

073 How to Get a Six-Figure Book Deal with Sara Kendrick of HarperCollins Publishing



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With Your Host

Rachel Rodgers

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Sara Kendrick: Your agent is everything. So you have to have an agent who hasn't pissed off half the world. If you feel like your agent is crazy they probably are. You should probably find another agent.

Welcome to the *Hello Seven Podcast*. I'm your host, Rachel Rodgers, wife, mother of four children, a lover of Beyoncé, coffee drinker, and afro-wearer, and I just happen to be the CEO of a seven-figure business. I am on a mission to help every woman I meet become a millionaire. If you want to make more money, you are in the right place. Let's get it going.

So everyone this is Sara Kendrick. Sara is the Senior Acquisitions Editor at HarperCollins Leadership which according to my agent is the Harvard of publishers at the moment. They are the ones that published the blockbuster hit *Girl, Wash Your Face* and her follow-up as well which I cannot remember at the moment.

Sara Kendrick: *Girl, Stop Apologizing*.

Rachel Rodgers: *Girl, Stop Apologizing*, thank you, so, all of you all now you know who HarperCollins Leadership is. And so Sara acquires values driven business leadership and professional development books that inspire readers to challenge themselves and take their lives to the next level, which is exactly what all of us do in our various lines of work. So that's really exciting. She works with authors who are experts in their field and helps them shape their message to the literary marketplace which is different than the way we go direct to a consumer and sell to them.

It's different when you're trying to reach a larger group of people and going through a publisher and then also Barnes & Noble and getting access to the distribution that publishers provide. HarperCollins Leadership strives to take content further by creating digital assets as well. That was one of the things that I was so excited about in my contract is that there's also a

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course that's part of it. So there will be like an online course that is also connected to my book which is really exciting.

So before joining HarperCollins, Sara worked in unscripted television story development which is super hilarious. That makes me think of Larry David and shows like that, like Curb Your Enthusiasm where it's unscripted. I want to hear so much more about that. So you are based in Nashville, Tennessee at the moment, right?

Sara Kendrick: Yes, exactly.

Rachel Rodgers: Awesome, okay. So we've got lots of questions for you. And just so you guys have context because I know some of you don't know anything about the book publishing world. So Sara is the person who bought my book. She was the one that gave me a book deal and said, "Yes, we should buy that." So she chose my story and she's also the person who I owe my manuscript to in just a few weeks and who will help me edit and just get it ready for the marketplace.

So we have a couple of questions for you Sara. I collected some questions from my community. And just so you have context, so everyone here is mostly women entrepreneurs. And they each have their own areas of expertise from things like AstroBRANDING, to Shameless Moms and helping professionals in various different industries. So they're all experts that really help people to shift their life and kind of next level in some way or another.

Several of them, some of them have a book proposal already. Some of them have been thinking about writing a book and they're wondering when is the right time, and so anyways just so you have context for who's here. And most of them have been in business for a while. We do have some new entrepreneurs with us as well. Okay, so here's my first question for

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you. What kind of books are you looking for right now? What would you love to see come across your desk?

Sara Kendrick: Bestsellers. So the biggest thing for us is how are you unique, yes, yet exactly the same? So it's one of those fine lines between you want to be unique enough where your message is going to stand out in the marketplace. But you also want to be close enough to something that when people see your cover they're going to say, "Well, I know what genre that's from." And I understand this is like the blah, blah, blah of the world. So we look in every different vertical. We've got sales books, marketing books, of course [inaudible] right now.

But we have about 12 different verticals, leadership. And when I got to this company I looked at the list and I said, "There are a whole lot of old white men on this list." And that is something in publishing. Publishing is very antiquated, extremely antiquated. And so we, you know, I said, "Well, I'm in Nashville, I don't have to play that game. I want to put more voices here, voices that aren't being represented in the marketplace." So that has been a big initiative of mine. And we've done very well.

We have signed some great, great authors like I just spoke yesterday to Raja Rajamannar who is the CMO of MasterCard. He is a huge, you know, we talk to him and you're like, "You're a smart cookie." And I don't understand what you're saying at all but let's hope it's understandable. But yeah, so we have a long list of people that I've brought on. And we're going to start seeing those books in a few months, at least start to hit the shelves.

I think that the world, you know, working in TV was very much a whole bunch of white men from Connecticut in particular. For some reason everyone I met who was in charge was from Connecticut, deciding what Middle America wanted to watch. And it didn't go so well. Publishing is kind of similar in a lot of ways where now I'm in Nashville and I can look around

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town and I can say, “None of these people want to read that book. We are not going to sign that book.” So that’s kind of a roundabout way of saying we’re looking for anything.

We do like diverse voices, definitely business related. The thing about personal development or professional development right now is we have gotten so many Rachel Hollis pictures. We love Rachel. She’s done amazing at what she does but she did it and so how are you different? How is your message different? How is your audience slightly different? How are we going to reach more people?

And so for us it’s all about its value, is make sure that what you say has value to it, that somebody is going to really learn something from your book and their life is going to be changed, specifically their professional life. So yeah, that’s a long roundabout way of saying what I’m looking for.

Rachel Rodgers: Yeah. No, I think you’ve said a lot. And I almost feel like – at least I definitely feel this way with my book. It’s like a mini revolution. And that’s kind of what I think should be happening and that’s probably, you know, that’s kind of what Rachel Hollis was trying to do too. But I agree, you don’t want to mimic anybody else because you can’t do it as well as them anyway. And you’ve got to just bring your unique message and your unique voice to it as well. And I do want to talk to you about that.

What are your thoughts on voice? Because I think people think there’s a way of writing good. And it’s like good writing and bad writing. And for sure because it’s about communication, you do have to get your message across. But I also think, like I think about shows like Insecure on HBO and other shows that are coming out now that are different where there’s a really specific audience for that. But it’s expanding beyond the audience that knows that lingo. You know what I mean?

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So I'm just curious to hear what your thoughts are on voice because I think sometimes, especially the women here are scared to stand out with their message or scared to sort of write like they talk a little bit. And I'm curious what your thoughts are on that.

Sara Kendrick: So voice is everything. We do not like boring books as readers and unfortunately there are very many boring books. Voice is everything, that is who you're speaking to, who you speak to on a daily basis. They want to hear from you and who you are. For our world because we're doing non-fiction, our authors are who they are. They are bringing their followings. You have your following. They know what your voice is so why would you change that?

Where we get really tripped up with voice is that for some reason this new unique, I can write how I speak is great and everything, but for some reason all of a sudden when they start writing the book, they have the most foul mouths known to man. So I don't know what happens because I speak to these people, they do not speak like that in public. And so it's kind of like HBO just because we can have sex and curse doesn't mean we should.

And that's probably the biggest thing is sometimes when you're writing you feel like you need to fit a certain box, and you don't. Because everyone who is going to read your book already knows who you are, they're coming to you because they want to hear your message that you've put in your book and so put it in your voice. Now, if you were writing an academic book, which we avoid completely because they do not do very well in the marketplace. You wouldn't want to speak in your voice.

So that's the difference between what we are doing and what the academic world is doing. And more – I don't want to say more professional but more the law books and the books that are really reaching the old white men

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essentially. They would have that stiff voice. We don't want to see that. But we also don't want to see eff you on every page.

Rachel Rodgers: I mean literally, no one talks quite like that, I agree. I've had copywriters that I've hired to write for me. And I mean I do curse, on the occasion I do curse. And people know that and they expect it from me. But I would have copywriters write for me and every other word would be, I'm like I don't actually curse that much. I do have things to say, there's other words that you could use.

Sara Kendrick: Yeah. And it gets lost in the message and that's something. And I'm really only saying that because it's something that's come up quite a bit recently. But that's not who you are. Your message is so much more than that. I mean the reason we sign your book is because of the fact that you are speaking to women, you are empowering women. And that is a very popular theme. But unlike Lean In, unlike Girlboss you're not teaching them how to fit into the white man's world.

You are teaching them that they should want more. And that is a message that we shy away from, that is a message that, you know, any time you mention money, people get very uncomfortable even if it's like, "I give my child 75 cents to make their bed." That somehow makes people uncomfortable any time you bring a monetary value to it. And your book is going to be so much more powerful because you're saying that this isn't taboo. Women should want these things. Women should want more for themselves.

And I think that is a huge, it's a powerful message because I do get the Rachel Hollis' every day who are saying, "Be better, be more confident", but not necessarily how and not necessarily what that confidence looks like. And so that's why your message is going to be so much more powerful.

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Rachel Rodgers: Thank you. You're selling me on my own book.

Sara Kendrick: I spend a lot of time selling your book, internally.

Rachel Rodgers: Exactly. Okay so let's talk a little bit about platform because I think that's something that everyone always is asking. I'm sure you get this question literally probably every day. How much does the author's existing platform influence your decision to take on a book? And what size, if there is a size would HarperCollins Leadership consider big? That's the question.

Sara Kendrick: Yeah. So this one, platform is everything. Platform does not look like it did five years ago. It used to be that your platform was because you could get on new shows. Now we don't really care. That's great and everything, but you getting on Good Morning America, actually we have watched the needle. We can see on Amazon when people order books. And we will watch during a Good Morning America special and it does not affect the needle at all. And that used to not be the case.

But now I can find out what I want to read from the internet so much better. So for you, in general for the authors we want we want you to have a platform that is significant for what you're writing. If you are writing a women's empowerment book your platform should be larger and have more interaction. If you were writing a sales book your platform should be big. If you are writing a book that speaks to a niche audience, you don't necessarily need a massive platform but you're also not going to get six figures for that.

So that's just you have to look at your book, figure out where it fits and then find a platform that is appropriate to that. Now, we know when you've bought followers. So we get that quite a bit, we're like, "Yeah, you're on one social media area, and they all come from one zip code." So we can count

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that. So that's one thing that we've had a lot of – that's occurring quite a bit. So if you have a platform we want to know that you're interacting with these people every day, these people have a personal connection to you. People are going to buy your book because they like you.

And people like you and so they're going to interact with you on social media, so those two correlate very, very closely.

Rachel Rodgers: Yeah, I agree. And it's true. I mean I do think I'm buying books that I've seen recommended on a blog, that my friends are talking about. And it's really like they're posting things on social media about the book and I'm like I'm going to go get that. Like Untamed which I've seen everywhere all over the internet. And maybe she was on Good Morning America but it wouldn't have mattered because I don't watch that. So that's such a good point.

Okay let's talk about story. We're talking about the big parts of what makes you want to buy a book. So I think like we said, voice is huge, platform matters a ton. Let's talk about story a little bit. I think women tend to undervalue their story, their personal story and how it can be very inspiring to other people. What makes a story stand out to you or a pitch stand out to you? What do you see in a story that makes you feel like that's going to be a big hit?

Sara Kendrick: It all depends on, you know, a unique story that is so unique it's almost unbelievable, people won't identify with that. A unique story that people can say, "I could have lived that life, I could be." And I keep referring to Rachel Hollis just because she's what everyone knows. But people could be her; they like to read from her, they want to hear from her because her life is achievable. So those are two very different things. Those stories that you get that are just mind blowing, I can't believe this person, the Uneducated of the world.

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So if you've read *Uneducated*, it's a great book, you should definitely read it, personally I don't think people have manners like that but her story is so unbelievable that the people who are reading it are not reading it because they connect with her at all. So it's definitely, it's, you know, people are wanting to hear her story from the outside. But they want the feelings.

So even though they can't connect with her story, they can't envision living that story. They can envision being a little girl who is lost, who doesn't understand what her parents are doing. Who doesn't understand why she's different. They can envision that because that's a theme that people understand. So when it comes to story, make your story emotionally relatable, not necessarily actually relatable but emotionally relatable is more than anything important.

Rachel Rodgers: Do you feel like when you're doing a book that is written by an expert, which I think is most, usually the case for you, is the author's personal story a big part of it? Or does it just matter that it has a good story in it, it could be the story of your clients perhaps, or a story of people you've worked with? Tell me about what that looks like because I think sometimes we don't realize, even for non-fiction books, there's almost like memoir built into it.

Sara Kendrick: Yeah. Well, and your expertise comes from your experience. So I would imagine a lot of your book is going to have your experience. But then also if you have clients that you want to share their experience, it just adds to the message. So if it's your memoir we don't want to hear from your clients.

But if it's a book where you're sharing your expertise, just adding more voices to that because even if you're an expert, you're an expert in selling, you can't be an expert in every single bit of selling. You have to bring in

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more voices. You have to bring – I don't want to say, validity is not the best word for it. But it does, more voices means more validity, so that's great.

A lot of times people will, you know I have an author who does really great marketing books and he wants to write a book HR. He's not really the guy to write it but he knows the guy to write it and so he can bring him in to help with those experiences. So you can do either one, just because you're an expert on something doesn't mean there aren't other experts. You don't have to, to get a book deal you don't have to own your world. You just have to know it enough to be able to teach people about it.

But then being precious about the pages of your book, being like, "This can only be my story. If I share other people's stories then they might get a promotion and I won't get it." That's just not going to help you in life in general.

Rachel Rodgers: I totally agree. Yes, and I almost – that actually brings me to an interesting question about the whole process. You need a whole squad. You've got your agent. You have the editor. Then it's like you've got to do the book cover which we haven't even gotten there yet, but that's next, there's such a process. Can you tell us a little bit about what your role is at the publisher and what that kind of looks like for you day-to-day? Because I think sometimes people don't understand what editors do or what you're looking for and all of that.

Sara Kendrick: And the thing, the issue with publishing is everyone's an editor. And so I'm an acquisitions editor, which is nothing like an editor, which is nothing like, you know, there's so many different types of editors it gets confusing. But yeah, so even though I'm an editor, I'm a story editor in acquisitions. If you asked me grammatical questions I probably would get very confused and I'm like, "I'll have to look it up." There are other editors for that.

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Publishing is in a transition period. So things have been done the way that they've been done for a 100 years. And there's a lot of people in publishing who aren't ready to change that. So other publishers are different so it all depends on what publisher, like what your goal is with your book and what your book is on deciding what publisher you want to go with. We do things a little bit differently because we don't come from publishing. So our publisher, so the publisher is the person who oversees everything for the end client.

So for me to pick up your book I had to go to the publisher and say, "I want to pick up this book because", and he had to approve it. He actually signs the checks. So yeah, you have the publisher, well, he's from Microsoft so he – we are able to think outside of the box. We're able to do digital tools. We go to industry events. We talk about the eCourses we're making. And people are very; they're like, "eCourses, why would you ever want that?" And I'm like, "Well, it's the future", but whatever.

But yeah, so you have to consider the publisher and you can find out a lot of that information online. You can find out, you can reach out to authors who have been on the publisher's imprint, they'll be happy to help you. So you have the publisher that you've chosen. Your agent is everything. So you have to have an agent who hasn't pissed off half the world. If you feel like your agent is crazy they probably are. You should probably find another agent.

So yeah, because the agent relationship with the editor is everything, I personally think that your agent by far is my favorite, there's no comparison.

Rachel Rodgers: Steve [inaudible], a pretty amazing guy.

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Sara Kendrick: Yeah. And poor Steve, we had our Women's Empowerment Talk on our pitch call and he's just kind of hanging out there.

Rachel Rodgers: Yeah, he's like, "I'm just going to stand back and let you all do your thing."

Sara Kendrick: Yeah, exactly. So your agent is everything. He's the person who's going to help you the most. And he, I'm sure, worked with you on your proposal, helped you figure out the story you want to tell. Because even though you know you have a book, even though you know you want to write a book and you have a story to tell, he's the one who knows what story that is. So how do we shape it for the market? And then he would, you know, depending on how far along you are, he can help you pull that out of you and figure that out.

He's also your conduit between the editor, so if there's something you don't like, you have that recourse to go to him and say, and I'm only saying him because your editor is a him. There are female editors too, I mean agents. But you have that recourse, that protection, that person who's looking out for you. So I would say that your editor is everything, I mean your agent is everything. [inaudible] the process once the editor really starts taking it on. But they, you know, depending on what you want out of your editor – your agent may or may not continue in the process.

So agents, you turn in your manuscript to your editor, they work with you and then there's a whole marketing team behind it that's going to come in and help you. And they help you amplify with what you have. So if you don't have a platform we can't really help you amplify anything with that because we can't magically get one. So that's why a platform is so important. And so our marketing team, for instance for us a lot of publishers will tell you, "Well, this is what your title is." And you don't have a choice. You're not part of the discussion.

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“This is what your cover is going to be.” And you’re not part of the discussion. That makes no sense. That makes zero sense whatsoever because you are promoting the book. It is you on the book, why pigeonhole you into something you don’t necessarily like or care about? Because then you won’t be excited about promoting it. So our marketing team comes in, they say, “You have a platform, we’re going to help you amplify that platform, how can we help?” And then go from there.

So that’s why a platform is so important, because we can’t create, the days of us telling the world what to read and they go with it, those days are over.

Rachel Rodgers: Yes. Now it’s a world of blogs, and reviews and all of that.

Sara Kendrick: Yes, people have a voice now. And because of that it gets a little bit loud. But you have to figure out what speaks to you. But I will also say when it comes to self-publishing because I get this question a lot. And I was on the bandwagon for self-publishing 150% until I started working at HarperCollins. Self-publishing is difficult. When we make a book we’re spending about I would say 30 or 40 thousand dollars to make your book. When it comes to editing, creating the cover, binding it, selling it to internationals, selling it to retailers.

So we’re spending a ton of money to make your book. If you were self-publishing, if you want to compete in the world you’ve got to spend that money too. So that’s where it gets difficult. And if you are writing a book that a publishing house didn’t want, find out why they didn’t want it because chances are it’s something to do with the marketplace. Publishers are funny and they like to pick up books that are going to be successful.

So if you are being told they don’t want to pick up your book there is a reason for it, so find out what that reason is and ask and we’ll tell you

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exactly, well, decent people will tell you what stood out, what was the issue. But if you publish a self-published book and it does not sell well, we know that, we have numbers, we have access to that. So that will hurt you.

It becomes very, very hard to get a book deal once you have self-published and your book didn't sell because the sales team has to approve us to offer a deal. And they're going to say, "Wait a second, they couldn't sell 3,000 copies of their own book. Why do we think they're going to be able to sell more of this book? What makes this book different?" And they're not as emotionally connected because we're helping them along.

And so if you want to self-publish, that's amazing, there is so much about that that can be a great experience. But know that, you know, know the pitfalls of what you're getting into. Research it first because the days of just putting it on Amazon and somebody's going to find it, those are over. You have to pay for advertising.

Rachel Rodgers: Yeah, it's true. It's true. And I think I mean the truth of the matter is still that there is – because there's such a process of kind of gatekeepers and figuring it out and having people involved in the book. I know that's something that I wanted. I wanted the book to be the best it could possibly be.

So then I want the best people involved on the project because you're going to tell me how I can make it better rather than me just putting something out there. And maybe it would be good but I know it can be better if I know I have people who know what they're doing when it comes to writing a book. I can know my area of expertise but I have never written a book before, what the hell do I know? So I think marrying those problems together.

Sara Kendrick: And it's a ton of work.

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Rachel Rodgers: Yes, exactly, it's a ton of work.

Sara Kendrick: I say that all the time that it's the most difficult thing people have done in their lives. And I'm only hearing it from people who just wrote it, to turn around and have to market it, and edit it, and hire people to do those things. It's a very difficult process.

Rachel Rodgers: Yes. Okay, we've got one more question for you. This was from Ray. They asked, "How fleshed out should your material be prior to submitting a proposal? Should your material be proven to work over and over with an audience? Do you need to have it research based or can you use a book deal as an opportunity to really flesh out your ideas?" What do you think on that?

Sara Kendrick: So that depends. It all depends, everything in publishing depends. And so here's a story of the very first proposal I ever got. So when you're in unscripted TV and somebody sends you a proposal you say, "This is great. I don't like anything about it but we're going to work with you because we like you." And we have that discussion with you.

When I first got a proposal it was from a YouTube star. And I got it and I called the agent and I said, "I really like her, she's great. I don't like this proposal though, it doesn't make sense. I would love to see it go a different direction."

And the agent was flabbergasted, they're like, "Why would you possibly, like are you serious? We're supposed to be taking cues from you." And I'm like, "Okay. Well, clearly this isn't the one." So I am one to go back, most publishers will not. They will say, "This is your proposal, this is what you want to write, this is not what we want to publish moving on." If I see hope in the person, if I see a chance that there's something there I will go back to

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the agent and I will say, “I really like her, let’s have a discussion.” And the agent will either say yes or no and there is nothing I can do about that.

But your proposal is a reflection of what your book will be when you turn it in. And we like books that make sense. So your proposal should be well thought out. And that’s where an agent comes in and helps you with that. Your proposal should not be 110 pages long. I do not have time to read that. It should be about 60 pages long, if that. And that’s where you’re doing a writing sample, your table of contents is everything, you should definitely flesh out your table of contents. But we know it’s a working draft.

We know that things are going to change in the process. And as an editor I want to put my stamp on it. I want to help you figure it out because you might go down a road that’s very specific that I don’t understand and I don’t think that your marketplace or your audience is going to understand. So I want to help you out. So you want that mix of something I can understand and something that the editor has room to play with going forward.

And then you have to maximize your platform. Whatever you do, do not list everyone that you are Instagram friends with who could possibly maybe mention your book. I don’t need six pages of that. Your Instagram fans may or may not like you. Yeah, so don’t list everyone you’ve ever met in passing because we know that that’s filler, unless you did that, then that’s great.

But for the most part you’re going to find when you go to the process, yes, your friend said they were going to support your book but that was before it was a book. They didn’t realize it would ever become a book. And suddenly they’re thinking of their brand and they’re thinking about they want to be out there supporting your book. But they haven’t read your book and maybe they don’t like to read books. And maybe they just didn’t really want to get that involved because they assumed because it’s very, very hard to get a book deal that you just weren’t going to get one.

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So we see a lot, really a surprising amount that people who really want to support you, want to support you until it comes time to actually support you. And that's where when you're listing all these people that you met, maybe you worked with them 10 years ago, or you met them in passing, or whatever reason you think you can get to them. Be aware that it's going to be difficult, even if you do know them, even if you did work with them. Because a lot of people – we hear a lot of times, “My company won't let me support you. I just don't feel like this is right for my brand.”

So listing out everyone you know really isn't helpful because we know what the, you know, we can see through that in two seconds.

Rachel Rodgers: Yeah. What numbers are convincing for you platform wise, is it email subscribers, is it followers on Instagram or a Facebook group on Facebook? What numbers do you guys look at that really are reassuring for you in terms of platform?

Sara Kendrick: So it depends on the timing that we're going through at that moment. When I signed your book, Instagram was everything. They have done research. Instagram is what sells books more than anything else. Now it's Twitter. So it changes with the tide. Definitely if you're writing a book that's very professional and it's speaking to professionals, those people are on Twitter, they're more so than Instagram. People who want to get to know you as a person are on Instagram. They like your pictures; they want to see your family, what have you.

So I would say it depends on the time but a 100,000 is a really good number, anything over a 100,000 we're definitely having a conversation. Unless, for instance, I got a pitch from a Bachelor contestant, Bachelor books traditionally have not done very well. So they might have two million followers but we know that of those two million followers a lot of them don't

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read. And if they do read they're not reading that book. So it's quality over quantity.

Email lists are huge in selling, it's just hard to confirm. You could say, "I have 60,000 email subscribers." But I can't go, there's not a site for me to go on and confirm that, if you're able to show that, that's great. If you're able to show this is my Mailchimp for an offer", or whatever, that's great. We're not going to ask you for it because that's rude. So [inaudible] from day one. We can go on and we can see if you really have Twitter followers and if you do and how many there are. We have analytics for everything else.

But when it comes to emails, yes, that is one of the most powerful ways because it sits in your inbox until you're ready to read it. So a social media post is going to fly by but that is waiting for you. The other thing with emails is that you have your email list and you don't want to sell your book all the time. You don't want to be front and center because people are going to stop following you, they're going to stop getting your emails. Enough with the book, we don't want to hear about it anymore. I got your damn book.

So we definitely work with that, we want to make sure that we're helping you realize where that line is. Yeah, emails are very, very powerful. Instagram is powerful. I think in our world professional development, it's not as powerful. Facebook has, you know, people are migrating back to Facebook, they like the groups, they like the private groups. Facebook followers are always great and we will take any social followers. But the thing about Facebook groups is people are there for a reason. People agree to join that group for a very specific reason.

It's a lot easier to follow someone on Facebook than it is to join their group. So that is very powerful. They are there for you and what you have to offer.

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So yeah, so other than it's the platforms for the most part speaking, yes. So speaking, we love speaking.

Kindra Hall is one of our favorite authors. She had this little bitty book called *Stories That Stick*. We were like, "Great, it's going to do some great pre orders." She went out and sold the crap out of that book to the point where we ran out because she is just on there, on the stage speaking all the time, promoting her book as much as she can and it's just very effective. Because in speaking you usually have those books with you and so you're selling them in real time and that's very, very helpful.

Bulk buyers, so we do a lot of bulk buyers. Sometimes authors will come in and they will say, "I know that I can sell 20/30 thousand of these, so I'm going to buy those right off the top and I'm going to do it at this discount." That's a very, very common thing because people know that they're selling them to their people. They know that they're going to go to events and they're going to be able to package it and stuff. And so having that from the very top allows you to do it at a much cheaper rate than you'd be able to do afterwards.

And then we process that through a company called Porchlight. So when you purchase, you know, somebody comes to you and they say, "I want 2,000 books." "Great, that's amazing, let me introduce you to my publisher." If we sell them 2,000 books it doesn't really mean anything. Yes, there's money involved that changes hands and that's great. But it doesn't go to the list. It doesn't make it to BookScan which is the number that we have access to, to see what general books do. So what we do is we process it through a company called Porchlight.

Porchlight, you can buy all sorts of books and in bulk, and basically they process it. You're going to give them a bunch of zip codes and whatnot. They have certain information they ask for. And they process it so that each

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of those counts towards your goals. So if you want to make the Wall Street Journal list or if you want to make New York Times, you want to go through a – I call it book laundering, it's not the best term for it but it is what it is. So you want those to count individually because you want to get on those lists. It becomes less important as the books been out, but to get on those lists.

Another thing is pre orders, pre orders, pre orders. It used to not be a big deal; we hear it from authors all the time. "I will wait until my book comes out to promote it." Well, it's not very helpful for a variety of reasons, the first being space, inventory. We only print enough books that we think we can sell because we can't afford to warehouse them. Amazon is no longer ordering books the way they used to. We are getting half of our orders from Amazon because they want us to house them. They don't want to be the ones to house them.

And they know they can come up to us at any time and say, "I need 10,000 more." But they're placing their orders and Barnes & Noble is placing their orders, everyone is placing their orders based off of how many pre orders you've sold. We print the books based on how many pre orders you sold. So they have gone from being completely irrelevant to being extremely important in the last few years because things are definitely changing.

80% of our book sales come from Amazon. And that's changing too because Barnes & Noble, bless their hearts are trying really, really hard, but that was our second biggest retailer and they've shrunk, and shrunk, and shrunk. And they have new ownership so maybe that's going to change. But for the most part, Amazon is where you're selling your books. You know it makes my heart hurt.

Rachel Rodgers: I know.

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Sara Kendrick: The book industry, but it is what it is. So yeah, they've taken over the world. Now, I will say, Amazon at the beginning of Covid-19 deemed books non-essential so they stopped selling them overnight. So overnight our sales went from great to zero, and it wasn't because people weren't buying books, it's because they weren't getting them delivered.

Amazon would say, "Yes, you're going to buy this new release book but it's not coming to you for another four weeks." And so people because of that looked outside of Amazon, they found – I think there was bookshop.com. they found, you know, there's a christianbooks.com for some reason sold a lot of non-Christian books. And our sales, we have a direct to consumer platform which is very rare for publishers, people looked outside of that. Now, if people continue going outside of it we'll see, but I hope and pray that they do because Amazon has too much.

Rachel Rodgers: Yes, they basically have the monopoly, so not the best. This has been amazing Sara, you've given us a real insight into what you guys are looking for and really just how the publishing world works which I think is so incredibly helpful for everyone. Because for me, it was a mystery to me two years ago until I started talking to people in the industry, so thank you so much for spending your time with us, I appreciate you.

Sara Kendrick: Absolutely, thank you.

Have you scheduled a date with your money yet? I'm talking about your annual money review and it's something you need to do if you want to make serious money moves in the year to come. My team and I have created an annual money review workbook to help you do just that.

You'll work through the great million dollar decisions you made this year. And you'll work through the broke ass decisions you may have made too. Plus you're going to make a plan to make more money and start living the

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