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WRITING
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with Pat Iyer



C-SUITE
Radio

How to Touch One More Person with Your Book

Arjun Sen

Arjun Sen, entrepreneur and author, found his author's voice when he decided to write about his experiences as a single father. His other books, one published, one forthcoming, embody his personal touch and desire to communicate deeply with his readers. As an author committed to those who read his book, he has a great deal to teach.

- Ask yourself who you're communicating to.
 - Ask yourself what your message is.
 - If you don't feel pride when you've completed your book, you may need to rethink it.
 - You must turn off your professional/technical self when writing a book.
 - Sometimes the best marketing goal is "Touch one more person."
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Pat: Welcome to *Writing to Get Business*, and this is Pat Iyer. Today I have with me Arjun Sen, an individual I connected with through the C-Suite Network Radio Program. The C-Suite Radio has the largest business podcast platform in the world. I wanted to bring Arjun on today so that he could talk about the books that he has written. Welcome to the show, Arjun.

Arjun: It's a pleasure, Pat. Thank you.

Pat: Tell our listeners about the reason you came up with your idea for your first book. And maybe before I ask you that question, you should give us a little bit of an overview about your background, who you are, what business you're in, and what's your area of expertise?

Arjun: You know I'm a father first because it took me a while to realize that, so I just will never forget that. An aerospace engineer who got into marketing and after that to be a father first became a consultant and now speaker. So, I am a consultant primarily in the branding area, and the first book was *Raising a Father* about my journey as a single dad.

I just was struggling because that is one of the most difficult jobs as a parent, a first-time parent. You want to do well, but there's no user manual. So, I started documenting primarily my mistakes. It's a fun

thing for me to go back to look at, wow, how many mistakes I made, and still my daughter and myself, we have such an amazing relationship together.

Pat: And how old is she now?

Arjun: She is 26 going on 55. She acts like my grandma, and it's the strength of the relationship. Initially the book was called *Raising a Daughter*. And after I read the book, I just hit myself. I said, "Come on, let's be thoughtful. Who raised who? I'm the guy who needed to be raised." And the book is about insights I learned from the two most powerful women in my life. My grandma who I call my "G", a widower who raised four children and of course after that raised, I think, her favorite grandchild. And my daughter, another amazingly strong woman with a big heart. And how My G and my daughter, how both together helped me really learn those lessons in life.

Pat: So, you wanted to share that story about the lessons that you learned. How did you go about starting it?

Arjun: So, it was very important as a first-time writer to have a very clear picture of who I was telling the story to. It's not possible for me to walk into a room with my eyes closed and speak to everybody around. I cannot do it. And once I felt I was telling the story to my daughter to recap, it became much easier. It became a very big conversation, and that has helped in my success with books. I do not start till I have a very clear idea who I'm communicating to. Then I also ask why. And once those two are there, it becomes an easier conversation, and easier on the edit part.

Pat: I heard John Maxwell speak at a National Speakers Association last summer, and he talked about the fact that he comes up with, when he writes a book, a very clear idea of who he's writing for. And he puts a picture next to his monitor, and he looks at that picture as he's writing. He has, as of last year, written 60 books. So, having that clearly defined image of your reader sounds like a secret of success when it comes to directing your content.

Arjun: Absolutely, and I can also tell you what happens when you don't do it. I wrote a book, which is very close to me, but I never published it. The book was a very clever book. It's called *Marperations*, an

intersection of marketing and operations because that's where brands fail. I wrote the book not knowing who my target was, and after the book was done, just when it was getting ready to get published, I did not see myself holding the book and feeling proud. It felt like I was just looking up and screaming to nobody.

And I tried to recover, but because it was not started with the destination in mind. I've used content from there but never published that book because I really think two things are very important, Pat. What you talked about is the clarity John Maxwell talked about, and the second is you really must think at the end: It's a creation. Like you need to hold this and feel proud about this and bring it to the world. You know it's just like the Lion King holding Simba up there. I think if you're not having that passion, that means you didn't put something from your heart into the book.

Pat: Do you think that book could be revived or resuscitated or reframed in some way?

Arjun: Yeah, we'll see at some point of time. Absolutely. I took the learning, I think, to start a new project. Because instead of trying to rework that, I just started fresh by saying, "Okay, let me have a clear target," and this time I wanted to put Arjun's voice in it. And the book became *Customer Karma*. And the best compliment I got from readers was, "Arjun, it feels that you are speaking to me through the book. It's your voice." And I think that is incredibly important in that journey. It must be you.

You must put yourself in and that's the part where *Marperations*... I think the role of *Marperations* was to help me write an amazing fun book, *Customer Karma*, which I enjoyed writing a lot because it was irreverent, and it was me.

Pat: Interesting. It's almost like the training wheels on the bicycle.

Arjun: You're right. You're totally right. I think that's what it is. Now I get it today. Thank you, Pat.

Pat: Well, let's go back to the book about *Raising a Father*. Did you self-publish that, or did you go to a traditional publisher when you were finished with that?

Arjun: I self-published, and the path became very easy. Again, my daughter, at that time she was 16, she is a business partner of mine. And as we were talking about it, I had this two-hour business plan on how I would push this book, promote this book, go all over. My daughter listened to the whole presentation. Of course, she paused and said, "Dad, can you go make me a cup of chai, please, the favorite chai of mine?" I'm like, "Of course" and then she sips the first cup... a sip of chai and says, "Dad, are we hurting for money?" I'm like, "No, baby" and she's like, "Then why are you getting so stressed?"

And you know I do not like when somebody breaks your idea without giving a solution, and my daughter knows that. So right away she said, "I know I can give you a plan." She said, "Dad, why can't you have fun with the book with a very simple mission to touch one more person?" And, of course, goofy dad who still needs to be raised asked, "What happens if you touch a person?" She said, "Touch one more after that."

And that became the journey. I went into self-publishing because I didn't know the system. I also felt the goal of the book was to reach one more person, and that's it. And you know the wise women in my life never mislead me, and I trust these women blindly. They are wiser than me any day.

And that journey had really got me beyond anywhere I could think. I got a chance to meet Senator John McCain, who read the book. I got a chance to meet President Bill Clinton, Senator Bob Dole. I got a chance to meet amazing human beings. I met a couple in New York at a rotary who have been married for 72 years, and they talked to me about their secrets to marriage. I really feel the ROI from the book, based on that "Touch One More Person" was priceless.

So, again, my advice is two big things. When you start the book, think about the objective because each objective has different paths. For all my books, it has been one more person, which means... I do not want to get into the complexity of national publishing. There's nothing wrong. Absolutely, it's a great thing. But to me getting it published but using the book is very important to me, and that's the reason.

And the second thing I also learnt is in having a second profession, there are two options. There's the professor Arjun who talks in graphs

and charts and PowerPoints. That guy is dangerous from a book writing point of view. Then there's a storyteller Arjun who loves to sit with friends and tell stories. So, I really disinvite the PowerPoint professor Arjun by saying, "This is not your book, buddy. You don't have membership to this club." And separating that is very important because each one of us have different sides.

You know, Pat, as you brilliantly said, "Knowing the targets." Know the purpose of why you're doing it, and then know which part of you is writing the book and why. Once you have that clarity, you have so much fun. That part I cannot... I have no idea. I'm not that smart in this area to know all this. But I can assure you, you'll have a blast writing the book from your heart to the audience's heart. It'll be fun.

Pat: And aren't those the books that connect with us when we feel that the author has written from his heart or her heart?

Arjun: Absolutely.

Pat: I'm reading a book now by James Michener, who's one of my favorite authors, and it's called *The Novel*. And he's giving us insight in his book about the whole mass production part of being a famous author. One of his agents or his publisher made a commitment that for the price of \$75 he would hand sign books. It's not an autobiography, but it clearly comes from his experience of writing so many bestsellers. But one of the agents made a commitment that he would autograph a book for the price of \$75 and they got orders for 9,000 books. And he in the story is talking about that's the business of publishing. That's not touching one more person, that's touching 9,000 people. And it was a written offer, which meant that he had to fulfill it.

So, the publishers came up with this creative way of imprinting his signature on the inside of the book without him having to physically hand sign the book. When you get into the whole production part of being an author, that opens all other issues that affect your life. And he... his character says, "But I can't sit and hand sign 9,000 copies. That just... That won't happen." And he ends up negotiating this solution that seems to satisfy everybody.

Arjun: Well, I think that's... You know, I think, as you talked about it, it's all about how you want to take the message. Certain messages are worth

taking outside. But on the other side, for some of us, you know micro-entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs, to me, I look at the book to give me credibility on the subject. My second goal is to start a conversation. And you know, this secret is it's like all stories are at one place. So, it just is a fun thing to have. And I have seen it has added dimensions to my consulting because, yes, the PowerPoint professor guy is good, but he is good in a transactional way.

Customer Karma got me connected with people in a long-term relationship. Because to me, I for the first time started practicing even in my consulting. What I did in the business world was to connect with people, and to touch one more person was the core concept behind *Customer Karma*. That's what Rocca taught me with *Raising a Father*. That's what I think about Rocca's *Raising a Father* lesson and *Marperation*, the training wheel. I'm going to use that phrase that you gave me now because now *Marperation* is very happy. It got me to *Customer Karma* and *Customer Karma* is a very conversational book as I went through it.

Pat: All right, so you focused in *Customer Karma*. It sounds like you had a very clear message you wrote from your heart. You suppressed the PowerPoint professor, the data analytical type part of your brain. How has that book done and expand for our readers a little bit on how that changed your business, please?

Arjun: Yeah, so to me it has... number one is, as I mentioned, it has given me credibility. Second, it has put an overall framework because to me what I learned while writing *Customer Karma* is you need two threads. You need a thread for the book, which is karma inside the customer world, but I also need it to connect to something outside which is dating. And every chance I got, I brought the parallel back to dating to show how certain things we do are goofy.

Like earlier when I was trying to sell to a client how I can build a loyalty program, I had to rationalize and hear the person's plans. But now when I ask by saying, "Think," and let's say I'm talking to this person, Jeffrey. I said, "Jeffrey, if you're single and you met this most amazing person, at the end of the first date, would you give her a punch card which says after five dates you get carnations, after 10 roses, and after 25 a big box of chocolate"? That's not the way you start a relationship. Then why are we doing it?

And that's what *Customer Karma* helped. Earlier I was just appealing to people through numbers. But connecting to the external threat to dating really made people laugh and say, "Come on, Arjun. Okay, so what should we do?" Like the whole thing was that it's much easier to get to what should we do. So, relationships are faster, easier to form. And that's what the book has helped, better connections, better business transforming of knowledge, and it's made it easier to position myself as an expert. Because it's more coming from my heart to your heart.

Pat: Have you written other books since *Customer Karma*?

Arjun: There are two other books I'm working on. One is *Secrets to Win Big* because I started looking at the world in a bigger picture to see how the marketplace is changing. If I ask you who is number two after Facebook, it's very tough for most of us to answer. Same with Google to everywhere else. So, as you start going through the same thing, for example, some of us may or may not like the New England Patriots. Being in Denver, I don't. But I cannot deny the fact that they put themselves in a position to win every year, which means brands that get to that level, big win, sustain the wins. And that whole, as I've started analyzing, I realized there are three things. They need leadership. They need a defined customer experience and brand stories. So, now what I'm trying to search is the one thread and what would be the outside world thread I can connect to. So, I have a lot of pieces.

So, if you look at if I'm making a garland, I have the beads. But I need to have the thread and I need to have the clarity on who will wear this. Until I have those two, the thread and the person, the beads are useless. But once I find this, it'll be a fun book again.

Pat: Who is your target reader for that book?

Arjun: The target reader for me is... You know I'm still clarifying on this, but right now what I'm looking at is a businessperson who has broken through the first year, is somewhere in the middle. And that's the person I want to inspire by saying dream big because this is your chance to go bigger than a Facebook, Google, or anything else. And then you can control how far you want to go. But at least in your mind know that if you have the right framework and roadmap, you can go

as far as you want. So, I really want to help that middle tier businessperson dream big in their life ahead.

Pat: When you say broken through the first year, are you saying somebody who has started a business and has completed their first year?

Arjun: I'm talking about somebody who has been there, let's say, two to five years in the business world or even in the corporate side. This is a person who has now got decent success and now is in middle management. Now this person is thinking, "How high can I go?" Because that person has already seen some belief in that person who's credible. So, it's like building from level two to onwards is where I'm looking at.

Pat: It is interesting how sometimes people put limits on their concepts of what they can do. And I immediately think about a man we hired as a carpenter to come in and renovate a bathroom when we had a house that had one bathroom in it. He was a union guy, and he pulled the cabinet of the sink away from the wall and put it up against the tub. And then he came in one hour a day for two weeks. When I asked him, "Why aren't you coming all day to get this done?" He said, "Well, I'm going to the union hall because I'm showing up to get a job." And I said, "But what about us? What happens if you get called to work?" And he said, "Well, then I would work, of course."

Just before I saw this pattern developing, I asked him if he could help us change the counters in our kitchen. And he looked at me and he said, "I'm not a general contractor. I can't do that." And I realized when he said that, that he had this plexiglass box around him that had a lid on it and he could see out, but he couldn't go beyond the wall. I think the message that you're talking about in *Secrets of Winning Big* is don't put yourself in a plexiglass box.

Arjun: Totally. And just like the example you gave, right away an amazing example came to my mind. This is maybe the best person I've ever hired, ever means ever. She was one semester from graduating. Debra Topwell walked into my office and said, "I'm Debra last name Top opposite of bottom, well.

Debra came in with an energy where everybody else at Papa John's told me 50 reasons why it wouldn't work. And Deborah had that goofy

intelligent smile. And the more I got to know her, I realized it's not goofy, it's intelligence and pride. She always says, "What if?" She was the person who, even though she joined at an entry level, was my favorite person because when things looked dead end, Debra always found a way.

And those are the kinds of people who remind me that in every person there must be a Debra who must be unleashed because we have one life to live. We choose how far we want to go. That's our choice, but we should never do it because we think we can't.

Pat: We have a relative who did some work for a large media company, and they had a plant in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. And he would go and visit their factory where the people were taking DVDs off the shelves and fulfilling orders. We talked about what it would be like to work in a factory. And I said, "Can you imagine getting stuck in a factory?" And my relative said, "I would never get stuck in a factory. I would figure a way out."

Arjun: Wow. That's the confidence because what you just taught me is this is a mindset change. This is not a business lesson alone because to me this is a mindset change. All of us will face big challenges in life. That's guaranteed. And that "I will find a way out" confidence is the biggest win you can always have.

Pat: I think that's why it's so inspiring to read stories about entrepreneurs who have worked their way through a company or seen an opportunity and persisted against heavy odds. I would think that your book will have stories of that nature in it to help us remember that, yes, this is achievable.

Arjun: And you know that's the part where I want each person to go back and find the biggest obstacle you have ever overcome. And we take that for granted. For me, I know exactly the day, September 18th, 1998. I was first diagnosed with laryngeal cancer, and what my doctor told me in Denver was, "You won't see Christmas this year. And somewhere there's that part of Arjun, which I never knew who just said without me controlling it by saying, "I'm not paying your bill, Doctor; you better keep me alive." And you know that gave me the impetus to go to Sloan Kettering in Manhattan. Everything's great now, but anytime I'm in a situation, I go back to September 18th, 1998

by saying, "Whoa, where is that Arjun? Get that Arjun out." Because if that guy... I need that guy. Like finding that person in you who is that rock star.

I know you have overcome. With COVID-19, I just was initially freaking out; then I found that Arjun by saying, "Come on, man. Come on, I need you." And that guy who's there is harnessing that person and respecting, appreciating that person. It's so important because you know, again, I must finish with a story of my grandma.

When I came to this country, there were some problems with my funding and everything else. Literally I had to survive on \$300 for seven months. I asked my grandma for help. She said, "I can help you. For that, I must sell my house, and I would." But then she said, "I thought and felt I don't need to help you." And the next letter... Those days there were letters. The next letter she said, "I believe..." and she was very spiritual. She said, "In any situation you are in, God has put you in that situation. But God is never cruel. God knows you have the skills to come out of it. So now it's up to you to believe, find and move your hand."

She was also very funny. She also said like, "You know it's just like if God threw you in the water. God knows you know how to swim. But if you don't move your hands, there's nothing you can do." And that I think is such a powerful thing and I really am glad I'm talking to you today because what you helped me understand is this is not a business insight alone. It's a life lesson that at least today you touched one more person in me to help me learn the secrets to win big. My lessons are not ready yet. I'm not ready to write the book based on what you taught me today. Thank you.

Pat: That content is within you and as for all writers, it will find its way out in the right format at the right time.

Arjun: Thank you, Pat. You are such a wise person.

Pat: You have messages that other people need to hear. And I think that's one of the reasons that drives me to do these interviews for this podcast is that I want listeners who are struggling with the concept of, "Is this something I should do? Am I worthy? Do I have anything to say? Will anybody by what I write?" I want them to think in terms of

the messages that they have that other people could benefit from. It doesn't do any good if they're stuck inside you. Your story of overcoming adversity, of coming to the United States, of adjusting to a whole different culture, of becoming highly successful in the business field is something that inspires other people.

Arjun: Thank you.

Pat: How can I listeners stay connected with you or find out more about you and your business?

Arjun: I would appreciate if anyone wants to connect to go to Arjun, my first name and last name is Sen, arjunsen.com. So, it's a arjunsen.com. And it will be a truly a pleasure to hear from any one of you because if I can touch one more person, my boss, that's my daughter, will be very proud of me.

Pat: Thank you, Arjun, and thank you to you who is either watching this interview on our YouTube channel or listening on the audio platforms.

If you are being held back, if you're thinking about do I have a book in me, think about our guest today who has written several and has more tucked away in his brain. He has shared the importance of when you're overwhelmed with a marketing plan, think about just selling it and touching one more person, one book at a time. If you focus on that, you will not get swamped by indecision or feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work that might be involved in marketing your book.

He started his writing career with a very personal story about raising a child and in that process met people from all different aspects of life who would never have known of him otherwise. And he also shared with us that sometimes you write a book and you realize that it's not formed the way you want it, or your target market is not as clear as you thought it would be. And that book needs to be put aside because that forms the foundation of subsequent books that end up being more successful and directed to an audience that is clearly defined. So, that was how his second book formed the foundation for his third book. And we've heard about more books to come.

Be sure to look for Arjun's book *Raising a Father* and *Customer Karma* and watch for *Secrets of Winning Big*. Thanks so much for listening to this program.

Arjun: Thank you.