

**Daniel Hall Presents**



**Episode 132**

**How to Use Coauthors to Grow Your Book  
Brand Internationally**

**with Bob Lee**

Hello! Welcome to the RealFastResults.com podcast! Bob Lee is this week's special guest. Bob is a management consultant and author of the book, [\*Trust Rules: How the World's Best Managers Create Great Places to Work\*](#). The really interesting thing about Bob, and one of the reasons for his visit today, is that he has taken a unique approach to getting his book to become well-distributed internationally. Let's see if he'll share a few insights on how he accomplished this. Please welcome Bob to the show...

**Promise: Increase Your Market Reach**

Hi! Thanks for having me. I suppose the big promise is that I will explain how to use the new power of on-demand publishing, combined with a carefully curated network of people in your market, or rather, the markets that matter to you, in order to leverage your personal brand, and personal profile. By doing so, you'll increase the extent by which you have influence within various markets, including outspreading to markets that you wouldn't normally be capable of reaching.

# How Did Your Book Get Spread Internationally?

**What I did was take the original book, and I selected partners in 15 different markets, so far.** If you think of the core content of the original book, it contained both an introduction and a conclusion. **The introduction explained why my content mattered in that market, and the conclusion drew everything together and effectively restated why the content mattered in the market.**

What might be unusual is that I've given co-authorship to the people that I've partnered with. **Part of the reason behind this is that I couldn't possibly have the same profile in those markets as these people already do.** They are the experts in those markets, and they are also the experts when it comes to knowing why the information in the book matters to the people in those markets. Not to overstate it, I would say that the minimum effort that anyone invested was probably about three hours, and the maximum was probably about three months. I can come back and explain the differences between the two and what quality of difference there is in the output.

So, basically, I took my book, which is on a topic that can be applied worldwide. **I found coauthors for it throughout the world, and in each market, I worked with a coauthor to republish the book specifically for his or her own market.** In all cases, I played the part of the publisher, and the coauthor bought the book, for their market, from me. That's where the payback is. The control of the publication process remains with me, but each book is a separate entity. It's a separate edition, and it has a separate ISBN, whether it's on paper or eBook format.

The message of the book is really how the world's best managers create great places to work. So, it's about how they build trust with their employees. Originally, I had been offered a publishing contract for the book. I was very pleased because, at the time, I saw self-publishing as being somewhat of "a loser's option". That's because I thought, "Well, if you don't get chosen by a publisher, then you can just do it yourself," but I became quite disillusioned with the terms of the offer that were available. I wanted to write a short book that people would read.

You know, I have a library of about 800 books. These are business books. I would say I've read, maybe, 200 of them. I've skimmed over about 200 of them, and I've even gone and bought executive summaries of books that I've bought just to understand what they are. I don't know, but I don't think that I'm atypical in that way. But I wanted to write a book that would actually be read because I wanted to write a book that would change people's behaviors.

The terms of the deal were that they wanted a hardback book, and I wanted a softback. They wanted a long book, and I wanted a short one. Then, in particular, they wanted examples of large companies, like Google, Facebook, Yahoo, and so on, and I felt like you don't need to give an example of how to keep your promises. You know, you don't need to draw on a big company's example.

**Also, the bottom line was that I would get \$1 for every book that I sold, and self-publishing seemed to offer better returns than that.** So, that put me in the frame of mind that, really, this is the business of publishing because I was going to have to direct the costs myself. That's why, when the English edition was successful in English-speaking markets, I began thinking about how I could leverage that success in

other markets. I realized that I couldn't possibly afford to put the same investment into promoting myself in international markets as I had in English-speaking markets. That's where the idea of the co-authorship came from.

Originally, I had the idea that we would coauthor and share the costs, but what I found was that the costs were quite small. It might cost \$500 to produce a local edition, but that \$500 seemed to loom quite largely in the minds of the coauthors. It seemed as though it was a large investment to them. So, I quickly decided that I would cover the cost because I knew it was a good book, and I knew that I could make it successful. I simply tweaked the amount that I charged for each book. It is working, and from a commercial point of view, they are almost all successful. Not all of them have been, and there have been lessons in that, but most of them have been, I would say, seriously successful.

## Can You Tell Us a Little More About Your Successes and Failures?

First of all, if you think of the numbers per book, the cost, for me, is about \$4, depending on the market. Really, once I buy 10 copies of the book, that's about what I'm paying, and that's delivered. So, what I'm doing is selling them to my coauthors at \$8, which means that there are \$4 for them and \$4 for me. In the least successful market, so far, I would say that I have sold somewhere around 40 or 50 copies. That's definitely disappointing, but I think that's going to change. **In the most successful markets, we have sold between 3,000 and 4,000 copies, but I would say, with many more still to come.**

I mentioned that the split comes out to around \$4 per copy. That's what I pay per book. **One of the keys, I think, to building a successful partnership with anyone is that you need to be open.** Everyone needs to understand what's in it for the other person. **So, in very broad terms, I pay about \$4 for each book, and I sell them to my coauthors for \$8. They sell them for \$12.** That means everyone is getting about \$4 per book. This probably isn't the most balanced deal, considering that I've written the book and created the intellectual property, but ultimately, this is a sales exercise. In order to sell, you need an incentive, and if I can make \$4 per copy in markets that I can't reach otherwise, then it's a good deal for me. I can afford for it to be a good deal for my partners as well.

Again, in the worst market I've sold between 40 or 50 copies, but I think that's because they haven't really got going, even though the book has been available for a few months. I don't think it's a case where they have tried and failed. It's just a case where it hasn't been a big enough priority. In the most successful markets, we've sold around 3,000-4,000 copies. One of the things about the book is that it's a book written for managers, and since it's a short book that can be read quickly, a lot of companies buy it for all of their managers. So, we've sold many more in bulk quantities of 50, 100, and so on.

Just this afternoon, for example, I took an order for 300 copies. This was a case where one manager liked the book, gave it to her boss, and the boss decided it was something that everyone in the company needed to read. I see it very much as a product, even though I put a lot of soul into writing the book. So, it's authentic. It's not just manufactured words. I sincerely felt what I wrote, but that's not enough to change behavior.

Unless someone reads the book and takes it to heart, it's not going to change their behavior. So, how do I judge success? Well, obviously, it needs to be commercially successful, but, to me, there's no point in being commercially successful if the book just sits there on bookshelves around the world. I want to see change. I want to see people acting differently.

## Do You Think There Are Ways to Leverage This Further?

Yes, but only in embryonic form. **Had I known at the outset that the book would connect with people or touch people in the way that it has, I think that I would have been more prepared to leverage that.** What's happening is I'm being engaged, increasingly, to run facilitated workshops where someone in influence has read the book and feels their team could benefit from it being presented to them. **Now, had I understood, in the beginning, that this opportunity was viable, I think I would have packaged it better and more professionally.**

A year later, I'm still playing catch up with that. I'm still designing the materials. Part of the idea of partnering with people from other countries was that I didn't want to be traveling as much as I had been. I would have been spending, maybe, four months of the year on the road. That's enjoyable, and it's not as hard as working, but at the same time, it makes it quite difficult to have any sort of a regular life. You can't commit to anything because you don't know when you are going to be away. So, part of the idea was that I could be at home more, and yet, have that influence.

**I'm now designing the workshops, collaboratively, and creating the material to allow my colleagues to deliver those workshops, but certainly, that's a lesson that I've learned from it.** I've learned that you actually need to be thinking two or three steps ahead when it comes to how you are going to monetize the success of the first part before you can even be sure that you are going to have that success. It's better not to wait and then try to catch up.

## How Did You Go About Choosing Your Coauthors?

I would have an established international network of contacts. **Through my work, my independent consulting, speaking, and so on, I already had an established network, which is an advantage.** But, it's not necessary. **With LinkedIn and other types of business connectivity software solutions, it's totally possible to find the type of person that you'd want to partner with.**

The criteria that I used in the first place was a little bit like, "Do they have a pulse?" Really, "Are they willing to work with me," would have been the key criteria for the first two or three. I put a huge effort into making sure that the English-language edition was a success because no one would have believed

that it could have been successful in their market if it hadn't been successful in the markets that I had easy access to. So, my initial three or four months were exclusively devoted to building the circulation and the profile for the book.

I may be being a little facetious when I say that "a pulse" was the criteria, but truly, I couldn't be too fussy in the early stages. **So, I tended to depend on people that I have an established relationship with, or maybe that I had collaborated successfully with in the past.** But, as I grew in confidence, and could afford to be a little more selective... For example, I got to the point where, unless the book was going to be actively promoted, then I wasn't prepared to invest my time in creating the product. I've sent a couple of potential partners back to the drawing board, in terms of their marketing plans or their plans for promoting the book.

**I think, really, what you want, first of all, is somebody who has something to add to the content that you've created.** So, at the very least, that means they need to be knowledgeable in the way that you're knowledgeable. I'm thinking, in this case, not about my own book, but maybe if you, as a listener, has an area of expertise and needs to find someone to partner with. I would say, the first question is, "What is it that I know that makes me able to do this confidently?" Then, "Who else do I know?" Who else could you reach out to, through LinkedIn or other networks, that you are involved in to find people who will work with you?

**Remember, you aren't necessarily looking for someone to take your idea and make it better. You're really looking for someone to take your idea and make it relevant in their market, and you want to be able to leverage their profile.** Assuming that you are from a different country as me, if we partnered on a book, I would have such a huge advantage over you in the Irish and UK market because I'm already known here.

In the case of your own book, you would need someone that has that sort of profile in their own country, and it would also need to be somebody with the integrity to agree to take it on and not just be satisfied that their mother is really proud of them because they have their name on the front of a book. That should be the start of it, rather than the end of it. I think it's important for anything like this to approach it with a spirit of generosity. In my experience, in order to make money in business, you've got to spend, and you have to be prepared to spend in the right areas. In a scenario such as this, that means you need to spend time writing the book, and that means spending time making mistakes and not looking for your partners to subsidize those mistakes.

As I say, "They go in on the ground floor, and they don't pay anything upfront." Theoretically, if one of my coauthors was to only buy five copies, I'd still get \$20 back, and I'd learn a lesson. **So, it's important that you pick the right people, and if you try to have contracts, or minimum order quantities, or anything like that, I don't think it's going to work.** This is still too new of an idea. Self-publishing, obviously, is what has made this possible. The fact that there doesn't need to be a stock of any of the books, anywhere, until they are needed is really what made it possible. This wouldn't have been possible five or six years ago.

Lightning Source has introduced this thing where you can now personalize the first page of the book. So, for less than \$1, and for as little as \$0.20 per copy, you can actually print a company logo and a message. It has become quite popular for companies to gift a book to their clients as a way of showing them, "These are the values that we have in our business, and we'd like to share this with you as a small

token of our appreciation.” Particularly, around the holidays, where hampers, or bottles of spirits, and gifts like that are given, a few copies of a book are an acceptable gift. Again, that’s something that we would expect to do a lot more of next year in the international markets.

## Do You Encourage Companies to Give Copies of the Book Away?

If you think of the book as a calling card... I always happen to have a copy of the book with me, so if I’m at a networking event... I’ll give you an example. I took a course on facilitation, maybe four weeks ago. There were 16 participants, and I brought 16 copies of the book. That was just because, I think, it’s easier to give somebody a copy of the book than it is to encourage them to go out and buy the book. That makes you, like, a hoaxer, or hustler, and you don’t want to hustle someone for \$10.

I genuinely give away copies of my book because I’m proud of it, and I think people would enjoy reading it, but three of those 16 people have since been in touch with me. One placed an order today for 260 copies in order to incorporate it into a management development program. So, I’m upfront about the fact that it’s a business, but I don’t make it feel like a business because I don’t try to sell you a copy of the book to start with.

I suppose one trick that I did use was when I was at a conference in the U.S., and there were about 300 companies participating. **I shipped 100 copies of the book over, and I identified the companies that I would like to have a copy of the book.** I’m smiling to myself, here, because I’m not sure if I’m giving too much away, but I basically approached people and asked them if they could do me a favor. I asked them to take a copy of the book, which had been successful in the UK and European markets, and just drop me a note, telling me whether or not they thought it would be successful in the U.S. markets. I told them I wanted to know if it was suitable for the U.S. markets.

About 25 people wrote me back, and I actually flew over to Lake Tahoe to deliver a three-day management retreat, which was based on one of the copies that I had given out. **So, it’s approaching it like a business.** It’s not approaching it like an author, and I sometimes wonder if it sounds a little bit facetious to be an author on the one hand, and then to talk about how you promote it, but to me it seems really congruent.

Why write a book unless you want people to read it? If you want people to read it, then you are competing with millions of published titles every year. So, if the book is good enough, and you’re proud of the work you’ve done, then I don’t think there’s any reason to be shy about it. The key is that by giving away a copy of the book, it’s changing the relationship. It’s a gift with nothing expected in return, and that means you aren’t weighing things out, like, “I gave this guy \$10. This better be worth it.” It’s more like, “Let’s see if this book is worth anything.”

That’s where it comes down to the simplicity of the language, and the shortness of the book is really important. We talk about how long a blog post should be, and we talk about people’s short attention spans, so why do we still have books that are 240, 280, or 320 pages long. You know, that’s a lot of blog

posts. So, if we were going to use the “attention span argument” with a book, I think somewhere between an hour and two hours is the amount of time that someone should need to invest. That’s why I didn’t want these examples of Todd, a manager at Google, being faced with a dilemma.

We are all intelligent enough. If I say, “You need to keep your promises, and it’s the small promises that count,” most of us get that. I don’t need 20 pages to say that either; I can say it in three or four. So, when you flip through the book, it invites you to read it because it’s, like, bite-sized pieces. The content isn’t dumbed down, but it is slimmed down, and I think that’s the key.

## How Do I Know How Long My Book Should Be?

This is the first book that I ever wrote, and I engaged an editor who had a very high profile. She had worked on books like mine before. I reached terms with her, but the only problem is that I really didn’t understand what the role of an editor was. I actually, honestly thought that an editor would take my finished manuscript, change a few words, correct a few apostrophes, add some commas, and things like that. So, I sent her nearly 80,000 words, but I said that I only needed 27,000, or maybe, 25,000 words.

That’s the point when I discovered that I should have been in touch with her about six months prior to that. I had her assistance, but I didn’t use it properly at all. She helped me to understand what an editor does, and I certainly would have spent less time preparing the manuscript if I had known that. However, I think the process of writing 80,000 words and then distilling it down to 27,000, which is what I have in this book, is a little bit like making a really rich gravy. You know, it’s so hard to let go of so much of the book. That’s a lot of editing to be done. I think what we ended up with was good, rich quality.

There’s not very much fat on the bones, you know? It says what it needs to say, and then you move on to the next point. The book I have is 5”x8” because it needed to be small enough to fit into an inside pocket, or into a purse, or maybe a backpack. I think about 184 pages and 27,000 words is about right for a book like mine. The Italian version, interestingly, is 260 pages long. That’s because, in Italian, they use a lot more words to say the same thing in English, and the words tend to be longer.

Also, the guy that I partnered with in Italy, Gilberto Dondé, is retired from active service, and he has a huge amount of life experience, which he has brought into the book. So, he’s one of the few authors who has opened up the content and interspersed his own recollections, added examples from Ferrari, and so forth. I think he has really enriched the book, and I think he knew the audience. In fact, I think that edition is a great example of knowing your audience. They even commissioned cartoons. There was one cartoon for each of the 16 rules, and that’s because they felt like that was more appropriate for their market.

**That’s knowledge that I wouldn’t have had, and I want to also point out part of the benefit of having local authors.** One of the things that Gilberto explained to me was that if something doesn’t exist in the culture of a country, it doesn’t exist in the language, and if it doesn’t exist in the language, it probably

doesn't exist in the culture. So, the point that he was making was that I was speaking about managers and coworkers, or colleagues, and he pointed out that those phrases didn't exist in Italian. They use "el direttore," which is a director, and the most common word for employee is, "responsabile," which is responsible.

The idea is that the director directs the workers, who are his responsibility. Now, that's a very different mindset to the one we're used to, say, in the US, where the idea of managers trusting people to get on with the work, and enabling them to do their best work. That's not really where a lot of Italian businesses are, and Gilberto was able to take that on-board. So, I'd say an ideal size would be about 27,000 words, but I think it's more important that it's as long as it needs to be to say what really needs to be said. It shouldn't be about what you think needs to be said, and that's the tough bit.

**One easy way to do this is to get someone that you know and trust to read the manuscript and ask them to be brutally honest with you about the bits that they skimmed over.** We all do that. We get halfway through a chapter, and we think, "I've got the idea now," and we skim over the rest. Well, that's the half that should be cut out.

## What Would You Do Differently if You Could?

Okay. **As an author, I would spend much more time planning the final product, and not just start.** Of course, to write, you need to actually write, but I think taking the time to think back and to plot where you are actually going to start, what the middle is, and what the end is, that would be the first thing. I would also say that if you are new to publishing, learn about how publishing works. **Reference the lesson I learned about how to use an editor.** They aren't just proofreaders.

I think to anticipate success is important as well. No, I'm sorry. Number 3, I would say to anticipate failure, and work out what you are going to do to prevent that because, chances are, if you publish the book, your parents are going to be very proud, your partner is going to be very proud, and your kids will be proud. One or two of your neighbors might too, but that's about it. You will always be able to say that you are a published author, but that's as much as you can say.

The book won't be successful, in commercial terms, unless you make it successful. **That means you need to think of it as being a product or a service, and you need to sell it as such.** It won't sell itself. I think that there must be so many worthy books that nobody has ever seen, and we also know that there are a lot of bad books that seem to get a great reputation just because they are particularly well-sold.

**So, Number 3 would be to anticipate failure, and Number 4, then, would be to anticipate success.** Think about, "How am I going to leverage this," and, "What's the next step?" It needs to be a continuum. Like, don't think that it works by waiting to see if the book is successful and then think, "Well, what else can I add in," and, "Maybe I should have a second book." There's a process. I'm working on the second book now, but I probably should have been working on that six months ago, or nine months ago, or maybe even a year ago.



The last thing that I would say is to have fun because it's a huge investment. The good thing about having a book with your name on it is that there's something of you that will endure. Maybe in 100 years' time, someone in a second-hand bookstore, if there is such a thing by then (I'm sure there will be) will come across this dusty book and flip through it. We'll be long-gone, but you've left a legacy.

It may just be something quaint, and they use it just to amuse their mates; "Wait until you hear this," and that sort of thing. You know, "How funny things were 100 years ago," but you've left something behind, and I think it will be something worth leaving behind. So, have fun because most people don't get to write a book, and if you are lucky enough to be able to do it, then enjoy it, and enjoy the ride, and enjoy the success.

## What Were the Top Things You Did in Your Market to Make Your Book Successful?

**The first that I did was send manuscripts to people whose opinion I respected.** I built time into the process to allow for them to read the book and come back to me with quotable quotes. That added about two months into the process because it's never going to be as important for someone else to get back to you quickly as it is for you.

I don't think the idea of sending somebody a sample chapter works, unless you are an established author. If you are, then you can send someone a chapter, and they can form an opinion about whether it's going to be a good book or a bad one. With my book, people needed to read the whole thing because they had nothing else to judge it on. I went to print with, maybe, 20 very strong quotes from people whose profile, or whose company's profile, would count for something, with the market.

**As I have mentioned, I was generous in distributing copies of the book because it's actually cheaper.** If you think about what you'd be paying for a top Google ad connection, it's actually cheaper, almost, to give a copy of the book to somebody. Don't just give it away in the sense of, "Here's a gift with no strings attached." It's, "Here's a gift with no strings attached," but explain what you are trying to do.

You know, "If you like the book, it would be wonderful. I've written it because I think every manager should read it, and if you think your manager should, then let's talk." In any sales process, you've got to be clear about what the "ask" actually is. So, the ask is, "Read the book, and if you like it, come back, and let's talk about how you can help it be successful."

Obviously, I did the usual things. **I did the interviews. I did the blog posts. I did Google AdWords, but I was more scientific, in that I tried to pick around the edges of that.** In other words, I didn't go for the most popular terms. Like, let's say, rather than targeting a manager who was looking for... I don't know, maybe a phrase like, "manager," or something, you might go for someone looking up, "career progress," or, "slow progress," or, "how to kick-start a career". I like to think that, maybe, grandmothers bought the book for their grandchildren, or aunts bought the book for their nieces and nephews.

That's specific to the promise of the book, and I was very clear that I didn't want to write a book for leaders. I wanted to write a book for managers, and that was a commercial decision on the basis that

every organization has one formal leader, but they have many managers. The proof that I believe in that concept is that the next book is aimed at the employees in those organizations. So, clearly, in a 100-person organization, a book aimed at employees will sell more copies than a book aimed at the CEO.

So, that's a quick run-through. **I think the main thing is that you can never stop promoting the book, but you've got to be sincerely motivated.** If someone senses that you are like a snake oil salesman with your book, you're going to be treated in the same way as a snake oil salesman. But, if you are someone that has created something that you are proud of, which you genuinely want people to enjoy, and if you put your money where your mouth is by saying, "Take a copy of it," it leads to sales in a way that hustling for that one sale would never lead to.

## Connecting with Bob

The four words to remember are "Bob Lee Trust Rules". If you Google that, or you type it into LinkedIn, or even if you go to TrustRules.com, you'll be able to connect with me. LinkedIn is definitely the preferred method because that establishes contact, provides my profile, gives the links to the book, and so on.

You can look at samples of many of the book covers at [TrustRules.com](http://TrustRules.com). There may be eight up there, at the moment, and you can see the approach in similarity and design that leads from one book to the other. So, certainly, seeing one book will tell you that it's connected to any of the other books. Yeah, I would say LinkedIn is definitely best. Just "Bob Lee Trust Rules," and it does.

## Resources

[\*Trust Rules: How the World's Best Managers Create Great Places to Work\*](#)

[TrustRules.com](http://TrustRules.com)

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