

NAME

2023-03-15 Pit Stop Sarah Puckett.mp3

DATE

April 5, 2023

DURATION

59m 14s

7 SPEAKERS

Karen Commins

Anne Flosnik

Sarah Puckett

Jeannie

Speaker6

Speaker7

Speaker8

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:03] Karen Commins

And it's now the top of the hour. And so I want to welcome everyone to the Pit Stop. It's your fortnightly midweek rest area to refuel your drive. I'm Karen Commins. I'm an audiobook narrator and the chief cartographer for NarratorsRoadmap.com. And I'm your host for Pit Stop and with me in the copilot seat is my good friend and award winning audiobook narrator Anne Flosnik, who hosts the Narrator Uplift show here on Clubhouse. How are you this afternoon, Anne?

[00:00:31] Anne Flosnik

Great. So happy to be here with you, Sarah.

[00:00:34] Karen Commins

Well, I'm happy you're here, too. Audiobook narrators who do more than narrate Pull into the Pit Stop and they're sure to inspire you to follow your interests and use all of your talents and gifts. So the conversation is being recorded. You'll be able to relisten or catch parts you missed and want to invite everyone to feel free to comment in the chat and raise your hand in the app if you want to be part of the conversation. So thanks so much for joining us. I am super excited to welcome our guest, Sarah Puckett to the Pit Stop. Sarah is an award winning audiobook narrator of over 300 titles and owner of the production and publishing company Pink Flamingo Productions. She started her career on, and although she does work with publishers, she has built her career through finding her own work with indie authors. Sarah lives in central Illinois and spends any time she isn't working with her family. So welcome to the Pit Stop, Sarah.

[00:01:32] Sarah Puckett

Thank you so much for having me.

[00:01:35] Karen Commins

Well, I'm just really excited to talk with you. Our paths have crossed several times, but it's been a while since I've gotten to actually have a conversation with you. And yeah, I don't think I when we talked before, I don't I wasn't aware then how you got into audiobooks. I heard you tell Rich Miller on the Audiobook Speakeasy that you have a degree in health information technology. I mean, so tell me about that. What were you what were you doing and how did you make the transition to audiobooks?

[00:02:07] Sarah Puckett

Um, so I used to, I used to code infusions and injections and it's just coding is kind of. It's not mindless. You. You have to really know what you're doing. But for me, after, you know, nine years, it was just I've seen it all basically. So I would listen to audiobooks. And while I was working and I was listening to this one book and I wish I had the name of it, um, and it was narrated by Amy McFadden. And I remember thinking, Oh my gosh, these narrators are amazing. And I looked at the narrators and it was just Amy. And I was like, What? And I just started researching one person. Yeah, how do they do this? And so I started researching and then I thought, well, I'll just give it a go. And that's kind of how it came about.

[00:02:58] Karen Commins

So you hadn't been like a lot of people tell me or I've read, you know, they had some background in theater or they were always setting up little plays when they were a child. This was not you.

[00:03:11] Sarah Puckett

That was not me. No, I have no I think maybe I did a play in junior high, but no, nothing else.

[00:03:20] Karen Commins

So you you were listening and you thought, I'd like to do that. So what did you do at that point? You.

[00:03:27] Sarah Puckett

Well, I jumped right into it. I mean, I did I did like I did a lot of research and I did figure out how to do it and on and everything like that. But I really kind of jumped right into it. And very, very quickly I realized I sound nothing like these great narrators. So at that point, I started, you know, getting a lot of coaching and I coached with Joel Frumkin for a bit, and then I coached with Jamie Matler for about two years. So because I didn't have that performance background, I really had to learn how to perform.

[00:04:06] Karen Commins

Yeah, I've had the same issue myself because I wasn't any kind of drama kid or theater kid. And I think you had some.

[00:04:19] Anne Flosnik

No, no, I don't know, because I started 20 something years ago and there wasn't anybody. So, you know, it just did it up as I went along. And then later on when the were coaches, yes, I got coached again. But that's, I don't know, ten, 15, however many years into my career.

[00:04:36] Karen Commins

So that's interesting that all of us have come from other areas into audiobooks. Well, Sarah, your work has really just blown up. I mean, you've done 300 books and you've not been at it all that long. And so and to see your meteoric rise in audiobooks. And so how did this happen that you started doing a production company on top of narrating?

[00:05:09] Sarah Puckett

Well, when I first started, and probably about two years in, when I really started getting kind of a lot of work, um, that's kind of when dual narration started taking off. And so I had a lot of authors who were requesting dual narration and some authors who would come to me with a book with dual points of view and would say, this would really sound better with a male. So then I would have to go out onto our narrator groups and kind of audition for male narrators. And at that point I was acting as the producer. I was handling the post. I'm also an editor, so I was doing all the editing and I was doing the auditioning and, you know, coordinating with the narrator and everything. And and I just thought it just kept getting more and more and more. And I just kind of at one point thought, why am I really should just have this as a service and then be able to offer it to other narrators as well for authors who are just looking to have their books produced, who don't know you know what to do. I had a lot of authors reach out just completely clueless about the process. So that's kind of why I started Pink Flamingo It. And and also, you know, we we started right off the bat with the marketing. And one of the reason for that was because I was friends with the owners of Audiobook Obsession who did audiobook marketing. And there really weren't that many options for marketing and audiobooks. So we kind of just decided to to add it together and, and add this, have this as a service for authors.

[00:06:53] Karen Commins

And were you and maybe still are hunting down authors or were they hunting you down?

[00:06:59] Sarah Puckett

It's a bit of both. We we absolutely go and hunt down authors. We have maybe we, but well, don't know. I mean, we we have to find clients.

[00:07:14] Karen Commins

So that's a that's a kinder, gentler way to think of it. Yes. Yeah. But so you you're contacting them, but they were also contacting you and I guess many of them, once you've worked for them, are probably referring you to their author friends.

[00:07:33] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, a lot of our work has come from author referrals. We get a ton of emails just where they heard about us from this author that they are friends with and and things like that. So that's really been helpful. And the majority of our work has come from that, which has been nice.

[00:07:53] Karen Commins

Did you I know you said you were getting more and more requests for dual narrations, and I think I saw that you're doing a lot more duet narrations now that. Yes. Did you kind of resist it for a while? Like, I really don't want to be a production company owner. I really just want to narrate. Or What was your thought process on this?

[00:08:16] Sarah Puckett

Uh, I didn't I didn't think of it in that way. For me, the the only hesitancy I had with starting Pink Flamingo was really just imposter syndrome. And my good enough to do this, am I, you know, who am I in this community? Like, I'm just Sara Puckett. Um, why do I think I can start a whole company? And, uh, but as soon as I started it, I kind of just said, okay, let's just give it a go, see how it goes. And as soon as I started it and I opened up our roster, oh gosh, we just had so many narrators who wanted to work with us and that really helped kind of, um, tuck those, those imposter syndrome feelings away and allow me to, to, you know, focus on the work and getting work. But as far as duet. Oh my gosh. Yeah, we do so many of those now.

[00:09:17] Anne Flosnik

How did you found this company, though, Sarah? I mean, did you talk with anybody? Because there's a there's a world apart from what you were doing before to even then doing the performance thing and then now having a business in it. And then the way you said that you did editing just so casually, I mean, where did you learn and who did you reach out to?

[00:09:37] Sarah Puckett

Well for editing. I learned that from Don Barnes. He is amazing. And I learned. Oh, yeah, very yeah, I learned that very, very early on in my career. Probably within the first year. I hired him to teach me all of that just so that I could try to keep the cost down on my side when I was first starting because I did a lot of royalty share in the beginning. Yeah. Um, but when I started Pink Flamingo, I did consult with a business adviser a little bit, but the majority of it has really just been trial and error and there's been a lot of error and learning.

[00:10:16] Anne Flosnik

And when you say a business advisor, because it's always these things that, you know, in our journey we kind of leap over that. But this is where for somebody that might have another, you know, a similar idea, where do you even find a business advisor in the Yellow Pages, basically?

[00:10:35] Sarah Puckett

Um, yeah. Basically I just looked on Google to try to find somebody in my area that I could speak to, and they, they fortunately have a program, cannot remember the name of it. Score, maybe.

[00:10:48] Karen Commins

Score. Yeah. With the Small Business Association has actually retired executives.

[00:10:54] Sarah Puckett

Yeah I'm actually almost certain you Karen actually turned me on to that Oh wow. Because actually talked to Karen also right when I first started about publishing, so.

[00:11:07] Anne Flosnik

Oh, let me see you doing all the right things, Sarah. No wonder you're so good, right?

[00:11:14] Karen Commins

Yeah. Remember we talked a few years ago and. Yeah, you were. I think you were either had just started or were thinking of starting Pink Flamingo. And, um, and I know you were thinking even then of distribution, and we're going to get to that because obviously you've done more than think about it. Yes. Yeah. But it. You know, it's really, like I say, just been exciting to watch you take off. And while I've known of score, I don't know exactly how they guide you. So did they did you meet more than once with this person or did they just give you the big aha? On the first session.

[00:11:57] Sarah Puckett

I met with him. I met with him twice and I really should have met with him way more than that. But I got so busy and just time got away with away from me. I really because I don't have a business background either. Um, I there's a lot of things even now that I just don't know. And so there were a lot I just had a lot of questions about is there a better way I can do this? Is an LLC the right way to go? Am I, you know, things like that. And he was very, very helpful. He would have been way more helpful had I actually spent more time with him, which I should have done. But.

[00:12:40] Karen Commins

Well, I mean, you can't say I should have because clearly what you've been doing has been working for you.

[00:12:46] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yes. I mean, it's just there's so many times during my days where I'm just thinking, gosh, I wish I just knew more, you know, more in depth detail about certain things, certain aspects of business. So there are some things I still need to know.

[00:13:06] Karen Commins

Well, the thing is, though, you know, when we get things all figured out, then the rules change and there's something new to learn.

[00:13:13] Sarah Puckett

Oh, gosh, yes.

[00:13:16] Karen Commins

And I wonder how you divide your time between actually narrating and then running this booming business.

[00:13:24] Sarah Puckett

Yeah. So before I started and that goes back to the 300 titles I've done in nine years or whatever, eight years. And before I started Pink Flamingo, I was recording so much. I mean, so I can't even remember how much. So I still was kind of on that trajectory with recording when I started Pink Flamingo and for the first year. And so this last year, I really kind of slowed down and, and started not taking on as many projects. But I do still try to work record about an hour or two a day. Um, and then the rest of my day is just PHP stuff.

[00:14:11] Karen Commins

And I've always been curious about the name, how you decided on Pink Flamingo.

[00:14:17] Sarah Puckett

Oh gosh. Um, so don't like maybe the year before I opened it, I took, I had business photos done and I am a very I wear a lot of black and gray and, um, and I thought, okay, I'll just put some color in there. So I grabbed this flamingo skirt off of Amazon and I had pictures in them. And then all of a sudden I started getting flamingos sent to my house from everybody because they think I'm obsessed with flamingos.

[00:14:49] Karen Commins

A collection is born. I should have told you that. That in your honor, I am actually wearing a shirt that's got flamingos on it as we speak. So I took a picture of that because I. Because I knew I would be flocking around with the head of the flock.

[00:15:07] Sarah Puckett

Right? Oh, gosh, yes. So. So when I. When I opened it, my husband was like, you just need to be Pink Flamingo Productions. And I was like, okay, I guess that's it. Because I've already made the brand, you know, with myself, with, with flamingos. So people associated that with me. So it just kind of made sense.

[00:15:28] Karen Commins

Are they still sending you things?

[00:15:30] Sarah Puckett

Oh yeah. And I love it. It's so thoughtful, but I do have a lot of flamingos now.

[00:15:40] Karen Commins

Yeah, because now, I mean, like, how would people even know what you've got? You probably got them in every room. I have a couple of flamingos sitting in the booth with me. Those little Beanie Babies. Oh, yeah. So I have those. And I have a couple other. I mean, who doesn't like a flamingo? You know, they're just so much fun. And they make me think of being at the beach and being and relaxed, being relaxed, which, you know, if I'm in the booth, I definitely want to be relaxed.

[00:16:11] Sarah Puckett

Right?

[00:16:13] Karen Commins

Well, you're doing all these things and I'm wondering, are you doing all this yourself? Because then when you said you were doing editing, I'm like, Good Lord, girl. I mean, how do you have time to even sleep or eat? I don't know. Have you, have you until I know you said you were working with marketing, but have you gotten somebody to help you personally, like an assistant?

[00:16:35] Sarah Puckett

Yes, I actually I just did that. I mean, obviously when you start a business of any kind, whether that's as a narrator or as a production company, um, you're really you're really going to be working it pretty heavily until it's off the ground. And so that's what I expected. I expected that I would have to give this pretty much my all. But as I as I get older, I want to give other things less of my all and just spend time with my family and and be present. Um, my kids are growing up, you know, my, my youngest is in high school, so, um, so this last January, I finally got an assistant who is so helpful. She does a lot of my emails. She handles, you know, things that I don't need to necessarily have a say in that she can handle. Um, just so much.

[00:17:37] Karen Commins

You mean January, two months ago. You've just gotten. Wow.

[00:17:43] Sarah Puckett

It's very. It's very hard to give up control. Um, and I do have a partner. Kristen. She. She is, she takes on half of the stuff as well, so. But this last year, we really had more than twice as much work. So we, we more than doubled our workload. So we kind of were, um, scrambling to try to figure out how to get everything done. And so it's been we have a really good team. Behind us. We have a team of producers that that work on the projects and I trust them to handle things. So there's there's other people helping other than just me.

[00:18:26] Anne Flosnik

And how did you find your virtual assistant? If she is virtual.

[00:18:31] Sarah Puckett

Yep, she is. She is actually one of our proofers. And so I when I put out a call that I was looking for an assistant, she, uh, she put in an application and was said, yeah, let's do this. Because she already knew the business. She already knew kind of what we were doing and at least certain aspects of it. So it was kind of a nice transition. Oh, yeah.

[00:18:58] Karen Commins

Well, somebody you already knew their work and had confidence in them and. Yeah, and not having to train them on your process would be a big bonus.

[00:19:08] Sarah Puckett

Yes, yes, yes.

[00:19:11] Anne Flosnik

And trust.

[00:19:12] Karen Commins

Oh, that's. Yeah. Because that was the thing that always worried me. And I did have an assistant for about three days until she ghosted me. And, you know, I was always worried that somebody would take my contacts and, you know, try to set themselves up and contact people and say, oh, Karen sent me or or just not even mention my name and just try to poach things. And so, yeah, we have to really underline that trust being such a huge issue in that decision.

[00:19:44] Sarah Puckett

And I have very solid contracts in place for that scenario.

[00:19:54] Karen Commins

That makes me curious. What do they say?

[00:19:59] Sarah Puckett

Well, just, you know.

[00:20:01] Karen Commins

Mean don't want you to spill your total secrets, but.

[00:20:03] Sarah Puckett

Right, right. It's just there's, you know, there's, like, a loyalty part of it. Um, you know, information about non-disclosures and things like that. It's just. It's a lot. It is a lot of trust. But we do have we do have contracts in place for all of our people as well. We're we're very we didn't always but we're getting to the point now where, you know, there's only so many times you can be screwed over before you put something in place.

[00:20:35] Karen Commins

Well, and I saw you just celebrated your third anniversary for Pink Flamingo. Yeah. I mean, I think just a couple of weeks ago, wasn't it?

[00:20:43] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yep. Beginning of March. March 8th, I think.

[00:20:48] Karen Commins

I mean, that's just fantastic. Yeah. And I wanted to talk to you about the Allure Conference, because I knew you and Dakota Willink had and probably others had planned it for two years. And I haven't seen a whole lot about it, but I thought that was such a huge thing to take on. On top of everything else you were already doing is to plan an actual physical conference somewhere.

[00:21:16] Sarah Puckett

Oh, my gosh. It was. So when we when we decided to do this was prior to Pink Flamingo starting, um, publishing. And we had, we had grown, of course, but it was right in 20, it was like June or something of 2020. So it was only a couple months after we opened. So it was still I was still in the mind frame of this isn't really going to be that big, and I can handle putting on this conference and oh my gosh, it was it was a nightmare. I mean, it was wonderful, but it was a lot of work.

[00:21:51] Karen Commins

Yeah, There's so much going on with that. Excuse me. Sorry. And I think you hit it in Chicago and I know you're in Illinois, but you're you're not in Chicago. Right. So I guess you had to go to the hotel and meetings there and.

[00:22:12] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, multiple times we had to drive up and it's about three hours from me, so it's not too bad. But it was it was a lot of work. It was very satisfying. It was rewarding. I loved it. It turned out amazing, but it was. We decided not to do it again.

[00:22:28] Karen Commins

Oh, that was my next question. For those who don't know, it was it was all audiobook narrators. And and were they all romance? Sarah? Was it? They were. And it was so it was them and fans and and was it a one day or two day or how long did it last?

[00:22:49] Sarah Puckett

I believe it was three days. Wow. It was yeah, it was a lot. It was a lot of of stuff happening. There were, um, sessions. There was a parties. Um, and then, of course, the signing, it was, there was just it was a lot. It was great though.

[00:23:10] Karen Commins

But once and done, it was so great. We don't want to do it again. Yep.

[00:23:15] Sarah Puckett

I mean, we, we're looking at virtual stuff now, just. Just things that are easier to manage.

[00:23:22] Karen Commins

Well, and what a great segue because you're doing a virtual conference for narrators in two weeks, right?

[00:23:28] Jeannie

Yes.

[00:23:29] Sarah Puckett

I'm so excited about it.

[00:23:31] Karen Commins

I am, too, because I signed up.

[00:23:33] Jeannie

Yeah. Yes, me too. Yep.

[00:23:38] Karen Commins

So how did that come about?

[00:23:40] Jeannie

Well, we well.

[00:23:42] Sarah Puckett

Basically, we just wanted to continue to educate. We that's one that was one of my big things with starting, um, Pink Flamingo is educating not only narrators, but also authors. And so we wanted to continue to offer that in some way. Um, but, you know, not, not in person and the virtual thing just seemed like the best way to go. And it really has been. It's been so much less stress, so.

[00:24:13] Karen Commins

Yeah, you have a really great lineup of speakers and topics and it yeah, I'm excited. I can't wait. I'm not going to APEC this year. And so this is going to give me the same kind of vibe without getting on a plane to go there and, you know, being with narrator colleagues and learning. Yeah, more things.

[00:24:37] Sarah Puckett

With APEC last year being on, being virtual, I just really wanted to do something again where narrators could attend that are unable to go to APEC because I'm, I'm not going either, So And.

[00:24:52] Karen Commins

And you're not going, are you?

[00:24:54] Anne Flosnik

No, no, no. Not this time. First time. Don't know how many years.

[00:24:58] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:24:58] Karen Commins

It seems like there are a number of us who, for whatever reason won't be in New York at the end of the month.

[00:25:05] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:25:08] Anne Flosnik

So it's perfect timing. Sarah.

[00:25:10] Jeannie

Yeah, well.

[00:25:11] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, I wanted to make sure it was like a couple days after, but at the same time, so everybody feels like they're kind of getting that little boost, you know, you just need that boost and conferences can do do that and help and kind of help you get out of the winter rut and feel more energized and ready for, you know, your career.

[00:25:33] Jeannie

Absolutely.

[00:25:34] Karen Commins

And it was incredibly affordable. Yeah, I actually was a bit shocked that you priced it the way you did because it's a lot of content and a lot of people sharing their expertise and experience and, you know, talk about bang for the buck for the narrator. It's. Yeah. Really astonishing and wonderful. I mean, I totally commend you for that. But I was thinking, I don't think they're going to make a lot. How can they make the money on this? Because, you know, there's so many people on the agenda.

[00:26:10] Sarah Puckett

Well, basically, I wanted to cover the what we're going to pay the coaches who are going to be attending and doing sessions. And then also, um, just my time and it does it did. We had a ton of people sign up, you know, the next time we might bump it up a little bit. But I do want to keep it affordable for the narrators.

[00:26:33] Karen Commins

I think that's a terrific thing. I've had people cancel from Narrators roadmap and tell me that they hated to cancel, but money was a little tight or, you know, it was a total financial decision. And so I admire and applaud you for having that stance and thinking of the narrator community and making it affordable and accessible for a lot more people.

[00:27:00] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:27:05] Karen Commins

I feel like I'm going to cough again. And could you steer the ship for.

[00:27:11] Anne Flosnik

I will. And Karen, are you going to. I know you can't answer me right now, but will you be able to pin the is the list full now, Sarah, are you taking on more narrators? If there's any room, Virtually.

[00:27:25] Sarah Puckett

Um, we aren't we. We closed registration last week just because we do have a we do have a booklet, um, that went with it. So I had to get that sent out to everybody and create it and everything like that. So just wanted enough time. So we, we did close registration.

[00:27:44] Anne Flosnik

Okay. Okay. Otherwise I would have said we would have pinned it and then people could maybe have, you know, found it. Yeah, but no, we are the lucky We are the lucky ones. That's right.

[00:27:54] Karen Commins

Well, it's on the pin. Linked is her site, Pink Flamingo Productions, and there is a link on it to the Flock conference. Yeah. Can people So, Sarah, can people still buy just the video only and not get the benefit of the booklet or is that kept as well?

[00:28:15] Jeannie

Um.

[00:28:16] Sarah Puckett

I'm actually I actually just had that email to this morning too from a couple people, so I'm planning on opening it back up for just the video access only.

[00:28:26] Jeannie

Oh, good.

[00:28:27] Karen Commins

No, good, because I think you'll get a lot of takers for that.

[00:28:31] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:28:33] Karen Commins

Especially when after it when people are talking about how wonderful it was. Everybody I wanted to I didn't know I wanted to go. Yeah.

[00:28:43] Jeannie

Yeah. And we're gonna we're going.

[00:28:45] Sarah Puckett

To do it again as long as this one is successful. Hopefully. Fingers crossed. Um, we'll do it again every year or twice a year or something, so.

[00:28:55] Anne Flosnik

Oh, great.

[00:28:57] Karen Commins

Because you obviously have copious spare time to plan these things.

[00:29:03] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah.

[00:29:06] Sarah Puckett

I never feel good if I'm sitting still. I like to keep keep adding things. Guess I don't know.

[00:29:14] Karen Commins

Which is probably what led you to becoming a distributor. So tell me all about this. This is a big, exciting expansion of your business.

[00:29:25] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:29:27] Sarah Puckett

We'll see. I mean, it's, uh. It's. We just. Yeah, I mean, we have a lot of authors that we work with on the production side, authors who just come and want to pay to get files who ask how to distribute. And they don't really they don't really want to go through. So we just wanted to give them an extra option, basically.

[00:29:55] Karen Commins

Well, I saw you do use and find a way for some titles and then you also have distribution contracts with. Some places individually.

[00:30:07] Jeannie

Oh, yes.

[00:30:08] Sarah Puckett

Yeah. For publishing. Yes. Yeah, we do. We do work with we like to go with them first exclusively through audible for the, you know, a little bit. And then we do go wide with all of our titles.

[00:30:28] Karen Commins

Well, guess I was thinking that the authors would make that publishing choice to start with. And. But now I'm thinking about what you just said, that they've already they already have their audio. Perhaps they recorded it elsewhere and that's they're wanting to just distribute. So there is actually two things you're doing there.

[00:30:53] Sarah Puckett

Yeah. You mean with.

[00:30:54] Sarah Puckett

Flock distribution.

[00:30:55] Karen Commins

Right? Yeah.

[00:30:57] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah.

[00:30:58] Sarah Puckett

Yep. We we have that for any author that needs help with distribution and doesn't necessarily want to go, Um. Through or find a way.

[00:31:12] Karen Commins

And you were one of the first people, if not the first person I knew who had a really good welcome packet that you sent to authors to educate them. Are you finding that authors now are more savvy or are they still needing the hand-holding and education that. That they had been meeting that as far as I knew.

[00:31:33] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, it just depends.

[00:31:35] Sarah Puckett

I mean, some some of them, you know, a lot of them are they're old hats now. You know, they've, they've gotten quite a few books and audio already on their own and, and so they don't necessarily need that hand-holding. Some of them have no clue still. So yeah we do we do a lot of educating still.

[00:31:57] Karen Commins

Do you find that they are willing to listen to you as a narrator, or is it because you have this production company that they're more interested in what you have to say? And I ask this kind of selfishly, I suppose, because I had written articles to try to help authors, and I just really got the impression that, I mean, nobody said this to me exactly, but it was kind of like, Well, you're a narrator. Why should I listen to you? You know, if I want your help, I'll ask for it. And maybe that was several years ago. And they've evolved and realized, you know, maybe we know about it and they should listen to us. I'm just wondering, do you still get any of that sense of. Push back or.

[00:32:42] Sarah Puckett

I don't. But, um. But you're right. It might be because of the role that I'm in, because I have a production company. So they assume I know what I'm talking about. I don't. But I don't feel like I got that push back as a narrator either. So that's really odd that that you have had that experience.

[00:33:02] Jeannie

Well.

[00:33:04] Karen Commins

Like, I know I wrote an article for digital. I wrote several articles for Digital Book World before it was acquired by this other company. They used to have all these articles about publishing. That was really a great site and you could learn a lot. And I wrote several articles there and the author's comments because people would share it in author's groups. And I was seeing a lot of comments of like, Well, I'll just read it myself. I don't need a narrator to do it or and kind of, well, who is she to tell me what to do? She's not an author. She's not a writer. She doesn't know. And so I kind of I've stepped back. I've thought, you know, if you don't want the help, I won't give it to you.

[00:33:45] Jeannie

Right?

[00:33:47] Karen Commins

I mean, that's part of why I stopped doing consultations, too, because I had a narrator once questioning everything I was telling him. And like, if you don't want the help, I'm not going to give it, You know, why am I going to waste my time trying to pull you along?

[00:34:04] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:34:05] Sarah Puckett

Mean think. I think that there are just some people out there that feel that way, you know? I mean, I've come across them as well, so.

[00:34:14] Karen Commins

So I wondered if that was happening with you. And I'm so pleased to hear that's not how things generally go with you.

[00:34:21] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:34:23] Anne Flosnik

I seem to remember, Sarah, maybe in your earlier days too. I mean, you've always been very good at managing people's expectations, right?

[00:34:32] Jeannie

Uh, yes.

[00:34:35] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, but that could be part of it. Karen And how? Well, I can imagine how it all happened. But how do you do that? I mean, what do you kind of keep foremost in mind to tactfully manage other people's expectations?

[00:34:49] Jeannie

Um, well.

[00:34:51] Sarah Puckett

That really came about, you know, because I got into some situations that were not great in the beginning. Um, but I just kind of lay it out. This is what, this is what I'm doing and, you know, this is it. So there's not, there's not really much wiggle room as far as what I'm offering. Um. And I think as long as people understand what the process is and how the process is going to go and how long it's going to take and what they can expect, um, then. They're not thinking something different. You know, they're not thinking they're going to get this when you're not going to give them that.

[00:35:35] Anne Flosnik

Right. Right. Because they could micromanage you, you know, to a line reading for a whole book, some of them. Oh, I've had.

[00:35:41] Sarah Puckett

People do that. Yes.

[00:35:43] Karen Commins

But you've had them do it or you had them try to do it. Try to do it. Okay. Thank you.

[00:35:49] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:35:52] Karen Commins

Because I pretty sure I can see you putting your foot down and that is not going to happen.

[00:35:59] Sarah Puckett

Yeah.

[00:36:00] Sarah Puckett

Yeah. Mean and some. I have been very fortunate with the authors that I've worked with. I, I don't know how I've gotten so fortunate when I see horror stories from other narrators about the people that they're working with. But, um, my authors have just been great and very cooperative.

[00:36:20] Speaker6

Mm.

[00:36:22] Karen Commins

Well, I think it goes back to Anne's point of you're managing expectations and a lot of that is with the welcome packet you give them and you just lay it all out for them. This is how it is. Yeah. Well, I have a question. I have what I call the pit stop hot seat. And. Okay, so one of my favorite questions is, especially for people like you who are doing so many different things, if you went into the witness protection plan, what identity would you like to assume?

[00:36:57] Sarah Puckett

Oh, my gosh. Um. Oh, wow. I have no idea. That's the most honest answer.

[00:37:09] Anne Flosnik

I've ever heard.

[00:37:12] Karen Commins

This sounds like. This sounds like something for life goals. It's like, I'll add another thing to the list, right? Well, another one I like. And let's. Let's see how you answer. This is what is your most trivial, useless or flat out counterproductive superpower?

[00:37:33] Sarah Puckett

Oh, geez. Um, my tongue twirls like. Like that.

[00:37:42] Jeannie

Oh, that's really good. Yeah.

[00:37:45] Sarah Puckett

But it is super counterproductive because every time I say water, it does it water. And you have to imagine how many times that word is in books. Mm. Oh. So I have to be like, watch her.

[00:38:01] Jeannie

I love it.

[00:38:06] Karen Commins

Well. I am really enjoying this and I think the audience is being very quiet. I want to encourage you all to raise your hand in the app if you want to join the conversation or type in the chat if you've got a question. Excellent.

[00:38:25] Speaker7

How do we get her up here? Oh, wait. Here we go. Here we are, Genie. Right.

[00:38:34] Anne Flosnik

I'm still there. There she is. Hi, Jeannie.

[00:38:38] Jeannie

Hi. That's an.

[00:38:39] Speaker8

Accident. Oh, so. Hi, Sarah. I'll just say hi. But that was a complete accident. Didn't mean to push the hand raise. I'm just listening. So sorry about that.

[00:38:51] Karen Commins

Well, don't be sorry. It's nice to hear your lovely voice.

[00:38:55] Jeannie

Nice to hear all of you as well. And love Sarah. So I just wanted to pop in and just hang out with you all on my. On my booth break. Lovely.

[00:39:04] Karen Commins

Well, we're glad you're here.

[00:39:06] Speaker8

Thank you. I'll. I'll quietly go back to the audience now.

[00:39:10] Jeannie

Well, you can go noisily.

[00:39:11] Karen Commins

We don't mind. So what's coming up for you, Sarah? You've got all these things that you've been doing. What is on tap for the rest of this year?

[00:39:29] Sarah Puckett

Uh, more of the same, I guess. My son started baseball. He got on the baseball team in high school, so.

[00:39:38] Jeannie

Oh, good.

[00:39:39] Sarah Puckett

Yeah. So I'm looking forward to. Well, it's like, every day, so it's definitely thrown a wrench in my work schedule, but, um. But I'm excited for that. So we, you know, other than that, just work and. Yeah, more of the same.

[00:39:59] Karen Commins

So he I think you said he's 14, so he doesn't drive.

[00:40:04] Sarah Puckett

He's, he's 15. Oh 15. Yeah. He's actually got his permit now and he's starting to drive so. But he's, but I do still have to take him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth every day. Oh.

[00:40:17] Karen Commins

I know it'll be kind of a blessing and a terror at the same time when he can drive, because then you won't be running Mom's limousine. But then. Oh, my gosh, he's driving.

[00:40:29] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yep.

[00:40:31] Sarah Puckett

And he's my baby, so it's definitely a little harder.

[00:40:35] Sarah Puckett

Oh.

[00:40:36] Karen Commins

How old's the other one?

[00:40:38] Sarah Puckett

She is going to be 19 this year.

[00:40:40] Jeannie

Oh, yeah. Oh, no.

[00:40:44] Karen Commins

She doesn't do either one of them. Want to follow your footsteps into this business?

[00:40:50] Sarah Puckett

No, I don't know what.

[00:40:51] Sarah Puckett

I'm going to do with it when I'm, like, ready to be done.

[00:40:55] Karen Commins

Oh, it doesn't sound like you'll ever be ready to. No. You keep thinking of great things to challenge yourself, because I know you. You absorbed. Joe Hempel's Company. Yep. Firehouse. Right. And then.

[00:41:16] Sarah Puckett

Fireside.

[00:41:17] Karen Commins

Fireside. Right, Right. I knew I said it wrong. And then. I think also didn't you didn't you absorb Northern Lake Audio as well? Yeah.

[00:41:29] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, we.

[00:41:30] Sarah Puckett

Did. Um, so we, we just so we had all genres, you know, and didn't want to start from scratch because I don't know anything about those other genres. I've the majority of my titles are romance, so.

[00:41:44] Karen Commins

Well, you've also been doing mystery and sci fi, though. Or maybe that's a later addition. But because I know I saw some books from podium with you and I'm in sci fi and maybe and but I know you've done some mysteries as well, so.

[00:42:01] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, a little bit.

[00:42:05] Anne Flosnik

Is your roster still open?

[00:42:07] Sarah Puckett

Sarah It's not. No, not at the moment. Yeah, we closed it for a little bit just because we have, we have a lot of narrators.

[00:42:19] Sarah Puckett

Mhm.

[00:42:19] Sarah Puckett

Mhm.

[00:42:20] Anne Flosnik

And I'm sure that somewhere along the line they'll be even more genres that you get into because I don't think you can stop yourself.

[00:42:27] Sarah Puckett

No, no. That's the hope. Yeah.

[00:42:32] Anne Flosnik

Good, good.

[00:42:33] Sarah Puckett

Yeah.

[00:42:34] Sarah Puckett

I'm trying to create something that will, you know, keep going even when you know I'm not working it and I'll be able to just pull money from it forever. That's. That's the hope of it.

[00:42:47] Anne Flosnik

Oh, think that's definitely going to happen.

[00:42:49] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:42:50] Karen Commins

Probably sooner than you realize.

[00:42:52] Sarah Puckett

Yeah.

[00:42:54] Sarah Puckett

Yeah.

[00:42:54] Karen Commins

And you? I know go to author events and get you set up tables there or how.

[00:43:01] Jeannie

Yeah.

[00:43:02] Sarah Puckett

Do you. We set, we buy, we purchase tables. Sometimes we have to be like in the vendors section. Sometimes we can be in the actual signing with the authors. Either way, it's just a way for us to be out in front of them and talk to them one on one. Think, you know, talking to them online is fine, but when you get face to face with them, you're a real person. We've always got our, you know, human voice only shirts on. So we're like trying to, you know, embed the A.I. thing into their brains.

[00:43:35] Karen Commins

Yeah, that's good work you do right there.

[00:43:38] Sarah Puckett

And it's just nice to be able to be, you know, in front of them and answering any questions they have and talking with them and being a real person that they feel like they can trust.

[00:43:50] Karen Commins

And how do you choose which events you want to attend? And do you sometimes maybe just buy a listing in the program and not a table?

[00:44:01] Sarah Puckett

No, Typically we have just been going and, uh, we typically try to find events that have a large amount of authors attending. Um, previously, before Fireside, it was all romance author events and um, and this year we're kind of a little bit pickier about it because we've been to all the a ton of events already. Um, and now we're trying to also bring in some events that have, you know, horror and sci fi thriller authors, um, things like that. But. But ultimately, we just go wherever we can and we determine if that signing was successful. And if it was, then we'll go back next year. If it wasn't, we won't go again. Um, and then I think this year we're going to 20 books. We went last year, 20 books to 50 and Vegas, and that is a vendor event where the authors actually come to the table. So they come to speak to you, which is nice because usually it's us going to the author table talking to them.

[00:45:13] Karen Commins

So yeah, I wondered about that. How like when you do have a table, how much traffic you get at the table?

[00:45:22] Sarah Puckett

Well, we get a lot.

[00:45:23] Sarah Puckett

Of readers, so our our company is kind of twofold. So we're looking for our clients, of course, which are the authors, but we're also trying to sell the books that we publish. So it's nice to sit at the table and talk to the readers. We do giveaways, we do. We have our QR codes. Qr, QR codes out there for some of the books that we've published recently for them to click on and purchase if they want. Um, we have our review team sign up if they're a reviewer, things like that. So we, we're able to kind of talk and chat with the readers and listeners as well. And then, um, we'll walk around and talk to the authors also.

[00:46:07] Karen Commins

Do you ever make appointments ahead of time with the authors?

[00:46:11] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah, we do do that as well. Like consultation type things.

[00:46:17] Karen Commins

But. But is it you reaching out to them or them to you or both?

[00:46:23] Sarah Puckett

Uh, we just put like a sign up form in the group for that signing. And if they want to sign up for a consultation, they can do so at that point.

[00:46:32] Karen Commins

Oh, great idea. Yeah.

[00:46:34] Sarah Puckett

That way when we get there, we have a set time already that we're meeting with that person or sometimes it's a group. Um, so yeah, we definitely do that as well.

[00:46:46] Karen Commins

Yeah, that's a really good idea. Because I wondered, would you say, well, I'm going to be here and anybody want to talk to me? Do you post in the groups beforehand or is it just pretty much the signup form post?

[00:47:00] Sarah Puckett

No, we do post in the groups beforehand. We do audio giveaways and things like that as much as we can just to kind of have our name keep popping up like we're doing all this work, we're doing all this work. You should talk to us.

[00:47:14] Karen Commins

Yeah, we are the place for audio books.

[00:47:18] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah.

[00:47:22] Sarah Puckett

Well.

[00:47:24] Karen Commins

I when I listened to you talk with Rich on the audiobook Speakeasy, you were telling him about making a sword and and so that made me wonder, what's the most recent hobby you took up?

[00:47:40] Sarah Puckett

Oh, gardening.

[00:47:42] Sarah Puckett

Really? Yes. And took that.

[00:47:45] Karen Commins

Up, too.

[00:47:46] Sarah Puckett

Yeah. We started a massive garden in our backyard. I mean, obviously, we can't plant anything, but we've planted seeds inside, which was not a great idea. We're going to get a greenhouse for next year. But they're growing and they're thriving. And I'm so excited. We're we're thrilled about it. So yeah. Gardening.

[00:48:11] Karen Commins

I thought an you would probably join in there because this has become a big. Hobby for you as well?

[00:48:19] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, yeah, it did. And I had to be careful because it really did my thumb in and I didn't realize that's a very popular point for arthritis is in your thumb because I went crazy with hedge clippers. I clipped everything inside.

[00:48:36] Jeannie

Yeah. Oh, Lord. Mhm.

[00:48:38] Anne Flosnik

So, um, yeah, kind of got a repetitive strain injury out of that. So I had to temper my ambitions a little bit. But you live and learn.

[00:48:47] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah, yeah. My husband, he has we have. We live out sort of in the country, so he has a big tractor. So he just cleared out the land and then he went through and he, he did all the hard work. I'm just going to plant when it's done. So we're putting a fence up and everything because we have deer and all sorts of animals over here. So they're probably going to eat it all, but.

[00:49:13] Anne Flosnik

Oh yeah, Watch those deer and think you can plant certain things, though. Sarah That might deter them a little bit. There's things that they do not like.

[00:49:21] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah, that's what I've heard. So we're. We're looking into that. We have. We don't know anything. So we're just watching YouTube videos a lot and trying to learn what we can.

[00:49:31] Anne Flosnik

Right, right. And I think on Amazon too, there are little kind of wire o thingamabobs that you can put around trees that you're starting or some of your shrubs or whatever it might be.

[00:49:46] Sarah Puckett

Oh, yeah. Okay. Mhm.

[00:49:48] Anne Flosnik

To kind of make a physical barrier, it's not very pretty but it depends on, on the thing. Like we started a lemon tree, a meyer lemon tree and Oh they went crazy, they went crazy for that. So we had to get a little thing.

[00:50:01] Sarah Puckett

Yes.

[00:50:02] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, yeah. So like you, we're kind of new to it and figuring it out, but each each year builds on the next, you know? And yes, it is interesting.

[00:50:11] Sarah Puckett

Are you excited?

[00:50:12] Karen Commins

Are you planning flowers and fauna or fruits or both?

[00:50:19] Sarah Puckett

We're doing vegetables and we have we started grapes and we have raspberry bushes and we're planting like a whole orchard on the other side of our property. So a lot of we're hoping that they don't all die in the first year because then we'll be out a lot of money.

[00:50:38] Anne Flosnik

Oh, wow. Pink flamingo cider right now. See it in life.

[00:50:43] Jeannie

Right. I mean.

[00:50:47] Karen Commins

That's how to extend the brand, right?

[00:50:51] Anne Flosnik

There's no way to it in wine because you got grapes. Good.

[00:50:54] Karen Commins

Yeah, I was thinking that.

[00:50:56] Sarah Puckett

And I love wine.

[00:50:57] Sarah Puckett

So, I mean, that's perfect for me.

[00:51:03] Karen Commins

Well, you know, this just answers the question. Where will you be next? I mean, you. You're here. There, everywhere. And now you'll be taking on the wine industry.

[00:51:15] Sarah Puckett

Oh, gosh.

[00:51:18] Sarah Puckett

I hope I'm just where I am now next year. I mean, honestly, I don't I don't have any plans to really do anything new or crazy. That can always change. But as of now, I don't have any plans.

[00:51:38] Karen Commins

Well before we part company today, What advice would you share with other people who want to expand their horizon beyond narration?

[00:51:49] Sarah Puckett

Um, do it mean the one of the biggest things for me with, um, when it comes to business is to diversify and find multiple streams of income. Because especially in narration, it's hard. I mean, this is a hard, um, business to make a career out of. So just do it. Just get, you know, if you find a skill that you are really good at something, you know a lot about, something you can educate people on and just go for it, give it a shot, see how it goes, learn as you go. You know, don't wait.

[00:52:33] Karen Commins

Well, that sounds like terrific advice because I think so often we get these ideas and then we don't act on them or we talk ourselves out of them. And just like you were even saying earlier, you were thinking, well, who am I to do this? And, you know, maybe the question is, who am I to not do this? The world is waiting. Yeah.

[00:52:54] Sarah Puckett

Yeah, I think yeah. And it's very easy to just say, you know, well, should I do this? Or I need a little bit more information or I need to do more research or whatever, and in reality, you just need to go just do the things. That's at least my opinion.

[00:53:15] Anne Flosnik

Well, obviously it's working. Where do you think that came from? Was it in your upbringing or it's just in you something you saw?

[00:53:22] Sarah Puckett

No clue. Mean?

[00:53:25] Sarah Puckett

Guess it's just me. I don't know. It can be to my detriment, though, because I will take on things and take on things and oh, I have this idea, let's do this, let's do this. And my producers, Jeannie, will tell you, she's one of our producers. I'll be like, This is our new idea. And they're just looking at me and I'm thinking, Please don't hate me.

[00:53:50] Karen Commins

But I mean, between the business and then your active family life, you don't. How do you make time for some downtime for just you for something you want to do?

[00:54:02] Sarah Puckett

I've really had to make sure I took the first two years and I really kind of went at it. And now I'm really stepping back and I've set a specific time that I'm done every night. Um, I don't work on the weekends. I don't answer emails on the weekends unless it's absolutely an emergency. Um, I've set a real precedent with my authors and my narrators that I'll answer them anytime. So they'll email me or message me at, you know, 9:00 at night or 11:00 at night or 2:00 in the morning. Um, and so I've really had to, uh, put my foot down and just not answer the email until I get back. And I put office hours on my email and everything like that just to kind of say, help me out, like, this is what I'm done.

[00:54:55] Sarah Puckett

Boundaries.

[00:54:56] Karen Commins

I think that's a great approach because I spent 33 years working in an office and you had a structure to that kind of work. And, you know, now working for myself, working at home, the tendency is to, well, I could do it, I'm available. Yeah. But then it just when you work at home, there's no separation between and especially when you are the business, there's no separation between work and home. And so you have to install those boundaries yourself because they're not they're not made for you by some artificial means of working in an office. Right. So I love that you say you take you take weekends off because to me it's hard to break away from it's hard to actually make myself walk away from it. And if you have some advice about that, I'd love to hear it.

[00:55:54] Sarah Puckett

I mean, I'm in the same boat. I'll be it'll be the weekend. And I'm sitting there just like doing nothing and thinking I should be working. I could be working right now. Um, and I really just have to force myself not to. And I think it's okay to work a little bit. I mean, if I, if, you know, if I want to get a little bit done for an hour or something, then that's fine. But, um. But, you know, my my word this year is boundaries and, um. Yeah. And my husband, you know, is he's been telling me for two years, you know, let's you work so much. Why are you working so much? Like he understands and he's super supportive, but, you know, I, I really want to be present for them and, you know, just enjoy my life because, you know, I mean, what am I going to just work all the time? I don't know. It just I have different priorities this year than I feel like I have in previous years.

[00:56:54] Karen Commins

Yeah, you can live to work or you can work to live. Yeah, and I. Think we're all saying we'd like to be in that second category. I work to live.

[00:57:05] Sarah Puckett

Yes. Yeah.

[00:57:06] Karen Commins

And that seems like a good place to put a pin in it and get the show back on the road. And I just want to let everybody know the recording is going to be available on clubhouse later today and in the near future. I'll put it. And a transcript on narrator's roadmap.com. And I hope you'll all take another road trip with us in two weeks on March 29th. I'm driving solo that day because Ann has another engagement, and I think what I'm going to do is just have a narrator picnic where you bring your own topic and we'll talk about whatever you want. And do you want to talk about next week's narrator Uplift show?

[00:57:50] Anne Flosnik

Oh, you've got me on the spot now. I can't even think straight. Oh, yes, yes, yes. The delightful Amanda Quaid. And she is a wonderful accent and voice coach and who lives in New York. And she's just a delight. So she's coming on the show next Thursday and can't wait to hear what she's got to say. I know it'll be very helpful.

[00:58:18] Karen Commins

Right. So that's Thursday at two and in the narrator Uplift Club on clubhouse. Sarah, do you have any final words or anything you want to plug?

[00:58:30] Sarah Puckett

Not really, no. But thank you so much for having me. This has been really great and it's been wonderful talking to you both.

[00:58:37] Anne Flosnik

Oh, you've been lovely.

[00:58:38] Karen Commins

Thank you. You have? Yes. Thank you so much, Sarah. This has been a delightful conversation. And I obviously want to thank my friend Anne for your excellent questions and support and everybody in the audience for spending time with us today. So I hope you all find joy in every journey and live the life of your dreams. Have a great afternoon and take care.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



Automated transcription by Sonix
www.sonix.ai