

Launching Your Book Without Losing Your Mind

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THE THRIFTY AUTHOR'S GUIDE

Introduction

Every time I went into a bookstore before my first book, *The Summoner*, was published, I would find the spot on the shelf where my name would be alphabetically. After moving the other books aside, I would put my hand in that empty space and envision my book being there someday. When that day finally came, it was all I could do not to jump up and down screaming in the local bookstore. Little did I know it, but *the hard work had just begun*. I was lucky to have a very supportive publisher, but even so, I could see that wouldn't be enough. After all, approximately 200,000 – 400,000 books are published each year just in the U.S. (figures vary depending on who's counting and what's included). Even within my genre niche, several hundred new books were going to debut within months of mine. I realized that the greatest book in the world can't sell if no one has heard about it. I also realized that publishers won't invite you to write a second book if your first one doesn't do well. I made it my business to make sure my books do well.

When my first book was published, I promised myself that, no matter how everything turned out, I was going to do everything possible to make my books successful. I've learned a lot as my series has progressed. I've seen some techniques work beyond my wildest imagination, while a few fizzled. Now, I want to share those insights with you so that your new book has the best chance for success. This book shares my secrets for successful book tours, attention-getting internet promotions, exciting websites and dynamic media interviews. You'll also discover tips I gathered some of my author friends, who have learned the hard way what worked and what didn't.

You don't have to be an extrovert to make these techniques work for you. Many of these techniques can be done online without ever having to go in front of a crowd. If you're not shy, there are more options open to you. Likewise, you don't need a degree in marketing to market your book successfully. On the other hand, anything you've ever learned or observed about successful sales and marketing won't hurt. So dive in with enthusiasm. Experiment, remix and recombine my suggestions. Find an approach that works for you. Just get out there and live your dream!

Chapter 1: Marketing Is the Author's Responsibility

Congratulations! You've finished writing your book, and you've either found an agent who found a publisher, or you've arranged for a publisher yourself. That means the hard part is over, right? Wrong! In fact, the hard work is just about to begin.

For people who like to write books, *writing* is the fun part. Authors love to tell a story or share knowledge. Even the research and editing is enjoyable, because writers understand how it fires their imaginations. When the final editing is complete and the manuscript goes to the printer, most writers heave a sigh of relief, then collapse into a chair. They assume that the publisher or the bookstore will sell their book while they go on to the next project. It doesn't work that way.

A Great 19th Century Business

Publishing is an industry where profit margins are surprisingly slim. That's because publishing hasn't changed much since the 1800s (which is a problem that is only gradually being addressed). It costs a lot of money to edit, format and design a book. Plus, it costs more money to print it, warehouse it, ship it, and take back unsold copies from bookstores. E-books eliminate most of these problems, but until they catch on with a majority of readers, authors must make do with the realities of traditional publishing. All those expenses leave very little extra cash for marketing.

Yes, it seems like books written by celebrities get the biggest ad budgets, and they do. That's because publishers, who have paid hundreds of thousands, and perhaps even millions of dollars in advance, have to make their money back. That leaves less—or no—money to promote new authors who need the marketing the most.

The Rules of Promotion have Changed

The kinds of promotion publishing houses have traditionally paid for, such as shipping huge quantities of review copies to newspaper reviewers and placing big ads in major industry magazines, aren't working as well in today's Internet-driven world. Many major newspapers have disappeared. This has happened because fewer and fewer people read newspapers. Magazine readership has also dropped. Among those that have survived, many have stopped reviewing books. So the traditional, expensive, publisher-driven techniques aren't as valuable as they once were.

Thousands of citizen-journalists that are dedicated to every taste and genre have replaced the big newspaper book reviewers. Websites, book review sites, book-themed podcasts, book-focused Internet radio shows, book-related social media sites or groups and online discussion forums have sprung up to take the place of the traditional media. There are more of these new outlets than there were newspapers and magazines. Best of all, writers can access these new opportunities for free.

Free = Hard Work

Let me qualify *free*. I mean *free* as in not costing money, but not *free* as in not requiring effort. None of the techniques in this book require you to spend money or hire someone to help you; although you may find that you prefer to do so to speed things along. The truth is that, if you're willing to invest the same kind of elbow grease in marketing that it took to write your book, you can reach a global audience for the price of a high-speed Internet connection.

Sales of mega-blockbusters, like the *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* series, and big names, like Stephen King or Clive Cussler, sell hundreds of thousands or even millions of

copies. But the average book printed in the U.S. sells 7,000 copies or fewer. Many authors struggle to sell even that many copies. Now you see why promotion becomes essential for authors who want to continue publishing, and perhaps make some money.

A Quick Recap of Publishing Reality

When you sell a book to a publisher, some authors receive a promise of royalties, unless you wrote a book that is a work-for-hire project. If you received an *advance*, you must sell enough books for the publisher to recoup the cost of your advance before you receive royalties. The real meaning of *advance* is “an advance against royalties.” It’s like a draw on commission in a sales job. If you don’t sell enough books to *earn out* your commission, then you don’t get royalties. If this happens, your book effectively *lost* money for the publisher, who will be reluctant to buy another project from you again.

If you self-publish, you have invested the entire cost of creating your book, so you have even more money at stake. You need to recoup those costs in order to break even, and before you can consider any sales to be a profit. If you don’t sell those books, you have a debt to pay and nothing but boxes filled with books to show for it. Furthermore, it’s unlikely that you would put up the funds to create another book.

Your book faces a lot of competition, so marketing is essential. Even the best-designed, best-written book, shares bookstore space with thousands of other titles, most of which are just as attractive. As a reader browses down the aisle and sees your book, you want him to think, “I’ve heard of him/her.” Recognizing the name of your book, or the name of the author, makes it more likely that a reader will pick up your book and read the back cover. Marketing is all about creating *name recognition*.

Different Authors, Different Goals

Would it surprise you to know that not every author has a goal of becoming a New York Times' bestselling author? While few people would turn down the honor if it were offered to them, there are other reasons that authors write, even a few that don't involve money.

Here are the other reasons to write a book:

- 1) You want to further a cause or educate people about something important;
- 2) You want to raise money for a charity;
- 3) You want to enhance your professional expertise to land more clients;
- 4) You are a professional speaker who needs a "back of the room" product; or
- 5) You are so passionate about your topic or story you want to share it.

There are also other ways besides money to define *success*. These can include:

- 1) Voicing a minority opinion or making a change in the way people think;
- 2) Recording something important for posterity;
- 3) Sharing information that saves or changes a life;
- 4) Providing insight or *how-to* knowledge on a subject with a small, but passionate audience; and/or
- 5) Providing a regional or special-interest view on a subject that is underrepresented.

Control Is a Good Thing

When you decide to lead the marketing effort for your book, you're taking control over the fate of your own creation. The publisher (if you have one) is risking his

investment in designing, printing and distributing your book. You as the author are risking your future as a commercially viable writer. If you're a self-published author, then you also have an investment in the boxes of books stored in your garage.

Ideally, you can work together with your publisher on marketing. In my experience, publishers are happy to find an author who is committed to the effort that is required to help a book rise above the average. You may find that there are some things a publisher can do that would be more difficult for you to do for yourself. This can include running an ad that features several of the publisher's recent titles (including yours) in the trade journals read by bookstore buyers and publishing professionals. In addition, it can include negotiating with bookstores for better in-store placement, and creating posters or display materials. It might even include having a table at a big industry trade show or event like Book Expo of America (or one of the smaller, regional book shows) where you could do a signing or make an appearance.

Some publishers really don't have the budget to do more than print the book. In that case, see if you can gather valuable contacts and suggestions from them as you embark on your marketing mission. That can include introductions to other authors who may be interested in joint promotions or shared expenses, or referrals to influential bookstore owners or library buyers who can put in a good word for you. You won't know what's available to you until you ask, so don't be shy.

In this book, you'll learn how to plan for the three critical stages of your book's birth: pre-launch; launch; and post-launch. When you have a plan, you have a road map. This means you can create activities that move you closer to your goals, and you can avoid actions that waste time and money. You have control, and that's a good thing. No

one in the world cares as much about your book as you do. That's why you need to control its destiny.

Gail's Tip

There's nothing better than connecting with readers who share your passion. Marketing enables them to find you and make that connection.

Assignment 1: Your Marketing Skills Inventory

This is where we look at what your natural abilities, and how they can help you market your book. We'll also figure out what kinds of things you'd really rather not do. This way, you will know what tasks you may want to outsource or just avoid (at least for now). You can add other skills to the list as well.

Look over the following list of skills. Which are you comfortable with? Which make you uncomfortable? Use a yellow highlighter for the skills you possess, and a green highlighter for the skills that aren't quite *you*.

Skills	Marketing Uses
Writing	Preparing press releases, media kits, blogs, articles and other PR materials
Public Speaking	Greeting the public at signings; Speaking at workshops and conferences; Doing radio interviews
Research	Building media lists; Uncovering contact information for reporters, bookstores, etc.
Internet Experience	Researching or setting up a basic website or blog; Using Internet tools or applications
Social Media	Connecting online on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and book-related sites
Organization	Setting up signings and appearances; Maintaining your contact list; Scheduling promotions

Graphic Design	Creating bookplates, stationery, business cards, bookmarks, posters, and a logo
Phone Skills	Scheduling signings; Pitching stories to reporters; Giving radio and podcast interviews
Collaboration	Setting up joint signings or panels with other authors Connecting with other authors for shared publicity or shared sales promotions
Photography	Taking digital pictures or web video of your own events; Using a webcam

“Been There, Done That” Author Tip

“For your book to succeed, you must think of your writing as a business. When companies do business with other businesses it's called B2B; with consumers, it's called B2C. Writers doing business with their readers. I call **B2R — Book to Reader**. The halcyon days of the publisher sending authors on a ten-city book tour are long gone. Now it's time to adapt the mantra, “if it's to be — it's up to me!” Shift your mindset into marketing gear to reach the widest possible audience. An easy way to make this shift is to think B2R! Where are your readers en masse? The solution is to find those readers by using low-cost, high-impact media tools – a compelling website, an e-zine, a blog -- and continuing the conversation on your topic via social networking.”

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