

Outside-the-box Offers: A Tale of One Seller's Success (with Amanda Cardenas)

Hello there and welcome to another episode of School of Sellers I am your host Erin, and today we have a very special guest on our podcast. Please give me a hand in welcoming Amanda from Mud and Ink Teaching. And she is here to talk to us about a Shakespeare festival that she created alongside her business partner Marie last year. And Amanda and Marie have managed to take the idea of an online festival, turned it into this incredible lead magnet, and—get this—they even made money off of this free Shakespeare festival. So I'm not going to share any more details because that's what Amanda is here for. But I just have to tell you that you guys are going to be blown away, and your wheels will definitely be turning as you hear Amanda describe what exactly they did. So without further ado, let's welcome Amanda. I am so excited to welcome Amanda to the show today. Amanda is someone that I have gotten to know through a variety of things. I feel like we've gotten to know each other through like Instagram courses, all of those things. And Amanda's here today to talk to us about something really cool, and I guarantee it's something that we've never talked about on the podcast before. But before we dive in, I'm going to give Amanda a chance just to kind of give herself a little introduction, tell us how you got started on TpT, what you're doing now, just anything you feel like sharing.

Amanda:

Sure. Hi, everyone. I'm Amanda. If you're trying to figure out how to pronounce my last name in the show notes, it's Cardenas. My maiden name is Cordis. So you can imagine the year that I got married, my four students were like Mrs. Cardenas. Like they kept like mashing them together. So it's Cardenas. My fifth-grade teacher sister-in-law actually taught everyone at my wedding with white boards Cardenas. It was so funny. So I come from a big family of teachers, and I've been teaching high school English for 13 years. My TpT journey started, oh my gosh, like recreationally probably around 2010. I mean I think I threw some ugly Hunger Games something on TpT, and I was like I want to be Tracy Orman someday. And then I remember like someday I was sitting in my house and I found out about Periscope. Were you ever on Periscope, Erin?

Erin:

I was not, but I know about Periscope.

Amanda:

Those are some long lost days. But I met some really cool TpT people on there, and I ended up making very good friends with the several of them who convinced me to go to the Orlando TpT conference. And that I believe was 2013 or '14, something like that. Whatever year that was, that's when I sat there, and I actually won, with my friend Amanda, we won a raffle to have a coffee with Amy. And we sat there, and I talked to her. And like it dawned on me that this is a company that wants to treat me like an employee and wants to see me succeed and make money. And like all these sessions, just little layers just started dawning on me, like this is a real thing. This isn't just where I dump my random ugly resources. And so that conference was kind of when I started. I remember hearing Shelley Reese talk about her story and just these people who I was like, that's a regular person. I'm a regular person. This is possible. And so from there, like I started to kind of set some goals for myself and become a little bit more ambitious. I realized there was such a thing as a product line, and there were just a lot of like light bulbs that went off in Orlando. And so kind of like from Orlando is where I started to kind of grow and take TpT a little bit more seriously year after year.

Erin:

I mean that's so crazy. There is something about the magic of the conference that just solidifies what you're doing and really makes it feel like real but also, yeah, that you can actually do big things with it.

Amanda:

And seeing the like the honchos, right? Like I met Adam. Like I shook his hand, and he looked at my face. And I was so seen, and there was just, I don't know, it was very cool to like hear, if you've never actually heard about like how TpT got started and all of that kind of stuff, like to be part of it was like, oh, like I had never considered being part of anything other than a school.

Erin:

That is so cool. I love that story. And I would strongly encourage anyone like even if you're just starting out if you can possibly make a conference happen for you earlier rather than later because I feel like a lot of us, like we tend to like put it off. Like maybe in a couple years when I'm actually making more money. But if you can make it happen earlier on, oh my gosh, it's so good. So okay. Amanda, I'm so, like I don't even know where to start because I'm just loving this topic so much. So today Amanda is going to share with us a really cool, creative, kind of outside of the box way that she has found to showcase her TpT resources but more importantly provide this really cool experience for teachers online. So why don't we just dive in, Amanda, and just tell us what you did and like how it all came to be last year. Because that was your first event last year, right?

Amanda:

Yes.

Erin:

Okay. And people are probably like, what the heck are they talking about? Tell us what you've done.

Amanda:

So okay. So a tiny little bit of backstory. I am the co-host of a podcast with my partner Marie. She's not really doing a lot of TpT. She actually has a YouTube channel. But Marie and I co-host the Brave New Teaching podcast. And last year around August of 2020, we launched our first course. And so we have a course out in the world. It's called Curriculum Rehab, and the course is really geared toward upper like secondary educators who are looking to do something different than just what a textbook is providing and really like harness inquiry driven design. So it's a really hard thing to do by yourself. So we found this niche. We built this course. Okay. So the course was great. The course did well. But after two launches, we were like, we really need a strong lead magnet. So this festival actually began as a way to build our leads and get a huge list of very niched down English teachers on our list so that when we launched again in May, we had an audience that not only was fresh but they had just witnessed our expertise and like we had created some credibility with what we know how to do. And so we decided to design as this lead magnet which I think Erin talked about in the intro was called the Shakespeare Teacher Festival. And that's where it all began.

Erin:

That's amazing. Oh my gosh. So tell us, first of all, I love the idea of using that for a lead magnet and then feeding it into your course launch. That is so smart because that's so different than the lead magnets you typically hear about and the ones we typically create for our business, right?

Amanda:

Yes.

Erin:

So what was the overall structure of the festival? Like I want to know about like the setup and like all the pieces and parts that you guys decided to include.

Amanda:

So we were already using Kajabi for our course and like we're at like the bottom level. So if you guys haven't entered into that world yet, it comes with three products. So we were only using one out of our three. So we're like, well, let's just use another slice of what we're already paying for. And so we put our conference festival. We called it a festival because that was more fun. And with Shakespeare, you hear like Shakespeare in the Park and everything. And so we built our festival in Kajabi, and we built our festival under the guise of like this is a lead magnet. It's free general admission. So we wanted to provide high quality, free training in the area of teaching Shakespeare but also at a limit, right? Like we were going to give away our expertise, but we weren't going to make like hour-long videos. It was going to be something we tried. I'm a bit of a talker so it's kind of hard. But we tried to contain our festival, kind of each of our days that we dripped out to videos that were around 25 to 30 minutes. And so the festival we organized as a five-day festival. So each day had a topic under the general realm of Shakespeare. So we did like how to introduce it at the beginning of a unit, we did how to close read passages with Shakespeare, we talked about using it with film. And there were a couple other things that I'm already thinking because we're already in the next one. But we had five different topics. And so we created a mini lead magnet for our lead magnet and that was a like a Flat Stanley but we did Flat Shakespeare. And so people could download, like when they registered and they kind of came into like the welcome area, we had some free resources for them waiting to go. And then when the festival started, we just dripped out our days one at a time. And so the free access was the Monday through Saturday. So they had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday content and then Saturday as a catch-up day. And that's where the free access ended. And there was two alternatives if you wanted to pay a little bit more. So I think at the \$25 level, we extended it like across the summer. So it was an April conference, and we left the access open until August 1st. And so that was \$25. And then at the \$99 level, it was lifetime access plus all of our resources. So like we had combined a whole bunch of resources that came up in all of the conversations that we had across those days. And so at the \$99 level, it was free access to the videos for life and all of the resources that we had prepared. So that was where we made money on a free conference.

Erin:

Wow. So okay. I was going to ask about the product side of things. So if they chose not to buy the \$99 option, along the way, did you link the products that you were showing in the videos and everything? Okay.

Amanda:

I did. And I was actually smart enough, well, that's not the right word. I was patient enough with myself to actually use my UTM codes. And I am terrible about that. Like I'm just so lazy. But I knew that I really wanted the data on the UTM codes so that was really awesome. So all the products were also individually linked. So if you came for free and you just wanted one thing, people could go to the store and get the one thing. And that was fine too. It was like the \$99 was like that enticing like all of the things, and a lot of people bought all of the things.

Erin:

Well, and at that level, you're also selling peace of mind knowing that like I have this forever, like there's no urgency. I mean I can't tell you how many times I've done that. I think that is such a genius upsell for people that are like, oh my God, I'm not going to have time to do this.

Amanda:

And we were surprised. We thought it was really high. I mean we kind of priced it that way because we're like, well, what do we have to lose? Like everything's already out there, and if people want it, they can have it. And yeah, it sold pretty well. The only kind of issue we ran into with, and that was like our own tech Kajabi issues is like Kajabi doesn't really offer, and we don't know if there's a platform that does, a way to upgrade your current position, right? So like if you bought the extended access but you wanted to upgrade to the all access, you had to either get refunded and then repurchase or what we created was an offer that was just like that additional amount of money and that was fine. It was a little clunky. It wasn't automated at all. That was kind of frustrating, and we're not sure exactly how we're going to solve that for the next round. But overall, the lead magnet wise, we were very happy. We attracted around 2,500 free registrants to the conference and about 70% of them actually went through all of the videos.

Erin:

Oh my God, those are amazing numbers.

Amanda:

Yeah, yeah. We were really thrilled.

Erin:

So like I mean even if you hadn't made a single penny off of this, just growing your list by that many from one lead magnet. Now granted a lot of work went into one. We say one lead magnet. It's a big one. But that is just so cool. So I have a question. I know you're getting ready to launch a new one, and I have questions about that. But random question.

Amanda:

Yeah.

Erin:

Do you or Marie, did you guys ever take like a, like did you ever get formal training on how to go about doing like an online course or like Kajabi? Or did you just kind of self-teach yourself? How did you get into that?

Amanda:

We mostly taught ourselves. I know that Marie went through Amy Porterfield's whatever.

Erin:

Digital Course Academy?

Amanda:

Yes. She had done the legwork on Digital Course Academy so she knew a lot about kind of like how to structure, kind of like the very long launch. Like we started launching our course in probably June, and the doors didn't open until August. But truthfully, we found that method utterly exhausting. Also rewarding. Like we had a wonderful first launch, and our second launch was when I was home sick with COVID in the winter. It was really rough, and we did well-ish there too. I mean we launched our course twice during a pandemic. I mean it was just, I don't even. But for the most part, we're self-taught. I mean Kajabi, we're self-taught, and we don't pay for the extra access to their 24/7 customer service. So we're on the bottom of the rung there. But we're happy to be on it. But yeah, we're pretty self-taught.

Erin:

I just think that's so cool because I feel like if you've never, like if all you've ever done is just TpT. And again, I say just TpT. Using that term very loosely. But if you're branching out and you hear about things like Kajabi and course creation, I think it's just so intimidating if you've never done it. But it's doable. Like it's totally doable in terms of figuring it all out. So I think it's cool to hear success stories from.

Amanda:

Yeah, it's doable. And I think as a teacher like I loved that like on TpT I create resources, but when I do a course, I'm teaching again. And I really love that part of when you're going to create your own business, like you get to define what all those pieces are. And I don't know that I'm going to love creating more and more and more courses, but I have started making more TpT video. And I think that was kind of helpful this summer. I heard a lot about that at this summer's conference and just the idea of having, I think it was Danielle Hall who talked about that flagship product. And I really thought about also like that flagship product needs to have a flagship video, not a product preview but like an actual video.

Erin:

Right.

Amanda:

And that's helped me too because now I don't feel a pressure like I have to create courses all the time. But if I want to blab around for 30 minutes about how much I love this novel unit and what it did in my classroom and how it changed my life, like that's going to make people want to buy my stuff, and I get to talk about how effective it was with kids.

Erin:

Right. Not to mention you can then use that video anywhere you want. Like you can share it on Instagram. You can put it on TikTok if you wanted. You could put it in your product preview. Like blog post. I mean it's just endless. And I feel like creating a course, yeah, it makes the video side of things feel more doable and less intimidating which is an awesome thing because videos are always a good thing to add to your repertoire I feel like.

Amanda:

Oh yeah. And if anyone's interested in doing something like this, a festival like this, I mean we're happy to connect with you. And the cool thing about this option too is that what we found, like our little dirty secret, is usually like I think what we're told, and I think this is for the most part right, is like less is more. Like don't give away everything. But we found that the more we packed into the festival, the more people were willing to pay to have it longer. So we really did put a lot into it, and I know Marie actually filmed herself in her classroom a couple of days doing some of the things that we were talking about in the festival. She was actually in a Shakespeare unit at the time. Same thing, she's going to actually do our little lead magnet lesson for our next one we're doing on dystopia is we actually do a picture book. We read *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* to introduce dystopia to our students.

Erin:

Oh my gosh.

Amanda:

She's going to film herself doing the lesson and include it as part of what we're doing. So that's very helpful if you do want to make this a profitable festival rather than just a lead magnet. That's the way to go.

Erin:

That's interesting because that's my philosophy all the time too is always over deliver. And it's human nature I think to like not want to give too much away. But think about it. I mean nowadays online, people can get a lot of stuff for free. So really wowing them is key I think, and that's really interesting that you guys had that experience. So tell me a little more about your new one coming up because I know you said that Cloudy with Chance of Meatballs, how you're introducing it. So it's all about dystopian novels. And oh my gosh, is there anything you can share about it? I get excited thinking about this.

Amanda:

Yeah, absolutely. So we're replicating all of the things that worked and ditching all the things that didn't. So we are actually, we're kind of taking away some of the product stuff. So Marie and I have disproportionate amounts of things to contribute. So what we decided was we're just going to do all links and no \$99 option this time just because it was a lot of work. Because what we basically did was open up a TpT store for our podcast because we both were going to share in the profits. We put our business PayPal on there and everything. And I was combining all of our resources, and it was so much work that we just decided to do \$25 for extended access and then \$50 for lifetime. And like the payment is only for access, and then all of the resources will be separate. So that was a big shift. Otherwise, the festival is exactly the same. We kick it off on Monday, September 27th, and the first video is all about introducing your unit, it's about how to design essential questions. The second day we're going to look at how to really use the genre to teach critical thinking and like the elements of what consists of a dystopia and how to kind of connect that a little bit to world events. And then on Wednesday, so day three is going to be kind of cool. We're going to actually, we're taking a different approach for this one. Instead of being one video, we're going to do about six five-minute videos and cover six different whole class novels. So I'm going to be talking about *Fahrenheit 451*, *Brave New World*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. And so I'm going to have three separate videos. So like whatever you teach, like you could go just watch those or if you have some that you've ever wanted to teach, but you don't have to watch all of them. So we're going to try to keep them short and just like best practices when doing this or like what not to miss when you're teaching this novel. And then Marie's going to do three other ones. I think she's doing *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *Hunger Games* maybe. I can't remember what her three are right now. And then the fourth day will be all about teaching literature circles. So like if you don't want to have a core text, you just want kids to do choice, Marie is going to cover all of that. And then on the fifth day, we're going to talk about our favorite supplementals so short stories, video, film, poetry, all of the goodies that can be weaved in throughout the unit, kind of like our top 20 favorites and what not to miss. Because I think the same things are taught year after year after year, and it would be really cool to branch out for people but they sometimes don't know how. So five days. It's a lot of stuff.

Erin:

I'm just thinking like if you're a teacher that teaches that stuff, you're just crossing off a ton of stuff for them just with that one week.

Amanda:

Oh yeah.

Erin:

Oh my gosh. That's amazing. What's your favorite novel to teach in general?

Amanda:

Oh my gosh. Well, I would say I have deep affection for a lot of novels. To teach, *Fahrenheit 451* is probably my number one. It's timeless. My second favorite and I've only gotten to teach it once is *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. And I could cry just thinking about it right now and what's going on in Afghanistan. It's the story of these two women who lived through the Taliban rule, and like I think about them now. I know they're fictional, but I think about them now. And oh my word, I just think about all the women they represent. And that was one of the most beautiful novels I've ever taught.

Erin:

I've never read that one. I'm going to have to read it.

Amanda:

It's by the same author as the author of *Kite Runner*.

Erin:

Oh okay.

Amanda:

Yep. He's got three really big ones and *Suns* not popular. But it was one of the most moving books I've ever read and taught.

Erin:

Oh my goodness.

Amanda:

Yeah. Add to your list.

Erin:

I will. My list, oh my gosh.

Amanda:

My mom read it. She's like, it's so sad. I'm like, mom, I'm an English teacher, mom.

Erin:

Right? Well, I don't know. I feel like I'd much rather read something that evokes emotion than something that's just like, I mean there's a time and a place for everything obviously.

Amanda:

Yes, absolutely.

Erin:

Oh my gosh. Well, I am like so excited to hear about all this. And like I just think it's genius, and I think it's going to make a lot of sellers think about ways that they can kind of think outside the norm and really do something different. Because I think teachers are ready for something different. We go through these phases where they're saying the same thing again and again. So it's becoming increasingly important to really stand out and not only do something different but it's so meaningful for them too. So I think that's so amazing.

Amanda:

Well, and you can think about like how captive you're going to have people and just establishing yourself as an expert in your field. I know a lot of other sellers do this in different ways. Like I know they do this in Facebook lives, and I know a lot of people will do like a series of Facebook lives. It's the same thing. We like having everybody all in one place. We like kind of that the Kajabi or whatever, Teachable or Thinkific or whatever you're using. I kind of like having this space that they're returning to over and over again. And the fact that when you do it free, like a whole department can sign up together, and like we encourage that like not only because we want to be seen in front of them but we also think genuinely like the best professional development is when you're working together with your teammates and taking someone else's knowledge and applying it right away to your own students in your own classrooms. What does it look like at our school? Okay. Like I love Amanda's idea here. But what does that look like for this class or this class? And so we can encourage that kind of collaboration, we can get seen and heard in front of a large group of teachers, and hopefully just be like a go-to down the road.

Erin:

Yeah. I love that. Well, and that's exactly, you read my mind. I was thinking like how many of these teams and schools are going to start returning to your online festivals again and again and again? I mean, oh, so cool. It gives me chills.

Amanda:

Yeah. Well, thank you for talking about it today. It's so fun to be here. I listen all the time so it's really cool to be on the other side.

Erin:

Well, you're not off the hook yet. I do have some lightning round questions to ask you. You know I love my lightning rounds. Okay. You ready?

Amanda:

Yep.

Erin:

Let's start off super easy. Chocolate or vanilla?

Amanda:

Chocolate.

Erin:

Okay. What's your favorite fashion trend now or like ever?

Amanda:

Okay. I don't do it anymore but like scarves. I was on the scarf trend for a very long time.

Erin:

I feel like we all were. Like the infinity ones.

Amanda:

Yeah. And looping it around my neck. I have a kind of a larger chest so I was always nervous about that when teaching, and I was like, I just got to put a scarf on. Scarf every day.

Erin:

A scarf solved everything.

Amanda:

It's seriously like made the same outfit different, whatever.

Erin:

Yes. And it was so, okay, that needs to come back maybe.

Amanda:

I don't know if it was a favorite, but I know that, I mean it was fun. I mean I *[inaudible 00:25:34]* anymore.

Erin:

Wow, I love it. Okay. What's your favorite restaurant?

Amanda:

This little Mexican place by our house is so good. It's called Tacos *[inaudible 00:25:45]*. It's my fave.

Erin:

Do you have a specific favorite type of taco?

Amanda:

Yeah. Well, I get the burrito suizo.

Erin:

Okay.

Amanda:

Tacos Al Pastor hands down. I sent an email to my list a few weeks ago that said let me be your pre-marinated meat, and it was all about how much I loved Tacos Al Pastor. But like I can't make it. So I'm not good at it. And I said, let your butcher do your meat. I said, let me be your butcher. I'm going to make all your lessons for you.

Erin:

That's hilarious.

Amanda:

I got a lot of responses. Like the extended metaphor was extra, but I'm here for it.

Erin:

I bet you had a really high open rate for that one.

Amanda:

I did.

Erin:

People are like, what?

Amanda:

The pressure for the next one.

Erin:

That's amazing. All right. Are you a MAC or a PC gal?

Amanda:

Mac.

Erin:

Yes. Okay. And last but not least. I feel like I already know the answer to this. But do you prefer audio books or real books?

Amanda:

Oh God. Okay. So right now audiobooks.

Erin:

Okay. I'm surprised.

Amanda:

So I have entered this phase of my life. I have two young children. I have a two-year-old and a three-year-old. And my two-year-old is great. Like she goes to bed on her own. My three-year-old now, like all of a sudden wants me in his room a little bit more. So if he ever wants me to like lay down with him or whatever, like I just bring my headphones in and I just plug them in and like I feel like that's how I get a lot of my reading done is in the dark or while I'm driving.

Erin:

I feel like that works. And I'm glad that was your answer because I consider myself like a pretty well-read person. But since I had kids, it's like audio books all the time. And I'm like I feel bad saying I read a book when I'm just listening. But I know it's the same thing. I know it's the same thing. But oh my gosh.

Amanda:

I do buy books. Like I probably buy five books a week on Amazon. Like I don't know why. Like they're just going to shelve. Like physically having it, the kids know that your attention is not on them. So like having your headphones in, they don't know that you're ignoring them.

Erin:

It's so true. I am so on board with that. Sometimes I'll just like walk around the house with my air pods.

Amanda:

Yes, I'm listening.

Erin:

I love it. Well, okay, thank you, Amanda, so much. This was such a pleasure. I can't even.

Amanda:

Oh, thank you for having me.

Erin:

Thank you. Thanks again so much to Amanda for taking the time to share with us all about this incredible idea for your teacher business. If you want to check out Amanda's Instagram, you can find her at [@MudAndInkTeaching](#) on Instagram, and you can also check out Amanda and Marie's podcast called Brave New Teaching and it is available on all listening platforms on your phone. So enjoy. Thanks again, Amanda. This was awesome, and I will catch you guys here next week.

Welcome to the School of Sellers

What is the School of Sellers?

We are a group that is committed to helping teacher sellers in all stages of their business. We like to provide tips, tools, and resources that aid in building your business while making it feel doable every step of the way.

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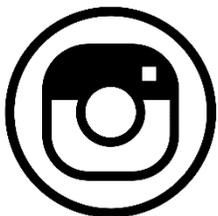
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