy that book, and actually do something good for you, but let's just assume there's not a huge audience of people who are looking for that book, so self publishing is a great option, because you can own that niche.

You could be the world's greatest expert on septic tank building, and you have such a deep, but small platform that you will be able to sell it successfully, you'll do fine, as long as you make sure that everybody knows about it. The benefit of that, and the benefit of all self publishing is that you get to press whenever the heck you want to get to press, right away. You can have a book in two weeks if you can write it that fast. You also have complete editorial control, whatever you want to put in that book you can put in there. You can decide whether you're going to market it, if you're going to market, how you're going to market. You also have control of distribution. Okay, of course you're going to put it on Amazon. Do you know how many books are on Amazon? In access of 16 million.

Stephen Woessne: Wow.

Wendy Keller: How are you going to differentiate yourself? Right? You also get to put a picture of yourself on the cover, presumably holding the shovel with which you dig these septic tanks. Right? You can do everything. You've got complete control. That's fantastic. Wahoo. You have no need for expertise, or help. That's also the downside, no expertise, or help, which means your book is probably not going to be written the best, because I've got 31 published books under nine names myself, and I need an editor for every single one of them, sometimes two editors, and even though you go to the self publishing company that says, "We'll get you a nice cover," you're paying them, they're going to do whatever you tell them at the end of the day.

You want it to be red, and green with Christmas leaves on it? Okay. They're going to give you that with the Easter bunny holding the shovel instead of you. Whatever you want, because you're paying for it. Right? There's all kinds of things that are the downside, and you don't have the ability to necessarily sell it, and you won't get media. Media happens when you have a professionally published book, because most of the time, that means that the journalists know that the book has been through the vetting process that happens with traditional publishing. Already you're starting off a little behind the game if you self publish, you're not going to get traditional media, you might get media from people in the plumbing industry, but how much is that? And what do you need?

Now, on the other hand if you're trying to do this, and you put out this book on septic tanks, and you do it right, and you build a platform, and you spend those two to five years really focused on that book, so that it sells in access of 2500 copies in any one calendar year. Right? That means that you're actually doing something right, 2500 copies in 12 months is a big deal for a self published book, even though everyone goes, "Oh, that's so easy for me, I'll do that in the first day," it's a little harder, don't you know, Stephen, it's a little, I mean you had a professionally published book by a top business publisher, how easy is it to sell 2500 copies?

Stephen Woessne: It is a challenge, absolutely.

Wendy Keller: If you don't, and here's the part, if you're going to listen to nothing else in this podcast, here's the piece to remember, if you self publish because you didn't bother to build the platform, and therefore you couldn't get an agent, so you had to self publish, or you're in a super niche like Mr. Septic Tank Guy, or Girl, so you have to figure that if that book sells fewer than 2500 copies, or in fact sells the average, and I'm sure you're better than average, but let's say it's going to sell a 117 to 250 copies, which are the two numbers in the industry, that means that you don't know what you're doing, and that means to a publisher and an agent this person has no concept no matter what they say, no matter what they promise on how to sell a book.

If you haven't been able to sell your own book when you were making all the profit, who the heck is ever going to believe that when you give your book to somebody else Random House, or whatever, that you're suddenly going to work real hard, and you've learned all these things, and now you're going to sell it, and it's going to sell lots, no, they're going to say, "This person when they made 10 bucks or more per unit, because they self published, sold 250 copies, they're a loser. We would rather have a virgin book from someone who has a good marketing plan than someone who has proven that they can't market themselves out of a paper bag."

And that will stay with you for a minimum of 10 years, because the ISBN number that little bar code on every book that gets published on Amazon, that bar code lets the publishers type it in, and we can immediately see how many units you've sold, so there's no dishonesty, there's no fudging the numbers, we know exactly how many you sold through the bookstores, which is the only numbers the publishers count, and then they're going to say, “Wow, you don't know what you're doing, I'm sorry.”

However, this is only trumped by one thing, if you get a film deal, or you get a television show that you're the host of those two things will overcome what I just said, everybody else, tough luck you're stuck for 10 years with this giant lead weight stuck to your ankle, this ball and chain that you can't get past, because your book is lousy, so now if it sold poorly, it may not be lousy, but it sold poorly. It's so critical, because people come to me every day and go, "I self published, and it's not my fault," insert long story here, "Why my book didn't sell very many copies, but the publisher, and then I, and then my mom, and then I didn't, and then yesterday," and they tell me these whole things, and I'm like, "But I can look at your Amazon number, and guess how many units you've sold, because I'm in the industry. You haven't sold enough for me to be willing to take a shot on you, because no publisher is going to take a shot on you." Then the people feel sad, and they didn't know that they ruined their own future by making an impetuous decision. Here's the strategy for success, it's very simple-

Stephen Woessne: Okay.

Wendy Keller: Build your platform. Write a book proposal. As soon as you've got that book proposal done, which is going to help you lay out the book anyway, find an agent, because if you have a platform, and a proposal sometimes even before you have the proposal if you have a big enough platform, but find an agent, get the agent to market that to the real big publishers, so that you get money in, instead of money going out, so then you get marketing, and professional expertise, editorial out, in instead of you trying to find all these parts in an industry you don't know anything about.

Now, while the agents shopping it, you just sit down and type your little fingers to the bone, you go ahead and write that whole book, whatever you need to do, while the agents selling it, and then when the agent comes back and goes, "Look, I got 25,000 bucks right here, it's going to cost you 25,000 bucks, or 10,000, or 300, or whatever it is to self publish, here's what's likely to happen in your career. Here's the outcome you're likely to get." Because if you go with a major publisher, or even a reputable publisher, you're more likely to get media, and if you get media, you're more likely to get paid speaking, and consulting, and ow five million people know about you, because you reported today in The Wall Street Journal. That doesn't usually happen, like one out of a billion happens for a self published author.

Now, you have this huge golden path, and now you're at choice about what the right strategy is for you. I have authors who tell me, "Well, Wendy, I get it, but you're handing me a $50,000.00 offer right here, but you know what, I want to self publish, because I need the book next week, or next month, because I've got this huge event," and then we have to strategize how to give an audience something that isn't going to infringe the rights to the book, and still make the deal. There are so many ways to skin this cat if you do it right, and you're not out any money.

If you build the platform first, because you have to do that anyway, and now you can find an agent, and get a deal, and then be a choice about how you want it, and then you can predict your future. Two years from now the book comes out, maybe 18 months from today, and giving time to sell, and time to write, and time to promote, and time to publicize, get the publishers help, get the media, all this other stuff, now you're ready for another book, now, you're building something instead of trying to overcome a negative problem that you created yourself by underselling a self published book. Does that make sense, Stephen, or is that just too much?

Stephen Woessne: No. It does make sense. But I feel like that was a tsunami of knowledge, which is-

Wendy Keller: Oh, I'm sorry.

Stephen Woessne: Phenomenal. No. It's very, very good.

Wendy Keller: I love this stuff, sorry.

Stephen Woessne: I know you do, which is why I was so excited for us to have this conversation.

Wendy Keller: Oh, thanks.

Stephen Woessne: Then, lets kind of regroup on that, because I do want to talk a little bit more on platform building in just one second, but if an Onward Nation business owner is thinking, okay, there's some real great advantages, and disadvantages to both, whether that's self publish or whether that is-

Wendy Keller: Yes.

Stephen Woessne: Publishing in a more traditional sense, we can say that. How should a business owner ultimately make that decision, like which path is the right one for them?

Wendy Keller: Okay. Step one, assuming all things being equal, everybody has a platform or is building a platform.

Stephen Woessne: Okay.

Wendy Keller: The decision is this, do you want to become famous-er, for the lack of a better word-

Stephen Woessne: That's awesome.

Wendy Keller: If you want to become more famous in your industry for any number of reasons, or-

Stephen Woessne: Okay.

Wendy Keller: In the world for any number of reasons, by becoming a consultant, become a speaker, you know, own the industry, something like that, in most cases that means that you should go with the traditional publisher, if that's possible. Again, that's going to be dependent not just on your idea, but on your platform. If you are in a tiny little niche that only has let's say fewer than 300,000 people like the septic tank guy, maybe has 300,000 people then you should self publish and skip the entire process, because you're not going to get media, I mean probably you're not going to be on The Today Show for your book on septic tanks. You're just not. You know?

You're probably not going to get quoted in the Wall Street Journal, but if those things aren't important to you then self publish. Also, all the people out there who want to write a memoir, please, please self publish, don't go after an agent, because there's almost no chance that you have a platform, and you will be burning rubber trying to get this to happen for years, and it's a heart rending process to face that much rejection. Go ahead and self publish, market your little heart out, and then when it gets picked up, if it gets picked up, because it's selling well, somebody will swoop down and take it away from you, that doesn't work with very many categories, but in memoirs that tends to work.

Stephen Woessne: Let me give that piece back to you, and make sure that I'm on the same page, so if somebody was going down the path of self publishing-

Wendy Keller: Yes.

Stephen Woessne: And then they actually started selling it well, are you saying that sometimes a publisher that will come up as blip on their radar, and they'll say, "Oh, wait a minute it's currently self published, but I think we want to take that into our house here, because we might be able to help that author promote a bigger wider, whatever?"

Wendy Keller: Yes. If you can figure out a way to sell 10,000 copies through Amazon and bookstores-

Stephen Woessne: Okay.

Wendy Keller: In the first six months, 10,000 copies, remember the average 117 to 250-

Stephen Woessne: Right.

Wendy Keller: If you can sell 10,000 copies in the first six months, you will definitely get people knocking on your door inviting you into Random House, or Penguin Random House, to be accurate, or Simon and Schuster, or whatever, you'll definitely get that. However, every single author I've ever spoken to in my entire, almost 30 years in the industry tells me that they're going to be a New York Times bestseller, guaranteed, and I don't even have to think about it twice, and they tell me their idea, my pigeon, which I keep in a cage in my office is telling me the secrets of the universe, or I've written a sales book on how sales is like golf. Where do I sign up?

I don't mean to be mean, but the chances statistically of selling even 5,000 copies in year that you've already far exceeded, Stephen, with your wonderful book, Profitable Podcasting, it takes a lot of work, and it takes a lot of prep, and it takes a lot of focus, and it takes a lot of energy, and it's not real likely, frankly, even with your wonderful book that you're going to sell a 100,000 by the end of this first year out.

Stephen Woessne: Right.

Wendy Keller: Sorry.

Stephen Woessne: No. In all transparency, Onward Nation, or full transparency I should say, I mean Wendy and I actually had the conversation that she just mentioned to you, her and I actually had this conversation, because I was filled with delusions of grandeur thinking, oh, New York Time, you know, all that kind of stuff, and she's like, "No. That's not how this works," and I'm like, "Well, what do you mean?" And so yeah it was a blow to my ego, and then she said, "No, wait a minute," but as a good mentor does, right, as a good mentor does you put your arm around me and said, "No, let me share with you how this works," and then when you shared that with me, I though, oh, okay, now I know how to develop a realistic strategy as opposed to being disappointed when it doesn't hit NYT, because it's not that kind of book.

Wendy Keller: Unrealistic. Yeah. Not only is it not that kind of book, that's true for most people, and most people just don't want to hear that, they go, "Well, what about Chicken Soup for the Soul, or Eat, Pray, Love, or Good to Great," and I'm like, "You know what, there are so many factors that you don't know, that I know, because I'm an agent, and I don't even know all of them, but I can list a 100 reasons why those books succeeded, and most of the other books in that category didn't." This is the shocking thing, right, let's think about the 787,000 copies-

Stephen Woessne: Man, that's a staggering number.

Wendy Keller: [crosstalk 00:29:16] how are you going to differentiate the New York Times list, how many books are on there in more than one week, and then divide that, and you will see that out of the 787,000 books .01% get anywhere near any of the important best seller lists, USA Today, and New York Times. You did Amazon, that's fantastic. Right? And there's a lot more Amazon bestsellers than there are anything else, because they're in categories. Right? It doesn't work that same way for other books, and it doesn't always translate exactly the sales. I think in your case it did, but it doesn't always.

A lot of your success, Stephen, has come from the Onward Nation audience, and the fact that you're out there, and you're training, and you're teaching, and you're giving, and you're on other podcasts, and all this other stuff. You are a very active self promoter, and that's what's making your book sell so phenomenally well. Other people don't have your level of connections, and they really caveat emptor. Before you write that check to that self publishing company, or before you rush out and beat your head against the wall trying to find an agent, who won't touch you, build a platform, if you have at least a little platform, it's proof that somethings happening, the people are interested in you. That's such the secret ingredient.

It's kind of like business. Right? If you said, "There are two ways to start a business," right, "One is the intelligent way, where you go, wow, is there a market for my product or service, and how will I USP, J Abraham differentiate myself," and then there's the also, "Hey, if you build it they will come," no, they don't, because they can't find you out of 787,000, or 900 dry cleaners within a six mile drive. I mean, what are you going to do to differentiate yourself? What's your USP, you've got to have it. You've got to know it. You got to be conveying it, every which way to Sunday, so that your audience really has a chance to find you, and appreciate your message, and acquire your message, and also in the process of platform building as you have certainly learned.

I've watched you grow whether, or not you observe this or not, I don't mean that in a condescending way, of course, I respect you enormously, but the first podcast you did was good. When I was on podcast number 116, yay, that was really fun, and you were fantastic, and your sincerity, and your humility, and your interest in subjects really comes out, but when I was on 258 you were way better, and now you're even better than that, and you keep improving. I want to urge everyone in this audience to realize that, that's how it's kind of got to be with your platform, and also with your content. There are so many competitors you really have to be able to differentiate yourself, attract an audience, and then write a book that reflects the highest, and best information that you have, or that is attainable in the world on your subject. That's really what you need to focus on.

Stephen Woessne: That's incredible advice, and that's one of the things that I have personally really enjoyed about our time to work together, or the time that we've had to work together, and also our friendship that we've developed along the way, as well, because just like a great mentor you provide candid feedback, no, I think you should consider this, or consider that, and that has been extremely helpful to me, and my team, and this is just a fantastic conversation.

I know that our time is quickly coming to an end, I just cannot believe that it has its just flown by, but before we go I want to make sure that I ask you a little bit more about platform, here, because let's say that you want a book to bring in speaking fees, or maybe more revenue into the core business, or maybe it's some other form of biz dev, so can you give us a little bit more highlights as to the kind of platform that, that person needs, or maybe the size of that platform, because again, trying to publish, so let's say that somebody's a speaker, again, using it for biz dev, are there a couple of other nuggets that you might give Onward Nation business owners, if they did nothing else to at least do these few things.

Wendy Keller: Okay. I can make this really easy.

Stephen Woessne: Okay.

Wendy Keller: If you would all please grab a pen, if you're interested in the answer to this question, the answer to what it takes to get me as an agent at kellermedia.com/submission-guidelines also on that page is what it takes to get one of my more junior agents to represent you, that's a description line by line of the kind of platform markers that we're looking for. People say, “Well, you're so snobby,” well the truth is the reason those are the platform markers is because that's what a publisher expects. A publisher sees that you're doing 20 paid speeches in 12 months, in a corporate audience, and you're writing a book related to the topic of your speech, their interested, now, if we also have a social media following of some sort, and/or you're also appearing on important podcasts, like Onward Nation, or other high level podcasts, then now you got some pieces and they can work with you, and they can build you.

Likewise, you know it kind of depends on the individual what you really want from your, what kind of platform is natural for you. I actually have a quiz in the platform book, as you know, Stephen, that talks about where your natural aptitude is as a platform builder, so get The Ultimate Guide to Platform Building, take the quiz, and then whatever, and then do it. But the point is you can't do everything, but if you start and you build a platform consistently, and with focus, and it starts to work, now, you know you're doing the right thing, and once that starts to happen, it's just adding more coal to it to grow a bigger, fire. I think that's the answer to everybody listening is that if you can't get people engaged with your material, and you're trying to build the platform, and then you need to shift it, and find someone who is doing it, and replicate them, and test it, and look for the analysis, just like you would, and if you're looking to build yourself as a speaker.

I consult bazillions of people it feels like on how to use their idea to become a professional speaker. $7500 and above is pretty much my sweet spot, and use a book in that process, whatever. I just had that call right before this podcast. But the point is, if you're doing that, then you really need to identify how your material is going to be new, different, better, or more than the other speakers out there on the topic, and if you tell me, "No one else is writing a book like this. No one else is going to speak on this topic." I can show you in 30 seconds how wrong you are, because you're not looking at Amazon, you're not looking at Google, there's lots of people out there on every topic. How do we differentiate you?

Two things, platform and content. You merge those together, and you've got something that everybody wants a piece of, whether it's to pay you $10,000.00 to come speak for 45 minutes, or to give you a $25,000.00 book advance, or whatever it is. That's the trick right there. You really got to do it in a logical way. I mean, it's wonderful, and it's art, and blah, blah, blah, yawn, the truth about publishing is that this is a business, and publishers are in business to make money, and since I'm working on straight commission, why would I represent someone who doesn't have the things that I know I'm going to be able to sell to one of my buyers?

That's the whole secret of the publishing industry, and if you're worried about that, and you're worried about how to become a speaker, and you think you're going to just rush off and self publish, you're going to be putting yourself back by years in this process, because I promise you if you go with a real publisher, and you get two to three media, which are hard to get, if you're self published, you get two or three media, because of that book, and your book is by a legitimate publisher that somebody has heard of, now, you present that to a meeting planner, the person who hires a speaker, and they go, "Wow. We would certainly take this person off of some bozo who paid 500 bucks to be a self published author, who maybe doesn't know anything, because there's obviously all these people who believe in someone who goes through the front door instead of tries to scuttle around that."

Stephen Woessne: I'm so grateful for your time.

Wendy Keller: Thank you for having me.

Stephen Woessne: Well, my gosh, in what I loved about this entire conversation is not only did you break it down into practical tactical steps that Onward Nation business owners can take and apply into their process in order to execute this, but then also you gave them decision making criteria, but then you also gave them the candid behind the green curtain [crosstalk 00:37:25]-

Wendy Keller: I love that, green curtain.

Stephen Woessne: You did, and you said, these are the conversations that I'm having with publishers, and you need to know what their expectation is, it's not be trying to be rude, and saying, "Hey, I don't want to take you as a client," it's my expectations are the same as their expectations, so you have to meet those otherwise you should invest your time somewhere else. Right?

Wendy Keller: Yes. Frankly, here's the crazy thing, I got the most beautiful email, I'll make this short, from somebody the other day who took a course with me, we do online, and live speaker training, and he took a live course, and he said to me, “Wendy, it took me a while to get over being angry at you for the things you said about me, and now that I've done it, and I've differentiated my content I'm booking solid. I keep booking, I've been booking for two years now, and I believe everything you said, and I am so grateful for having met you.” That's a rough paraphrase of a very long email, but that's the thing, I mean, I'm not making any money until you make money, because it's a commissioned business.

That what I really want people to know that all agents are just like me, we're all looking to help you, because when we can then we can make a profit. We want to help you. We want to grow you. And you know from our own experience I will go above and beyond for an author whose willing to learn these things, and apply these things, that's what makes all the difference in the world, so that as a team, you, me, and the publisher can create maximum success for you.

Stephen Woessne: Amen. Yeah. You definitely do, do that. Before we go, and say goodbye, could you give us those URLs one more time?

Wendy Keller: Sure. Kellermedia.com is our website. Kellermedia.com/submission-guidelines is where to go to see what publishers, and therefore this agency, and most agents are looking for, and there's all kinds of free resources, and stuff on our site, and also if you are interested in becoming a speaker, or anything like that, you can go to kellermedia.com/webinars and come to one of our free webinars, and kind of get the lay of the land in detail, and if you want to talk to me personally, I know this is a lot, kellermedia.com/rent, and I will spend an hour focused on nothing but solving whatever issues are in front of you as an author, or as a speaker, that's my expertise.

Stephen Woessne: Okay, Onward Nation, no matter how many notes you took, or how often you go back, and re listen to Wendy's words of wisdom, and I sure hope that you do, the key is you have to take what she shared with you, and take action, apply it into your business, into your process, and accelerate your results. Wendy, we all have the same 86,400 seconds in a day, and I am grateful that you would take time out of your compressed schedule for a third time to come back, and share your wisdom with Onward Nation. Thank you so much, my friend. I greatly appreciate it.

Wendy Keller: Oh, thank you so much, Stephen, and good wishes to all of you however you chose to publish, I wish you lots and lots of book sales.

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