
Transcript

Guest Expert Michele Promaulayko

Keri:

Hey Michele, I'm so excited to have you here today, and Nutrition School students, you are in for such a treat today. Michele Promaulayko is joining us. And aside from being one of my closest friends in the world and just an overall absolutely incredible, amazing woman, she's so inspiring and just an incredible person. You are. And I'm so grateful and blessed to have her as a friend, but also a colleague for many years. And today, you are all going to be so lucky to receive, and you're going to be so happy when you receive them, amazing tips from Michele on the do's and don'ts of getting published.

Keri:

But before we even get started, I just want to give you a teeny bit of background on Michele. In case you don't know her, you might know Michele, but in case you don't, Michele was the Editor-in-Chief of Women's Health Magazine for many years, where she led the magazine to receive the prestigious National Magazine Award for general excellence, and among many other awards. She is also the Editor-in-Chief of Yahoo Health and the author of the book, 20 Pounds Younger, and has done a million, many other wonderful, incredible things in the health and wellness world. And is just, like I said, an incredible, empowering woman, and you are going to receive her amazing tips today on the do's and don'ts of getting published. And Michele, I know our Nutrition School students are... I mean, they're just so lucky to get this incredible knowledge, exclusively for them.

Michele:

Wow, Carrie, thank you for such a gracious introduction. You can do all my introductions from here on out. You're hired.

Keri:

Well, it's all true. It's all true. So, you deserve it all. So, anyway, yeah, let's get started. The do's and don'ts of getting published. I'm so excited for... I'm wondering all this, too.

Michele:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you need no help from me, but I'm super excited to give the information, and it helps me, too, because then nutritionists know how to pitch me, know how to pitch my colleagues. And so, it's a symbiotic session we're having here. It's good for them. It's good for me, too. So, happy to do it.

Keri:

All right. Awesome. All right. Let's get started. You're absolute... I know we talked about doing some do's. You have some do's and some don'ts, so you tell me. I mean, let's start with the negative and then go positive. So, what's are your first don't?

Michele:

Okay. We can go back and forth, we can mix it up. And it's all positive, it's just things that the average person doesn't know about getting published, so there are no dumb questions. I'm just going to try to clear up some of the confusion. So, the first thing is, I think a lot of people who don't work in publishing think, "I should write the whole idea and submit that to an editor," but that's actually not true. And the reason it's not true is that every editor really wants to assign a story that is specific to their publication or, in our case, a website, a digital magazine. And so, the editor is going to want to give you specific instructions, going to talk to you about the tone of the brand and things like that. And so, if you're just writing a piece without any of that feedback, chances are you're not going to get it right. So, first tip, don't submit the fully complete article. You want to engage an editor and talk about ideas.

Keri:

Yeah, that's a really great tip. And even for book writing, too, I mean, I know people have said that to me. They've said, "Well, what do you mean? You didn't write the book and then sell it?" I said, "No, I know what I was going to do for every chapter or every single part of it." You can have the concept, but you have to know if someone wants it. So, don't spend the energy in the idea and the concept, and then you write it after with the direction of the person who's going to publish it.

Michele:

Exactly. And that's what an editor's for. An editor is your partner in getting this right, and so there's a give and take and a back and forth and stuff that needs to happen before you submit the whole piece.

Keri:

Oh, I love that. Great tip.

Michele:

Yeah. So, the second thing I want to tell people is, again, pitch a story idea, but when you pitch a story idea, make sure that it's specific enough. You don't want to pitch a general topic. And I think that's where a lot of new people to publish and go wrong. They would pitch something like, "I want to talk about going gluten free," but that's a huge topic. And so, you want to pitch something that's a little bit more thin sliced, and you want to look at the publication or the site you're pitching and kind of see what's the sensibility of what this place does? How can I nail it the first time? So, for us, it might be, "Five ways going gluten free can help your skin." I'm just making that up off the top of my head, but it's a more specific idea. It's more narrow, it's more special. So, don't pitch like a huge topic. Pitch an idea.

Keri:

Right, right. I love that. And that's, again, it's just analogous to something I do with clients that would be similar to, you can't say to a client, "Eat vegetables." It's like it goes right over them. It doesn't do anything. Instead of eating vegetables, they're not even absorbing it. They're glancing it over. But if you say, "Incorporate greens at lunch and dinner every day," for that week or whatever, they might actually do it. So, it's sort of the same type of thing, being really specific. I love that.

Michele:

Exactly.

Keri:

Great. Okay.

Michele:

Yes.

Keri:

All right. What's your next one?

Michele:

Okay, the other thing, especially-

Keri:

These are so good for... By the way, our Nutrition School students are going to.... I know they're eating these up right now because I just think these are the types of things so many people in health and wellness really want to be getting their work out there. And I think people are like, "Well, how do I begin? What do I do?" So, this is really great.

Michele:

Well, I'm glad I could help. So, the next thing is, especially if you're pitching digital sites, you have to be timely. So, news hooks are great, and they're happening all the time, and it's not just a study that's been released, although it could be that, it could be a celebrity something. Like, for instance, this past week, Tom Brady and Giselle's personal chef made a comment about how they eat 80% vegetables, and so we did a story, "Could you eat like Tom and Giselle?" And it was all about that sort of breakdown in your diet, on and on and on.

Michele:

So, the point is, we used celebrity hook, something that was going on in the zeitgeist, to craft a story. And that's always great because people are already talking about it, so it's kind of trending, and then you can get in on the conversation. And you can also give your own take. You can find a fresh new angle. It doesn't have to be a rehash of what people are already talking about, but the point is, it's not an idea that could have run the week before or the week after. It's that week or that day.

Keri:

Yeah, that's really good. That's really good. And I think that's hard for people, though. Sometimes they think they come up the idea and then they're trying to craft it and craft the picture, to craft the story, and waiting and waiting, and then all of a sudden that moment has passed. So, how do people deal with that?

Michele:

Right. And that's the thing is that, if you're going to go the timely route, which I highly recommend, you have to be prepared to turn that idea around really quickly.

Keri:

Okay. That's a really good point. Yeah. You have to be like ready to do it and know that you have the time in the day to do it that day. Don't do it if you know you're about to leave for vacation you can't sit and write, don't pitch it because-

Michele:

Exactly.

Keri:

Right. Okay. So, make sure that you can actually get the job done? Okay. That's good.

Michele:

Yeah. And listen, there are some evergreen ideas that are great and that will always work, and I'm not saying that you can never pitch those, but I think timely ideas trump those. And timely ideas also show that you're really paying attention to what's going on in nutrition news and when people are talking about these topics, and that you're paying specific attention to what that publication might want instead of just saying, "I'm going to pitch five anti-inflammatory food." Which, by the way, is a good topic and that information needs to get out there, and there might be a time and place for it, but when you're starting to break in, I think you'll impress more with a specific idea and a timely one.

Keri:

Okay. I love that. I love that. Great. Okay. All right. What's your next one?

Michele:

Okay. So, this one is a little less technical. It's more about you guys. It's about being a little bit of a specialist. And so, of course you want to have a broad base of nutritional knowledge. You want to be able to talk on a variety of subjects. But if you're known as a little bit of a specialist, it gives you an edge, because that way, if we're doing a story in your area of expertise, we're going to naturally think of you because you've already carved out that niche a little bit. So, Keri, I always think of you, among your many talents, as somebody who can talk about responsible weight loss very authoritatively. Obviously, you can talk about anything nutrition-related, but that's kind of your niche where you have really strong information and really strong expertise, and some of your books have been based on that. And it could be paleo, it could be vegan, it could be that you're a smoothie expert and you're for that, but I think just carving out some kind of specialty is helpful.

Keri:

Yeah, that's a really, really good point because I think... And we've talked about this in other webinars and things I've done, but we've talked about the idea of sort of trying to be everything to everyone. And you really have to figure out like, are you going broad? Do you have some specific... And if you are broad, like I would say with nutritious life, like we reach a wide range of people but with a specific philosophy, and I always say, and try to take their nutrition up a notch. So, we go broad, but still, it's a specific philosophy that carries through and is consistent. Other people might take the route of going, they're all paleo or they're vegan, and everybody they educate, it's on being vegan, right? And neither route is wrong, but you have to kind of know which way you're going. So, like you said, when you go to me for something, it is still a broad topic, but it's still specific within a broad topic, I guess you could say. For other people, like you said, a smoothie expert or a juicing expert or... Anyway, I think that's really, really good advice.

Michele:

Yeah. It's maybe even more of a concentration than even a specialty, and it obviously should be something that you're passionate about, something that you feel driven to do. You're not like, "Ooh..." Yeah, you want to fill a void. You don't want to go into a space that's super saturated

necessarily, unless you have something new to say, but I think that's something that people wouldn't automatically think about but that I find really helpful. And that way if you're that person, that specialty, then I will go to you first when I have, say, an in-house idea that I need a source for.

Keri:

Yeah, that's a great... I love, love, love that tip. This is actually, I don't know if you were going to bring this up at all, but you made me think of something. What about these new health and wellness writers out there and they don't... I know you obviously, and I've been doing this for so many years, I know a lot of different editors, but what if they don't have those contacts yet? How do they begin to get these contacts?

Michele:

I think that's probably one of the hardest things, right? Making that first connection. So, you can definitely try LinkedIn, and if an editor has their email there, then they're sort of open to being contacted. And again, contact them with specific information, a specific idea, send them a note on LinkedIn telling them why you want to connect, start following brands that you admire on social media. And then, from there, kind of figure out which editor covers which topical area you're interested in. And then, just reach out. And as long as you're not sending an email that's a novel or a note via LinkedIn or friending everybody on LinkedIn all at once at one publication, you want to sort of target the people who are most appropriate, and you can always pick up the phone and try to call if there's an assistant in the department and ask them who the appropriate person is to pitch a specific topic or topical area.

Keri:

Okay. Amazing. And I like that point that you said about writing an email novel. Don't write a whole long thing. Send a little, quick email because I think that that's something that happens. I know when I get emails that are too long, you're like, "Whoa, I'm going to put that aside and read that later." And even the organization of the emails.

Michele:

Exactly. And later ever comes. Yeah.

Keri:

Right. And then later never comes up. And even the organization of an email, you want it to be easy bullet points, easy to read, you can glance over, you know where the person wants to talk about. I think that's so important because just the way you put out that information is going to, obviously, affect the way it's absorbed and whether or not it's going to be absorbed at all. So, I like that.

Michele:

Yeah. And the other thing I want to say is, in today's world, with social media being what it is, we're possibly going to find you. It's not just you coming to us, we're potentially going to find you. If you're out there saying important things, creating a presence, building strong platforms, chances are... And you can tweet at us or you can make us aware of things or tag us in things, and that's what's so awesome about social media, is that this is a two way street. This isn't just you guys coming to us. And so, on that note, I want to say that it's important that all the social platforms that you have really represent your brand. And so, if you have one Instagram feed, for instance, and you have some personal stuff on there, that's okay if there's a little bit of the kid's stuff or the cat stuff or friends stuff, but you want it to mostly be about your brand and about what you do, if that's your only feed.

Michele:

I mean, you can have one personal feed that maybe is a private account and then a public account that's more your professional one. That's a lot of going back and forth. Yeah. So, just make sure that your social platforms represent your profession, your professional philosophy, and not necessarily every ancillary thing that you like and all your hobbies and your personal life, because that's just distracting from the message that you're trying to send.

Keri:

Right. And I think that's a really good point. And because editors can find you, you have to make sure what they're finding is representative of what you want to be putting out there.

Michele:

Yeah. And also, that there's nothing on there that might be polarizing or that could turn them off. I mean, you never know. You can't please everybody and know in advance what an editor's

proclivity would be, but I just think staying neutral or staying on topic is really the best case scenario for the platforms that are about what you do.

Keri:

Yeah. Great point. Great, great, great point. I love that. There's something I wanted to ask you about... Oh, I know what it was, because, again, you made me think of this for... What if you really want to write and it's just not clicking? You don't feel like you're a writer, but you really want to write. What do you suggest on-

Michele:

This is like one of the ones that's so tough because not everybody is a natural born writer, obviously. It's a specific career for some of us. But then, there are people who, with enough practice and enough reading and enough coaching, can become good writers, or can become strong writers. And then, there are people who that's not their affinity. They have other strengths. And if you know that you're that person, or you've been told that you're that person, then maybe it's not writing, maybe it's going to be contributing as a source that we attribute information to. And that's super valuable because it's raising your visibility. It's raising your practice, your name, and it's lending authority to what you say. It doesn't mean you have to have a byline.

Keri:

Right. That's a very, very good point. You could give expert quotes, you could even do recipe analysis. You could do, I mean, especially in workouts, you could do videos. I mean, there's so many other things, recipes, there's a lot of different things that you could do. And that's the point. I mean, it's really knowing your strengths and weaknesses. Yeah.

Michele:

Exactly. And know your strengths and weaknesses and ask people who are close to you that you trust what they think your specific strengths and weaknesses are. You just mentioned videos a few seconds ago. Some people might not be great writers but they're great on camera. You're both. So, you've got it all going on. You've got the whole package. But some people don't, but they're great on camera so they can start a YouTube channel or have a really robust Facebook that has tons of video content or go on TV or pitch their local station, something like that.

Keri:

Yeah. That's great. Great point. Something else that we've talked about before is disclosing if you have any conflict.

Michele:

Yes.

Keri:

Any conflict of interest. Because I think that that is so important, because I think, sometimes... I mean, I know someone had a young RD, or new RD I should say, had brought that up to me when she was doing something in the media, and she had prepped the entire segment and had been working with the producers. And then, the day before it was like, "Oh, yeah, but I work with so-and-so." And they said, "No, we're talking about this specific brand, and that brand is an advertiser and blah, blah, blah, blah." Anyway, so how does that work?

Michele:

Yeah. I think that's less likely to happen with new nutritionists and more with established people who have these endorsements. I mean, it's unlikely that somebody who's just getting into the field is going to have those endorsements, but it's still just a great reminder even to keep in mind when you're attaching yourself to brands, when those opportunities come your way, to ask yourself, "Is this going to augment my profession, my practice, and what I had to say in a good way? Or is it going to limit my opportunities?" Because it really does erode credibility for both you and the publication if you don't disclose a conflict of interest. And then, you're writing on that topic and you're not telling readers, you're not telling your editors, and you're just making it seem like, "Hey, I'm so behind this." But your financially benefiting from it or benefiting from it in some way, so just always be on the up and up about that, because you can really burn a bridge.

Keri:

Absolutely. Yeah. And the example that I give, and actually, the person wasn't new to being an RD, actually I should say, she was a young RD in media. So, she wasn't a new RD, she was a longer time. I should say, new to media. That was the problem. That's why there was a specific conflict, but wanted to get into media so bad that did it. And then, it ended up burning the bridge with the

producer. Exactly. And I said, "You have to say that at the beginning." I said, "If they're doing something, you have to make that aware." So, anyway, I think what you're saying there's a really very, very good point. Always be transparent. Always, always, always. For your readers, for your viewers, and for the relationships, obviously, with editors and producers.

Michele:

Absolutely.

Keri:

Yeah. Really good. This is such good stuff, Michele. I love hearing... And we talk about this stuff all the time, obviously, and we've worked together. Michele, as I said, was the Editor-in-Chief of Women's Health, and that's actually where we originally met. So, I was writing and working with Women's Health under your leadership for so long, so we've obviously talked about so many of these things, but I still learn something from you every time we talk about publishing and writing.

Michele:

Oh, thank you.

Keri:

I do every time. So, I know our students are learning so much from you. Anything else you want to-

Michele:

No, just to sum it up, it's like, be responsive. If you pitch an idea, make sure you're checking back to see if the editor's gotten in touch with you. Don't get discouraged if you don't hear back right away. Editors are super busy. But be responsive, set an email alert for certain people, set an out of office if you're not going to be available, and just keep up on the news. And that way you can shoot an editor a note and say, "Hey, the new dietary guidelines just came out. Here's what I think about them. Here's what's right about them. Here's what's wrong about them." Have an opinion, have an authoritative, informed opinion, and put it out there. And once you become a go-to, trusted source for an editor, they will go back to you again and again.

Keri:

Right. Because, ultimately, you're helping them. They need to write that story that day, so they say, "Oh, great. I have the person to go to instead of-

Michele:

We need you guys.

Keri:

Right.

Michele:

I mean, I would say I'm not the expert, I'm the conduit to the experts, and that's what I do for a living. So, yeah. Need you guys, badly.

Keri:

Yeah, I love that. I love that. Like you're helping them out, so think about that. You're helping them. And like you said, it works together. So, that's great. I love that. I love that. These were such amazing tips. I loved them all. I really do. And I think they're so incredibly helpful for... I think, writing and getting published for any health and wellness expert is such a big part of what so many of us want to do because we want to get our message out there.

Michele:

Absolutely. You want to scale your business, and you want to touch, help more people. And as I said, we're the conduit to doing that, so go for it.

Keri:

Exactly. Thank so much. Super, super inspiring. I know this was-

Michele:

Thanks, Carrie. Thanks for having me.

Keri:

You are so welcome. Thank you, thank you so much for your time, and hopefully maybe we'll see you back here again.

Michele:

Absolutely. Love to anytime.

Keri:

Okay. Bye.

Michele:

Bye.