

## Episode 175

### Effective Book Positioning Starts with a Comp Title Analysis

Jodi Brandon [00:00:21]:

Hello. Hello, book authors. Today we are talking about comp titles. That means comparative titles, books that are similar to the book that you are writing and why this is so important no matter how you're publishing. So let's dive right in. Traditional book publishing is how this started. When you put together a book proposal for a traditional book publishing deal, one of the sections that publishers are looking for is comp titles. And it's all about positioning, right? It's about framing your book.

Jodi Brandon [00:00:51]:

It helps people know what the book's about without reading it. It helps people know which books out there on the market your book is similar to, different from, and how it is similar and different from it. So you being able to understand what your book is and is not and how it fits into the marketplace, the traditional book publishing marketplace that allows you to, you know, sell the book, right? Sell the book to agents who can then sell the book to editors at publishing houses. And then later you and the publisher can sell the book to the media and sell the book to consumers. So that's how it really started. And a lot of us who work in the book publishing industry, you know, sort of push this narrative that figuring out the comp titles is equally important when you're self publishing or using a hybrid publisher. And the reason is all about messaging. Messaging and positioning.

Jodi Brandon [00:01:47]:

So if you are a regular listener of this podcast, you know that this is something that we have talked about multiple times before in the podcast. There are episodes. I will link them in the show notes episodes with Danite Berhe and Aaron Van Dyke, the book marketing rock star. All about messaging and positioning. It's critical, right? It's just like in our we need to be able to talk about our businesses in a way that attracts the right people, repels the wrong people, gets the right people into our ecosystem. Same thing goes with our book. Another step further. We need to understand what people like and don't like about the type of book that we're writing.

Jodi Brandon [00:02:24]:

We need to understand what people are expecting and not expecting from the book that we're writing. And this will help us also craft an elevator pitch for our book once we sort of figure out what the structure is going to be. But you can figure out so many things about your own book by looking at those comp titles. You know, think about, you know, it's X book meets X book. You hear that sort of language a lot in the book world and if you start paying attention for that, you will hear it as well. So you probably have ideas yourself of this type of book, but with this type of book's tone or this type of, you know, subject matter book, but for this audience, not that audience. So that's one step. Take it a step further.

Jodi Brandon [00:03:12]:

Ask people who've read your book. You know, maybe you've had friends read certain chapters or the whole thing. Maybe you've had beta readers, maybe you have a developmental editor. Ask them, you know, what would you say this book is like, similar to or different from? Was it like another book you've read in this genre? Was it like another book you've read? Not in this genre. But putting all of those pieces together really helps you nail down your messaging and figure out how you want to talk about your book, which as we know is so important down the line. So one great way to do this is of course to go to a bookstore and physically look around. Another great way to do this is on Amazon. Amazon has a really strong genre subgenre classification list that can really help you sort of focus, focus in and see which books really are the comp titles for your book.

Jodi Brandon [00:04:11]:

It might not be the ones you're initially thinking of and maybe you don't know what they are initially, that's okay too. But you've got to do your homework here.

Jodi Brandon [00:04:19]:

Hey there business owner and aspiring or published author. Sorry to interrupt this episode. Just wanted to check in and see if you're subscribed to Coffee and Commas, my email newsletter where I share behind the scenes industry info and much more about writing, publishing and marketing. A book for your business. Sign up at Bit Ly Coffee and Commas signup. That's all lowercase. Now back to the show.

Jodi Brandon [00:04:43]:

So there's a great blog post I'm going to recommend everyone check out. I'll also I'll link this in the show notes also. And this is from the Queen herself, Jane Friedman, and she's talking about using AI. Well actually she's not. It's a guest post on her blog, so I shouldn't say she is. About using AI prompts to do some of this comp title research and there are some sample prompts in there. You know, I'm going to read one to you now and then send you over there to get the rest of them. You know, suggest 10 comp titles published in the last three years for a literary novel set in New York that features drug use.

Jodi Brandon [00:05:17]:

Do not include any books that have appeared on bestseller lists. Do not include nonfiction books. So let's break that down a little bit. So you're telling, in this case, ChatGPT, how many titles you're looking for. You're telling them in the last three years. So we want relevancy, right? We want relevant books that are relevant. We want. For fiction, it's going to be a little bit different from nonfiction, but for fiction here they're giving them a theme of the book features drug use as well as a setting set in New York.

Jodi Brandon [00:05:48]:

So that wouldn't be something that applies for a nonfiction book, but that's something important to know for a fiction book. And then give it some parameters, right? Do not include any books that have appeared on bestseller lists. I think the reason for that I don't know, but I'm guessing the reason for that is because that sort of skews your results. And as we know, spots on the

bestseller list are earned in different sorts of ways. So it's not necessarily the most, the most direct apples to apples comparison for what you're trying to do here. And then do not include nonfiction books. So, you know, so that you're not muddying the water there with maybe, you know, who knows, maybe there's a biography from a former New York City police detective that was in the narcotics unit. So that would include, you know, that setting and theme that they're looking for, but they don't want nonfiction books.

Jodi Brandon [00:06:38]:

So there are other sample prompts in this article, in this blog post, which is fantastic. I encourage you to check it out. And again, I'll include it in the show notes. But the more parameters you can give to get the right kind of results, just like anything we do with AI, right? The better directions we give it, the better the results are that we, you know, that get spit out back to us. So that that's a great exercise to do. And then again, spend some time on Amazon, spend some time at a bookstore if you have a good public library system with a lot of books in your category. I know that that's sometimes difficult depending on where we live. That's a great place also.

Jodi Brandon [00:07:16]:

But you really want to make sure that you are studying the market so that you can position your book. And then the things I mentioned earlier with the traditional book world, what they're, you know, selling the book to your ed, an agent selling, who then sells it to an ed, who then sells it to the rest of the staff at the book publishing house and then selling it to the media, selling it to consumers. Those things are the same in the self publishing world and the hybrid publishing world. So getting that early foundational work right is so, so, so important. And comp titles are a huge part of that. So that people know what your book is about. It helps them, you know, it's a frame of reference for book publishing professionals. The comp titles are a frame of reference for you as a business owner.

Jodi Brandon [00:08:06]:

It's helping you with your messaging and positioning, which again, we know is super, super important. So I encourage you to take the time to see what's out there on the market, really study what's out there. What these books, you know, break them down. Not just, oh, this is a book about a topic similar to mine, but this is what the table of contents looks like. I have five books here and I'm studying the tables of contents. They all talk about X, Y and Z. Only two of them talk about R and none of them talk about S. So that helps you sort of figure out if you were planning to talk about whatever S is, if you're planning to talk about it.

Jodi Brandon [00:08:48]:

Why are none of these other books talking about it? Is it because it's not necessarily relevant for this type of book or is it relevant to what you're doing because you're doing something a little bit different? So you've got to sort of figure out what's out there, what the marketplace looks like, what the marketplace likes, what the marketplace expects, and then figure out how your book fits into that or doesn't. And that helps you really frame how you're going to talk about your book and sell your book once it's written and published? And this foundational work will make your

book marketing so much easier in the immediate timeframe, you know, for launching, pre sales, pre launch, all of that, but also for the long term, which we've also, we've talked about that before, right. How book marketing is such a long game, but really understanding all of this will help you and really give you a leg up on a lot of other, a lot of other book authors, business owners or otherwise. So that's what I have for you today. I hope that you will take a look at the resources I'm going to include in the show notes here and you know, use AI to help you with this. We've talked about that too, using AI to make your book process more efficient. This is a great way to do that and really get that messaging and positioning down well before your book is published so that you know how to talk about it. And it will help you for all of as long as your book is out there, which we know.

Jodi Brandon [00:10:14]:

Once your book is out there, it's out there. So happy researching. Until next time, my friends.

Jodi Brandon [00:10:19]:

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Right Published Market Podcast. I know just how busy business owners and CEOs schedules are, and I'm grateful you've taken some time out of yours to spend with me today. If you enjoyed this episode, take a quick screenshot and share it on social.

Jodi Brandon [00:10:33]:

To let others know you're listening.

Jodi Brandon [00:10:35]:

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