

# Book Promotion Ain't For Sissies

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(Visit her site to find great books for writers!)

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## INTRODUCTION

When I began writing books, I understood that times had changed. Even though my books were published by traditional publishers, I knew I couldn't count on them to do all the publicity for my book. I'd heard rumors that authors were expected to take on some of the work.

Now that was the understatement of the year!

What I've learned after ten books (and an eleventh and twelfth coming soon) is that no matter how you publish—whether it's through a major publisher, a small press, an e-publisher, self-publishing, or a vanity POD company—a book's success or failure rests on its author's efforts.

Many authors, including me at first, don't understand just how much "effort" is required. We do a few book signings, ask some reviewers to review it, maybe pitch ourselves to a few radio producers, then we are aghast that our books don't rise to the top of the charts.

Book promotion is not a temporary task. It's an ongoing, long-term job that requires work on a consistent basis. Some authors recommend that you spend 15 minutes every day working on book publicity. I recommend closer to an hour or two, at least for the first six months. Maybe after that point you can reduce your time to 15 minutes a day for as long as the book is in print.

Even if you have a publicist, that publicist does not know your book or its intended audience better than you do. It's up to you to find your target market and make sure they hear about your book again and again.

Once I figured this out, I went in search of information about how to publicize my books. I found some great resources, but wound up feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of what it appeared I *should* be doing and how far behind I thought I was.

That's why I'm creating this report. The size isn't too daunting, and I'm not trying to cover every potential thing you could ever do to promote your books. I'm trying to offer more of an abridged version of how to kick your publicity efforts in gear. Hope you find it helpful!

## YOUR MARKET

I hope you gave serious thought to your market before you wrote the book. If not, give it some serious thought right this minute.

Who is going to want to pay money for your book?

The answer is not "everybody," as much as you hope it is.

The more you can define this audience, the less you'll waste time trying to promote your book "everywhere." It's far better to concentrate your efforts on a specific group rather than tossing your seeds in the air and hoping they'll bloom all over the place. You need to find your fertile ground and nourish it.

Try to define your audience in these terms:

- Sex
- Age
- Education/income
- Career
- Hobbies/interests
- Geographic areas

If you have a nonfiction book, your primary audience should be obvious. Let's say your book is about how to deal with a rebellious teen. Who are you targeting? People who have rebellious teens—that is, parents. More specifically, your main market is moms and step-moms (they buy a whole lot more parenting books than dads do), mostly in the 35-55 year old age bracket.

A novel's audience may be a little harder to define, but think about the characters in your story and who's likely to identify

with them. A mystery with a lead character who's female, Asian, and single will likely attract women in the same demographic—in addition to fans of mystery books in general, and specifically those who share the profession of your main character or live in the book's setting.

A true niche book may require an author to think "outside the niche." For example, my latest book is [Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer: How to Win Top Writing Assignments](#). Who's my market? Writers, of course. More specifically, people who write for—or want to write for—magazines.

The problem is that that's a very restricted group. Eventually, I'll run out of places to publicize the book exclusively to magazine writers. So I have to think of related groups who might be interested in my book. For me, that list includes: work-at-home moms (and those who are looking for home business opportunities), entrepreneurs, college students in writing programs, and retired or disabled people looking for side income.

So your first task is to write down a list of all the types of people who are in your target market.

Now you just have to find their secret hiding places.

## "ARE YOU THERE, AUDIENCE? IT'S ME, AUTHOR."

Now that you know who you're looking for, you have to determine where they hang out. Primarily, you want to find out what magazines, websites, e-zines, newspapers, and newsletters your audience reads; what radio stations they listen to; what TV shows they watch; what types of stores they frequent; what associations or clubs they belong to; and who their "leaders" are.

Here are some easy ways to do so.

- **Writer's Market**

An annual guide published by Writer's Digest, the Writer's Market lists more than 2,000 magazines and their descriptions, circulation, and contact information. If you're looking for sports fans, just flip to the section marked "sports" and you'll find more than 30 magazines your audience may read. You can find this book at any major bookstore or library.

- <http://www.AllYouCanRead.com>

At AllYouCanRead, you'll find more than 23,000 newspapers and magazines all over the world. You can search by keyword, category, or geographic location.

- <http://www.YahooGroups.com>

YahooGroups will point you to e-mail discussion groups. Search here by category or keyword, and it'll pull up descriptions and membership numbers. Obviously, you'll want to concentrate your efforts on larger groups.

- **Associations and Clubs**

Are there any professional, interest-related, or social associations or clubs for your target audience? You can find them here: <http://www.ipl.org/div/aon/> or here: <http://www.vcanet.org/vca/assns.htm>.

- **Message Boards**

Online message boards are another great (free) way to reach your audience. Search the directories at popular message board hosts here:

- \* <http://www.ubbcentral.com/links/>
- \* <http://www.forumfind.com/>
- \* <http://listings.boardhost.com/>
- \* <http://invisionfree.com/directory.php>
- \* <http://www.vbulletin.com/links.php>

If you want to find only very popular boards, use this link: <http://www.big-boards.com/>

- [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com)

Google—or any search engine, for that matter—is your friend when you're looking for an audience. Simply type in keywords related to your book to find websites your audience is likely to visit.

- **E-zine Directories**

In addition to what Google pulls up, you may want to use e-zine directories to find online publications your audience might read. Try these:

- \* <http://www.ezine-dir.com/>
- \* <http://subs.zinester.com/>
- \* <http://www.jogena.com/ezine/ezinedata.htm>
- \* <http://www.ezinehub.com/>
- \* <http://ezine-universe.com/>

- **Radio Shows**

What kinds of radio programs might your target audience tune in to? Find them here:

- \* <http://www.radio-locator.com/>
- \* <http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Radio/Formats/>
- \* <http://www.gebbieinc.com/radintro.htm> (Also, see Gebbie's All-In-One Media Directory at your library)
- \* [http://dir.yahoo.com/News\\_and\\_Media/Radio/Programs/](http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/Radio/Programs/)

- **Media Leaders**

This one's a little more intangible. You want to figure out who the influential media people are in your target market and befriend them. And I don't mean Oprah or Dave Letterman. I'm talking smaller "celebrities." Who are the editors of the most popular websites on your topic? Who are the columnists who write about your topic in newspapers? Who are the experts the media turns to on your topic? Look for ways to collaborate with them, send them freebies, send them "bonuses," and hope they'll mention you well to their readers or listeners.

## BLURBS

Blurbs are the short endorsements you often see on the back cover of a book—like, “Fascinating! I highly recommend this book to everyone who’s ever wondered about the mathematical abilities of monkeys.”

If you are publishing with a traditional publisher, surprise! The responsibility for blurbs still rests with you, in all likelihood. Sometimes an editor or publicist will make suggestions or call someone on your behalf, but typically, the author handles this. The publisher, however, should be willing to send out galleys, advance review copies, bound copies of the manuscript, or finished books to anyone who you’ve contacted and has expressed an interest in blurbing.

Ideally, the time to get blurbs is before the book is published and while there’s still time to get the blurbs printed on your book’s cover, back cover, or in the front matter.

Peter Bowerman, author of *The Well-Fed Writer*, says that Bob Bly’s blurb on his book helped his sales tremendously. Peter was a first-time author, and having praise from perhaps the most recognizable expert in Peter’s industry (copywriting) helped assure potential readers that Peter knew his stuff.

For *Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer*, I made sure to get blurbs from magazine editors—after all, they’re the people my target audience most want to impress. I knew if I could show that my book impressed the editors, writers would trust that my book could help *them* impress editors, too.

But even if you score blurbs after the book is published, they can still be tremendously useful. You can use them in your marketing material, on your website, or on online booksellers' websites.

Include a few short and powerful blurbs in your press releases or media kit when you write to reviewers, journalists, editors, bookstore/library events coordinators, radio producers, and others. You can say all you like about how wonderful your book is, but it means a lot more coming from a respected source who has no financial stake in your book.

You don't need to find celebrities to endorse your book (though that's always nice). What you do need is to find people who have some kind of credibility your audience will trust. The president of an association related to your topic, a medical practitioner, university professor, an author who's published a book your audience will recognize, a government official, or anyone else whose position might carry weight in your market is appropriate.

When possible, contact your potential blurber directly (or ask your publisher to make contacts on your behalf). Phone is probably the best way to make contact, followed by e-mail, faxes, or letters. If you don't know your blurber-to-be personally and he or she is a celebrity, you'll probably have to get through gatekeepers: publicists, managers, agents, or publishers.

To find contact information for many celebrities' representatives, visit <http://www.whorepresents.com>.

If your celeb has written a book, find out who the publisher is and call or write to the publisher's publicity department to ask if they'll pass along your request.

Make sure you're targeting people who have some kind of interest in your book topic. Don't just pick celebrities for the sake of picking celebrities; find celebrities who care about your book's topic. Then explain why you're asking that person in particular. Don't expect the publicist to put two and two together. They filter these kinds of requests and rarely send them through, so you want yours to show exactly why the celebrity will want to fill your request.

Here's a sample of a letter I used to ask for a blurb for one of my books:

Dear Ms. Wolf:

I am writing to ask if you would pass along a request to Kim Basinger.

Two years ago, I had hit "rock bottom"-- I was agoraphobic, and had been unable to leave my house for more than a year. Prior to that time, I was a stage actress with aspirations to move to L.A. and start a film career. Panic disorder erased that dream for me, and I had given up on life.

About this time, I saw the HBO documentary "Panic," and was floored when I heard Ms. Basinger discussing the very same experiences I'd been having. I am so thankful for her honesty and grateful for the hope she gave me. After watching the show, I didn't feel so crazy, after all. It was so inspiring for me to find out that someone who'd been as low as I was had battled this disorder and fought so hard to keep her dreams alive.

The worst parts of this disorder were the loneliness and hopelessness, and it was easy to feel like no one else in the world had ever gone through what I had and managed to live a successful life. I promised myself that if I ever overcame agoraphobia, I would remember to pass on that hope to others. That day has finally come, and I'm keeping that promise.

I have compiled an anthology of success stories from people who have overcome all sorts of anxiety disorders. There are 33 stories in total, from people all over the world, and Dr. Paul Foxman (author of *Dancing With Fear*) has provided commentaries about each of the stories. The book, *Conquering Panic and Anxiety Disorders*, is under contract and will be published in paperback and hardcover by Hunter House in fall, 2002.

I am writing to ask if Ms. Basinger might be interested in reading the book and possibly writing a short blurb for its cover. I know she has a very busy schedule, but I'm hoping that she shares my desire to help people who are still suffering as we were. I would be happy to send the manuscript for her consideration, and provide any background information she'd like.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this. Please feel free to contact me anytime by phone or e-mail. I look forward to your response.

Regards,  
Jenna Glatzer

Although some potential blurbers will look at your manuscript in electronic format (PDF, usually), it's kinder to send it to them in a printed format. If galleys are not yet available, print out the manuscript yourself (or take it to a copy shop) and bind it in some manner—three-hole-punch it, spiral bind it, whatever. 400 loose pages on a kitchen table are a pain. Your blurbers are doing you a nice favor; make it easy on them.

Expect to send out at least 15 copies to potential blurbers. Don't send the manuscript without permission; send a letter or make a call first so the person knows to expect it. And always form your question in a manner that allows for latitude; if you ask, "Will you write a blurb for my book?" you may frighten the person—what if he or she doesn't like your book after reading it? Ease off the sense of obligation by asking if the person will *consider* providing a blurb *if* he or she likes the book.

When you send the galleys, book, or manuscript, provide parameters and a deadline. "If you enjoy the book, I'd appreciate it if you'd send me a 3-5 sentence blurb by January 10th."

Follow up about a week before you need the blurbs, and again a day or two before. For any last-minute blurbers, you can even provide a simple option: Offer "examples" they can use.

Especially if you know the person you're asking, you may be able to ask for exactly what you want. "What I'm looking for is something along the lines of 'This honest and thorough guide to making money as a freelance writer will take years off your learning curve.'" More than once, a potential blurbster has written back to me, "That sounds good. You can use that for me."

Keep a file of all your blurbs, and remember to thank the people who gave them to you!

## GETTING YOUR PUBLICIST TO DO SOMETHING

Authors are rarely satisfied with their publisher-appointed publicists. As a whole, publicists are overburdened people. They have many books to publicize, limited budgets, and a limited time frame to produce results or move on.

The harshest reality for me was finding out that you can't take *anything* for granted with a publicist.

A few weeks before Outwitting Writer's Block and Other Problems of the Pen was due in stores, I realized I had never spoken with my publicist. Didn't even know her name. So I wrote to my editor, who promptly told me my publicist's name and e-mail address.

I wrote to her to introduce myself and ask what I could do to help. I casually asked if any trade reviews had come in yet. (Trade magazines—like Publishers Weekly, Foreword, Library Journal, and Kirkus—are tools used by book sellers and libraries to help them decide which books to order.)

Almost all of the major book trade magazines want galleys at least three months in advance of the book's publication date so they can review the book while it's brand new to the market. As a general rule, they don't accept books that have already appeared on shelves.

So here we were, about three weeks prior to the pub date, and my brand-new publicist said, "Oh, I wasn't planning to send copies to the trade magazines. We didn't order any galleys."

Huh??

I nearly fell off my chair. What, did my publisher just not *care* about selling this book? Would they rather watch it collect dust in warehouses?

I tried to keep my polite nature in tact and asked her kindly why this was the case and how I could get her to change her mind immediately.

To her credit, she did immediately order a few galleys, and she sent them out to four or five trade magazines. However, it was too late by this point. The trades got the galleys about a week before the pub date, with no media kit and a lame press release that I didn't get to see until it was too late. They gleefully ignored my book.

Although I was disappointed and pretty angry with this publicist for her lack of attention to my title, I couldn't remain bitter. I needed her to be on my side.

We set up a time to talk, and I surmised she had never read my book. (This is not too surprising; often, publicists just get notes about what the book is about.) I sent her a list of places I wanted review copies sent, and she sent them. But that was the entirety of her role, apparently. It would be up to me to set up signings, speaking gigs, interviews, chats, and other appearances.

And I did so. And I told her all about them. And she put them in her weekly report to the publisher to show all the great things she had done. But I'm not complaining. Much.

Not all of my publicist experiences have been terrible, though. In general, I've found that the more I can spoon-feed a publicist,

the more she'll be willing to do. I sent one of my publicists a list of all my media targets on address labels; all she had to do was stick the book in an envelope, stick on the label, and mail it out. It might have taken her weeks to get the books out otherwise, but I made it simple for her.

My most recent publicist (who is a gem) was happy to send out targeted e-mails offering a discount to writers' groups and conferences as long as I did the research to track down the e-mail addresses.

Publishers are thrilled when you come up with ideas for publicity. But these ideas can't be vague and pie-in-the-sky. (One of my publicists tells me she has an author who frequently sends her directions like, "Would you please call every college in the country and tell them my book should be in their libraries?" and "How about getting me into *Newsweek*?") This doesn't help anyone.

Your publicist is working with many authors at once and has limited time and resources. Come up with tasks your publicist can help you with that are well thought-out and achievable.

You want your publicist to get jazzed about your book's potential as well as your potential. Publicists are used to dealing with authors who want the world ("Why haven't you gotten me on Oprah yet?") and don't want to put in any effort on their own. Show from the onset that you're not one of those authors and the publicist will look forward to hearing from you instead of dreading you.

Set up a phone meeting with your publicist as soon as possible in the publishing schedule—preferably several months before the book's release. Make sure the publicist has your most recent bio

and a list of any contacts, associations, schools, or media outlets that are likely to take an interest in you. If the publicist doesn't ask you to fill out an author questionnaire, make one up yourself.

Include:

- The key benefits of your book, or a summary of its plot
- Your target market
- Details of any media experience you have (if you're an experienced public speaker, or have done radio/TV interviews, taught workshops, etc., make sure to include this)
- Any special angles you can think of that might help her pitch you as an interviewee
- Any topical angles you can think of that might help her pitch the book to newspaper reviewers, TV shows, or radio shows
- A sample Q&A she can send to potential interviewers to help them determine what questions to ask you
- Places you've gotten publicity in the past
- A list of your local papers, TV stations, and radio stations (with all the contact info you can find)
- Your availability and any limitations you have
- A photo
- A suggested press release she can work with

Keep the publicist updated on your own efforts—both to show her that you're serious about working on promoting the book and to make sure you two don't overlap efforts—and send her copies of any mentions of your book. Ask her, in turn, to keep you updated and send you clippings. Most publishers use a clipping service and can find out about your book's media appearances easier than you can.

If you want something from your publicist, ask. If you'd like help setting up bookstore appearances in your state, offer to find

contact information and ask her to make the calls. If you want her to add something to your media kit, or send you "autographed by author" stickers, or send postcards to your mailing list, ask. Be specific in your requests and understand that the almighty budget (which she probably has no control over) will influence what she can and can't do. If you want her to place an ad in a publication and she refuses, ask if they'll at least split the cost with you. Same with a mailing list rental or the cost of your listing in a radio guest directory. It never hurts to ask.

Hiring your own publicist is always an option, albeit an expensive option. My personal take on the subject is that if you plan to write more than one book on a particular subject, or if you want to parlay your book-writing into paid speaking engagements or sales of related products (teleclasses, audio books, services related to your book's topic), an independent publicist might be a good idea. Even if your dollars-and-cents payoff doesn't add up for that one book, the publicity you gain will be valuable for years to come. Each book and related project builds on the last; if your first book sells well, bookstores will be more likely to pick up on your next. Media contacts you make on one book will likely be friendly when you come out with something new. And a skilled publicist can position you as an expert on your topic, which makes it easier to land the next book contract (and a higher advance).

You do not need a publicist, though. You just need to be willing to work your buns off to do everything a publicist would do:

- Write an excellent media release
- Put together a media kit
- Develop a strong list of contacts
- Send out review copies relentlessly

- Approach anyone who could give you an audience: radio and TV producers; magazine, newspaper, and website editors; columnists; book reviewers; interviewers; chat hosts; bookstore community relations managers; library and college event coordinators...
- Make follow-up calls and send follow-up e-mails

In addition, you can submit "Letters to the Editor" in response to articles you've read, volunteer as an expert on your topic at a site like <http://www.allexperts.com>, include your book's teaser and url in your e-mail signature file, write reviews of other people's books at Amazon with a tagline on the bottom of the review identifying you and your book, and hook up with a charity and figure out a promotion where you'll donate a portion of your book's proceeds to them (they may directly help you publicize the book because of this, or it may just help you get more press—the media is much more likely to give your book attention if there's a good cause attached to it). See here for an article about an author who hooked up with a charity:

[http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/murder\\_for\\_charity.htm](http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/murder_for_charity.htm).

Offer yourself as a speaker—free or for fee—to any organizations that include your target audience. At the very least, offer to speak to local writers' groups about the process of writing and publishing your book.

Even though most niche books won't get national TV attention, don't discount the possibility. Bill Adler, Jr. had just published Outwitting Squirrels when Rosie O'Donnell began complaining about how she couldn't get squirrels to stop eating out of her bird feeder. He got on the show, and wham—this quirky little book hit Ingrams' bestseller list.

## One Brick at a Time

You don't have to have a lucky break like Adler's to create strong sales, though. Some authors shoot for the top, get disappointed when their books don't get reviewed in the New York Times, and figure the book is doomed, so why bother? The truth is that small publicity adds up, and the more you get yourself into the public's eye one way or another, the more chance you have of earning major press.

I've agreed to do online chats where I knew I'd only have about a dozen people in attendance. Why? You just never know who's there who might become your book's best promoter. Maybe one of those chat attendees will go on to write a review of the book, or to praise it to everyone in her writing group. Maybe one of the chat attendees is a TV producer, an e-zine editor, or a popular blogger.

I know authors who think book signings aren't worth it. I can see why they feel that way—really, I can. I've heard many stories from authors who've traveled long distances and found one intrepid soul has showed up for the signing.

But there are many ways to look at a signing: First, try not to count the success of the signing by how many books sold. Consider how many books the store ordered that will now be on the shelves (and, if you're lucky, the store may put them on an endcap with an "Autographed by Author" sign). Consider that bookstore employees are more likely to recommend a book by an author they've met. Consider that even that one intrepid soul might just be worth your trip. Again, you just never know where that contact might lead. Two authors I know have had poorly-attended signings that led to much bigger opportunities: In one

case, an attendee was a book reviewer for a major daily newspaper (who then wrote a stellar review of the book), and in the other, an attendee was related to a local television reporter who invited the author onto her show. Twice.

Those who've met you in person are more likely to follow your career and pay attention to your next book, and to tell their friends about that nice author they met.

If the bookstore is a chain, you can also ask the manager to refer you to other bookstore managers in the area... or to provide you with a short blurb for your media kit if the signing was a hit.

Here's an article about one author's "Do-It-Yourself Book Tour":  
[http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/diy\\_book\\_tour.htm](http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/diy_book_tour.htm).

One of the major lessons I've learned from signings is to be proactive. You can't sit behind a table and wait for people to come flocking to you. If you're brave enough, greet people at the door with a postcard or flier about your book. If not, at least stand in front of the table with a smile and lure people over to your table with a bowl of free Hershey's Kisses and a colorful and friendly sign.

Show up early and be sure to hand whomever is handling in-store announcements a little script to read that gives a short description of your book and an offer for people to come meet you and pick up an autographed copy. Stay as late as possible; again, you just never know who you're going to meet, and what fans you might make just by being friendly and accessible. The general public sees published authors as celebrities. They may expect you to be aloof and intimidating. Be the opposite—let

people tell you their stories and ask you questions, and you'll earn plenty of respect.

More book signing tips:

<http://www.celebratelove.com/booksigningtips.htm>

## **MEDIA KITS**

Again, there are other places to get more detailed information about what goes into a media kit and how to construct each piece. I'm just giving a brief overview:

- Press release
- Cover art
- Author's photo
- Reviews
- Q&A
- Publicity plan
- Article

### **Press Release**

If you don't have a publicist, you'll write your own press release. To see proper press release format and tips, see: <http://www.prweb.com/pressreleasetips.php>.

### **Cover art and Author Photo**

Both should be included, at a size big enough for the publication to scan if they choose to; also include a note saying you can send art in digital formats in high resolution.

### **Reviews**

Professional reviews are the most important, but you can also include your blurbs, reader reviews, and reviews of your past work. Don't try to include every review you've ever received (unless you've received only two or three).

## **Q&A**

A short (1-2 page) interview with you that includes questions the media can ask you. Some people prefer to just include suggested questions. This can work to your advantage if the questions are real teasers; the reporter, editor, or host might be so curious about your questions that he or she has to call you to get the answers!

## **Article**

This is optional, but can work well. You may include a free article, humor essay, personal essay, trivia tidbits, quiz, or other such item that magazines and newspapers can reprint and radio hosts can read on the air. Include a short bio with your book's info at the end and be sure you've indicated at the top that the article is free for reprinting.

Alternatively, you might include a list of 8-12 topics you can write about if requested.

Lauri Berkenkamp at Nomad Press says this worked well when one of her authors approached regional parenting magazines. "Both author and we won, because now she has more magazine clips, a potential new source for regular contributions, and we get free publicity," she says.

"The other great promotional thing this author did was to come up with a list of 'Top Ten Signs You're the Parent of an Elementary School Student'—it's just a kind of David Letterman list, very cute and totally relevant to the book, and I sent it out with galley copies. Newspapers and mags all over the place have requested it. Trivia, small factoids, etc. are huge favorites with

the media, because they don't need to do anything and the trivia is terrific filler for them."

## HOW TO GET AND USE REVIEWS

One of my keys to success is being generous with review copies. Of course I target appropriate publications and ask editors and writers to review the book, but I also put out plenty of general ads for reviewers, asking if anyone's interested in reviewing the book. I also include an e-mail address on my books' web pages where people can write to ask for review copies.

Because of this, plenty of people ask to review my books. Some have obvious qualifications, whereas others have no particular book reviewing credits, or at least they don't mention any. I often get e-mails that say, "I'd like to review your book. Please send it to..."

When this happens to you, write back. "Thanks for your interest! Can you tell me what publication/s you review for, or where you plan to send the review?"

Depending on the answer, you'll know how to proceed. If you're dealing with a total newbie who doesn't have much of a clue what to do with a review, don't ignore her—instruct her. Tell her you'd be happy to send her a review copy if she'll send a review to a few publications... then supply her with contact information.

This is just what I did when a new writer told me she'd love to review my book. She named a few places she planned to pitch it (long shots for a new writer) and I gave her the benefit of the doubt and sent it to her. I checked in with her two months later, and sure enough, she hadn't gotten any responses to her pitches. So I provided her with a list of about eight places to submit to. Two of them published her review, which made both of us happy.

Another option is to make the book available electronically in PDF format for reviewers who are less experienced. It costs nothing to send your book this way, so there's no financial risk involved. You don't need to explain your reasons; just say you don't have any more print copies of the book in stock for reviews, but you'd be happy to send it in e-book format.

After you've sent review copies, allow some time for the reviewer to read the book (keeping in mind he or she may have other books to review before yours) and pitch it to publications. I like to allow two months before following up.

Then write or call the reviewers you haven't heard from and check in. Make sure they got the books and ask if there's anything you can do to help.

If a person has no luck placing a review, you can always ask him or her to at least write up a quick review for Amazon or BN.com (or both). These reviews matter to readers more than you might think!

Once someone sends you a copy of a review, rejoice, thank the person (even if the review is less-than-stellar), and if appropriate, ask if he or she would also post it to Amazon or if you may include it on your website.

When you only have a few reviews, you may want to include the entire reviews in your marketing materials and on your site. When you have many reviews, you can cherry-pick the best "nuggets" from each, like you see on movie posters.

You can also quote from reviews in press releases, in your bio, in ads...

When one of my reviewers called me "The Dr. Phil for writers," I adopted the moniker in my advertising for the next several months. I also picked a few key phrases for my bios from other reviewers—like this:

Jenna Glatzer is the author of Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer, the book Women's Health & Fitness editor Colleen Oakley calls "a must-read for any freelancer wanting to break into the business and stay there."

To announce your book for review, your best bet is to target specific writers and editors who serve your target audience first. Write to them with a quick introduction and a press release that shows why this book is appropriate for this publication. If it's available for excerpting, mention that, and mention that you're available for interviews or to answer readers' questions for their publication.

But in addition to that, you can announce your book's release and availability for review here:

- <http://www.prweb.com>
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/reviewerandauthor/>
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ReviewersChoice/>
- Writers' message boards
- [http://www.openbookltd.com/bulletins.shtml?category=Open\\_Book\\_Announcements](http://www.openbookltd.com/bulletins.shtml?category=Open_Book_Announcements)
- <http://www.authorsden.com>
- <http://www.authorzone.com/>
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/doesbookannounce/>
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Independent-Book-Reviews/>
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RomanceJunkiesReaders/>

- <http://www.allreaders.com/promote.asp>

And you can find reviewers to contact here:

- <http://www.rio-reviewers.com/membership/riomembers.html>
- <http://www.blether.com/reviewer.php>
- <http://www.ebookcrossroads.com/book-reviewers.html>
- <http://www.writing-world.com/children/reviewers.shtml>
- <http://www.bookzonepro.com/reviewers/>

And a few hubs for publications that run book reviews:

- [http://www.midwestbookreview.com/links/othr\\_rev.htm](http://www.midwestbookreview.com/links/othr_rev.htm)
- [http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Literature/Reviews\\_and\\_Criticism/](http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Literature/Reviews_and_Criticism/)
- <http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Reviews/>

## CONTESTS AND FREEBIES

I'm not sure if I can properly convey the promotion potential of contests and freebies. If I were to sum it up in a word: "WOO-HOO!" (Is that a word?)

People love freebies. Free reports, free e-books, free signed bookplates, free consultations... think of something you can give away that relates to your book in some way. Make it easy to deliver (preferably something you can deliver electronically by autoresponder). This might be a transcript of an interview you did, a few of your articles packaged into a "special report," a gift certificate for money off your next book/another service or product of yours, an e-book you wrote just for the occasion...

Some innovative writers have teamed up on their freebies. One smart group of authors got together and wrote a cookbook (*Cooking By The Book*) that included recipes inspired by their books or characters, along with short book excerpts. Others have written chapters of inspirational or writing-related e-books to be put together into a freebie all of them can use.

It's simple to give freebies; if you're taking orders directly, you can just send the freebie to anyone who places an order. If you're not, you can ask for some kind of proof of purchase (a receipt, a bookstore name, an answer to a simple question about something in the book) and tell them to send it to your autoresponder's address (or your own e-mail if you want to handle fulfillment manually). Handling fulfillment yourself will cut down on the number of bogus freebie-hunters (there are rare cases when someone will write to your autoresponder without having purchased the book, just because he or she realizes it's an autoresponder and won't know the difference—but I wouldn't lose

sleep over that), but it can get very time-consuming if the promotion works and you have lots of orders!

I have yet to find a totally foolproof free autoresponder. If you have a website, your hosting company may provide autoresponders for you (check your package—it may well be included), or you can surf around on search engines for “free autoresponders.” I use <http://www.sendfree.com>, which works well most of the time, but sometimes doesn't deliver. Always have a back-up way for people to contact you just in case the autoresponder doesn't perform for them.

You can also run contests related to your book. Many smart authors use this as a way to draw people to their websites to read more about their work. Recently, author Billie A Williams ran a contest where readers would have to look around on her site to find answers to questions about her books, then they'd send her the answers by e-mail and she'd give away a copy of each of her books to winners chosen at random from all correct responses.

I've helped authors run other sorts of contests, too—the author of a humor book about shoe obsession called for short essays about shoes. Other authors have asked for short stories or poems about their characters. One even ran a “bad review” contest for the person who wrote the most insulting review of his book!

The publisher of The Dimwit's Dictionary ran a contest where people were asked to submit “Dimwitticisms” they came across... I won second place and a \$100 bookstore gift certificate!

The prize may be a copy of your book, or anything else of your imagination.

The biggest benefit of contests and freebies is their promotional weight. While most e-zines, magazines, and newspapers won't run a general announcement about your book's release, many of them will happily announce a free contest or a giveaway. If you decide to go this route, promote relentlessly! Post your own announcements in e-mail discussion groups and message boards, and beg editors to announce it to their lists. A nice perk you can offer: Tell them you'll list their publication as a sponsor on the contest/freebie page if they run your announcement.

You can also offer your book as a prize in other people's contests. Be on the lookout for good promoters; if a contest is getting attention, it's a good idea to get your book associated with it. Offer up a free copy as long as they mention it on the prizes and/or sponsors page. Even better, look for contests where your book will be the only prize. For example, in the Absolute Write Newsletter, we run a giveaway every other week. We usually give away a book. The author of that book gets free publicity twice: Once when we announce the contest, and once when we announce the winner. Two ads in our newsletter (which goes out to 75,000 writers) would cost a pretty penny, especially for the high placement we give the contest listings. Sending us a book for giveaway is far more cost-effective.

You can also use giveaways and contests to entice people to come to your chats or live events, or to sign up for your newsletter or fan club. (If you don't have a newsletter, set one up—you don't have to run a regular e-zine, but it's smart business to develop a mailing list of people who've bought your books in the past, so you

can tell them about your next book! I use <http://www.zinester.com> for my newsletters.)

Always overdeliver on your freebies. If your freebie is worth exactly what people paid for it, they're going to feel cheated and will not look kindly on you. I get the most wonderful compliments on my book-related freebies; people often write to say they can't believe I gave away such quality info (like my Editors' E-mail Cheat Sheet Directory, which I give away to anyone who buys Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer, or my Agents! Agents! Agents! report that I give away to people who sign up for the Absolute Write Newsletter).

The general rule is: If you couldn't sell it, it's not a worthwhile freebie. And putting a price value on your freebies helps:

When you buy *Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer*, you'll get the Editors' E-mail Cheat Sheet Directory (a \$29 value) free!

There are even some nice people out there who will let you take their stuff and turn it into a freebie for yourself. Like me. You could take all of the articles on my free-to-reprint page and turn them into an e-book for giveaway, as long as you included my bio and copyright information. Or you could take some of my articles and some articles from other people who are offering free reprint rights and compile them into an e-book (I'm cool with this as long as you don't charge money for it—but make sure the other writers are, too).

Other cool ideas for freebies: A guided meditation you record that you can offer as a download, recipes, coupon books, free

advertising in your e-zine or website, a free teleclass, or free access to a paid-subscriber service.

## YOUR WEBSITE

I'm not even going to get into the fact that you need one. You just do in today's publishing climate.

If you have no idea how to create a website and you don't want to pay someone to do it for you or buy software for it, just go to <http://www.authorsden.com> and fill in the blanks. It couldn't be simpler. You can also get free templates and hosting at a number of sites (Geocities, Homestead, Tripod, etc.), but these would be last resorts in my opinion. They're amateurish and usually filled with pop-up ads.

You could also ask your publisher to set up a web page for you, which they may do automatically.

On your site, the essentials are:

Your cover art

Your book description

Ordering info

Reviews/blurbs/awards

Your bio

A "media room" where the press can find what they need—sample questions, cover art and your photo in different formats, a press release, info about your availability and past media appearances, etc., along with info about who to contact (you/your publicist).

The not-essential-but-would-be-nice things are:

Your photo

An interview with you

Personal statement from you about why you wrote the book or what reactions have been like

Free articles

A way for readers to contact you

A place to subscribe to your e-zine or fan club list

To promote your website, first make sure it's ready for search engines. You'll want to include meta tags between the <head> and </head> tags that say this:

```
<title>Insert a title here that includes keywords related to your book</title>
```

```
<meta name="description" content="Insert a short description of what people will find at your site.">
```

```
<meta name="keywords" content="Insert phrases and words, separated by commas, that relate to your site and book—if your book were about getting rid of wrinkles, you might use phrases like wrinkle treatment, crow's feet, and anti-aging products.">
```

In the body of your main web page, make sure you've repeated your key phrases and keywords at least three times.

Then go to the major search engines and look for a "submit your site" button. Be aware that many search engines take several months to list your site, if they choose to list it at all. But it's worth the effort; once you're listed, you don't have to submit again (despite what other people may tell you, in my experience, I only had to submit my sites once and they've been listed ever since).

Then visit sites related to your book and ask for reciprocal links. Search engines determine placement partly by popularity. They

measure popularity by how many sites link to yours. Also, you may pick up traffic through these link swaps.

You may also choose to join web rings (see <http://www.webring.com>) or banner exchange programs, but don't go crazy cluttering your pages with other people's graphics. Your main objective is to keep people on your site, not encourage them to go clicking away to other people's sites.

You can also gain popularity for your site by writing free articles and distributing them to article banks like <http://www.articlecity.com>; anyone who reprints your article will include your bio (which should, of course, include your website address).

Many authors report that the free articles they write are their most successful promotional tools. If you don't have a website, include your publisher's 800 number or your book's page at Amazon in your bio instead. It's important to keep establishing your credibility and to keep your name in front of your potential readers, so spend time writing worthwhile articles that will keep them reading all the way to the end... that's where your bio is, after all!

There are many, many places for you to get more in-depth instruction about web promotion and web design; I'm just offering the tip of the iceberg. Do some research if any of this floats your boat. You can't throw a stick on the Internet without running into a website about how to optimize your pages for search engines, how to increase your site's traffic, how to attract subscribers to your e-zine, how to do ad swaps, etc.

Get creative with the uses for your site. One author regularly has someone take digital photos of him with people at book signings, then hands the people his business card and tells them they can "pick up" their photos on his website at a special link. This draws people to his site and it gets him more attention at the bookstores, too! ("Who's the famous guy everyone's lining up to take pictures with?")

## Your Salesperson Cap

On your book's description page (and in all your marketing material in general, particularly your media release), you must have a USP. (Huh?) That's a Unique Selling Proposition, and it's what sets your book apart from the competition.

I learned this the hard way. I had already put in a good amount of effort promoting my book Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer, but early sales were not wonderful. Not bad, but not wonderful. I didn't understand why, and I asked my newsletter subscribers for advice. I wrote, "If you're interested in the topic but you haven't bought the book yet, I'd love to know what holds you back." The feedback was enlightening: Almost all of them said the same thing: "I don't know what makes your book different from all the other books about writing I already have."

Well, I thought in frustration, didn't they see that I said my book gives insider tips about how to break into magazines? *Wait, no, all freelance writing books say that.* Didn't they notice I said that I'd teach them how to write irresistible query letters editors would love? *Yeah, but all the other books promise that, too.* Didn't they check out the part where... *Oh, forget it. They're right!*

What I wanted to say was, "I know all the other books promise this stuff, but mine actually delivers!" but readers who don't know me have no reason to believe that sweeping statement. Instead, I decided to give them proof and let them judge for themselves. Here's what I wrote:

I know there are other books about freelance writing out there. Some of them are good. Some of them aren't.

THIS book, however, came out of my desire to debunk the bad advice I've seen in other books and articles, mostly from well-intentioned writers who aren't very experienced. Sometimes from editors who had edited at only one magazine and had no idea how other editors worked.

I can't tell you how many times I heard that a query letter must be one page, no more and no less. (Bull. I'll show you my sample query letters, one of which was two pages and earned me \$4000.) Or that you have no chance of landing a writing assignment with a national magazine until you have credits from lots of smaller publications. (My first article was for a national magazine.) Or that you should never give up all rights. (There are times when it'll be lucrative for you to do so.) Or that you should pay attention to writers' guidelines to figure out whether an editor wants queries by mail or e-mail. (Forget it. Melissa Walker, senior editor at *ELLEgirl*, says "Even if they say snail mail, pitch them via e-mail... Snail mail piles up-- and gets rejected by editorial assistants.")

I also wanted to tell the truth about things I'd never seen any other writer address in a book like this: When pitching a profile of an outstanding woman to national women's magazines, you have to consider what she looks like. Even if she's found the cure for cancer, if she's overweight, many women's mags won't buy your article. Yes, I'm serious.

Which magazines will make up or alter a source's quotations, and which ones actually care about fact-checking? And what if your best clips are all five years old? Stephanie Abarbanel at *Woman's Day* says don't include them-- she'll think no one's hired you since then. Do editors call each other to find out if a writer is any good? Chandra Czape (now at *CosmoGirl!*) says "absolutely," and it could kill your chances of working for her if another editor says you were a pain to deal with. And what's the *one thing* you should never include in your query letter if you want to make sure your article idea isn't stolen and given to a staff writer? I'll tell you in the book so you don't have to learn the hard way (like I did!).

For less than \$14 (plus shipping), you will learn everything I wish I had known when I started freelancing.

Other things to remember about your marketing efforts:

- **AUDIENCE-CENTERED:** Remember that everything you write, from your media releases to your site copy to the book's description, must focus on the reader and how the reader will benefit. A radio producer does not want to hear about your great new book. The producer wants to hear what you will offer of value to the show's listeners. Your press release should NOT focus on your book, it should focus on your expertise and the interesting topics you can talk about and questions you can answer for their audience. Remember: The host will not be interviewing your book. He will be interviewing *you* about what you can teach his audience.
- **AS IT SAYS IN MY BOOK:** Annoying! I've been an interviewer for a long time, and as soon as an interviewee uses that phrase, I roll my eyes. Yes, you can and should mention your book during your media interviews. However, you must find ways to work it into the conversation naturally, without resorting to the obvious plug. You might tell the story of why you wrote your book, or tell an interesting anecdote that happened while you were writing it, or an extra tidbit that didn't make it into the book. All these techniques can give you an excuse to mention your book without launching into a sales pitch. Hosts hate pitches and jaded audiences will see it for exactly what it is. Launching into a sales pitch, except at the end of the show when you are expected to give your book title and ordering

information, can even get you booted off a show early (and never invited back).

- **ALWAYS HAVE BOOKS ON HAND.** Don't be above selling your books out of the trunk of your car. You never know when you're going to strike up a conversation with your waitress, someone on line at the grocery store, or a bank teller who asks, "Where can I get your book?"
- **LOOK FOR BULK SALES OPPORTUNITIES.** If your book has any potential ties to a product, service, store, profession, or location, see if you can work with your publisher to offer a discount for multiple sales. Some businesses buy books to give away as incentives to customers. Some doctors buy books to give or sell to their patients. Gift basket companies sometimes include books in their gift assortments. See if you can get your book featured in a catalog or book club. Approach relevant associations and ask if they'd like to offer the book at a discount to their members.
- **VISIT BUSINESSES.** Aside from bookstores, where else might your book sell? How about at a spa, a party goods store, a car wash, an amusement park, a hobby shop, a crafts store, a pet shop, or a nature center? Walk into stores and ask. If managers are reluctant, offer a consignment deal.
- **OFFER ENDORSEMENTS.** Just as you sought out blurbs from people for your books, other authors need blurbs, too. Find authors you respect and offer to write endorsements for their books. If you write a juicy one, your name and book may be featured on the cover of someone else's book.

- **JOIN IN DISCUSSIONS.** Earlier, I asked you to find bulletin boards and e-mail discussion lists appropriate to your target audience. I don't want you to just drop in, announce your book, and leave. Pick out a few popular spots and make your presence known by answering questions, being supportive, offering advice, and telling stories. You shouldn't need to plug your book in your posts: let your signature do the talking. In every post, make sure you have a signature line that tells who you are, what your book is about, and your url. Most of the traffic to my personal website comes from bulletin boards where I post. I find it's better not to spread myself too thin in this area, so I have about 4 or 5 that I visit regularly. When I give a fellow board member good advice, I know it's likely that other readers will want to learn more about me—so they'll visit my site.
- **STAY OUT OF FIGHTS.** Be aware that anyone has the power to post a review on several public sites. One of the abusive members who I had to ban from my Absolute Write message boards went on to write a scathing review of one of my books on Amazon (which he admitted he hadn't read). There wasn't much I could have done differently because I was in charge of the board and he was so nasty to the other members that I had to take action to get rid of him. However, other members had a choice in how they interacted with him. If I had a book to promote and I was not a board moderator, I would have ignored him. Unfortunately, several authors got into battles with him, and he treated them the same way—by writing nasty reviews of their books in public places. Some successfully got Amazon to remove them, others didn't. (I didn't.)

- **REMEMBER A CALL TO ACTION.** Ask for the sale. At the end of your radio interview, tell people exactly where they can get your book (a 1-800 number is preferable, followed by a website—spelled out if the url is at all uncommon). At the end of a speaking engagement, let the audience know why they should buy your book now and tell them where you'll be signing it. On your website, include a time-limited offer or any kind of perk if they'll order it *today*.
- **BE HELPFUL.** In all your dealings with the media, always think of what's in it for them. They don't owe you anything, and they're not in business to help you promote your books. That's why you, the author, need to help them. Help them look better to their audiences and their bosses by giving them truly enticing material to work with. Make their jobs easy: Include a list of questions a host can ask you. Offer to find other guests who would complement your appearance—like, if you've written a book about breast cancer, offer to find a breast cancer survivor and a researcher who's working on chemotherapy improvements to come on the show with you. If a reporter interviews you for an article, follow up by sending her helpful research material you found. Always think of ways to go above and beyond for the people who are in a position to help you get your book known.
- **NEVER STOP LOOKING** for new opportunities to promote your work. Keep in mind that most people need to hear about a book several times before they decide to buy it. So if you start to think, "Well, sheesh, I've already written five articles for this parenting website... if their audience hasn't bought my book by now, they never will," stop yourself. The

sixth time might be the charm. Or the twelfth. I've often had readers tell me they had "wanted" to buy my book for a long time, but it wasn't until one particular review they read, or a special, or a new article of mine, that they finally decided to buy it.

There are many places to list yourself as an available guest. Most aren't cheap. Here are some links to investigate:

- <http://www.guestfinder.com/>
- <http://www.rtir.com/>
- <http://www.prleads.com/>

## NOW APPEARING: 9 TIPS FOR WELL-ATTENDED EVENTS

When I made the decision to do free workshops and book signings for Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer, I thought it would be easy to draw an audience. I had, after all, done all the right things to prepare for this big event: I had a successful e-zine, AbsoluteWrite.com, sent weekly directly to my target market; I was a contributing editor at the most popular magazine for writers; had been interviewed all over writers' e-zines; and had submitted articles to sites and magazines related to my primary audience (writers) and my secondary audience (those interested in working from home).

But the problem was that my audience was international. I had a workshop set up on Long Island, and more than 99% of my regular audience wouldn't be able to get there. So I had to get local attention. Through trial and error, I've come up with a system that works. I haven't had fewer than 30 people at any of my signings, and I've always sold books. I hope my tips will inspire you next time you're promoting an event.

### **1. Focus on the benefit to the attendee.**

The first thing a reader should see on your promotional material is what's in it for them. A signed book is all well and good, but it'll require them to spend money. What are they getting free just for showing up? In my case, I was offering a free two-hour seminar about making money writing for magazines. What will they learn? What perks will they get? This is what appeared in big letters on my posters, with the "book signing" in small letters toward the bottom.

### **2. "Community Events" are not places to do business.**

Most local newspapers have a "community events" section where they run short blurbs about local events. Submit your release at least two weeks prior to your event, with all the "who, what, where, when, why" questions succinctly answered. But after I did that and failed to place my events in local papers, I asked an ex-newspaper editor for advice.

"While I would have probably run a little blurb about your free writing workshop, I would not have run your free writing workshop combined with your book signing," she wrote. "I would invite you to pay for an advertisement because, being the jaded cynic I am, I would not give you free publicity for something from which you are profiting."

So leave your for-profit hat at home when approaching the media.

### **3. Think small.**

National attention is nice, but when promoting a local event, you want to get your message to as many local people as possible. I mulled this over one day while pushing my grocery cart through a supermarket, then noticed the bulletin board filled with posters. I ran home and created my own on the computer: Colorful posters that gave all the essential information about my event in large, easy-to-read type, with pull-off tabs on the bottom that simply said "Free Writing Seminar," along with the location, date, and time. You can put these in supermarkets, as well as delis, convenience stores, libraries, and other high-traffic businesses.

### **4. Find local websites, e-mail lists, and message boards.**

Many cities, counties, and regions have their own websites where people can announce coming events. You can also search for your geographic area on Yahoogroups.com to find e-mail discussion lists in your area. Write to the site owner or group moderator to request that he or she tell members about your event. You can also post any literary event here for members of the media to see: <http://www.netread.com/calendar/>

## **5. Co-promote.**

When Judith Lazarus promoted her books, The Spa Sourcebook and Stress Relief & Relaxation Techniques, she asked a spa product manufacturer to provide her with samples. She used these samples to draw people to her book signing table. You might find a local business that could benefit from being featured at your event, and ask them to hang a sign about the event or include flyers in customers' bags in return. Or find someone who's promoting a complementary product or service, and agree to swap—you'll distribute postcards about their events at your table if they'll do the same for you.

## **6. Run contests and giveaways.**

Similar to Judith's deal with the spa product manufacturer, see if you can get a business to donate an item for giveaway—or use one of your own products or services. On your publicity material, you can announce that one lucky attendee (or many) will win a valuable door prize. Or invite people to enter the contest beforehand, then tell each of them that you'll announce the winner/s at the event. Be sure to include the prize's monetary value on your announcements.

## **7. Use lawn signs.**

If politicians can promote themselves with signs on our lawns, why can't we? Ask friends and associates to put a colorful sign on their lawn with very brief information about your event.

### **8. Be photogenic.**

If this is an event you've done before, or if you have an interesting photo related to your event, send it to local newspapers with your release. You have a better shot at seeing print if you can provide a photo, and readers will be more drawn to your announcement if it's accompanied by a picture. Pick an interesting prop or a fun candid shot, not a typical headshot.

### **9. Business cards, revisited.**

Although many local businesses don't have enough counter space to display a stack of your flyers, they may be happy to let you deposit a stack of business-card-size announcements about your event. These are easy to make on your computer, and again, should just contain an eye-catching headline and essential information about the event.

## THINK OUTSIDE THE BOOKSTORE

When most authors think of book signings, they think bookstores. Don't.

My writing pal Linda Formichelli (co-author of The Renegade Writer) says that she has far greater success at libraries. Yours is the only book for sale there, so it's not competing for people's pocketbooks.

To make your job even easier, check this out:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/ppo/progresources/authors/authorsyour.htm>

The American Library Association provides this site for authors and libraries to connect. It has a significant "want list" from libraries looking for authors to come in and speak or do readings, and many of them will allow you to sell your books at the library. You can also post your availability as a speaker on this site. A benefit of speaking at a library is that most of them have newsletters that go out to the whole community, and they'll include your event in the newsletter.

Now think even wilder.

Moo Press, the publisher that's publishing my next children's book, bought Hattie, Get a Haircut! in part because they saw the potential for some interesting promotions. The publisher wanted to know if I'd be open to doing signings and readings in hair salons.

"Of course," I told her, and followed it up with other ideas—I could also read at children's hours at the library, the YMCA, school functions...

If I were really entrepreneurial, I might even run "Hattie" kids' parties: I'd come as a party helper and read my book to the kids, and each kid would get a copy as a party favor.

Other interesting places for book readings and signings:

- Airports
- Wineries
- Theatres
- Malls
- Gyms
- Parks

Don't be afraid to throw yourself a book launch party, either. Invite your friends, ask your friends to invite their friends, and definitely invite the media. You might have a themed party (related to your book) where you ask people to come in costume. Have bookmarks or other small "party favors" and a big stack of books ready for signing. Ask these people for help getting your book off the ground by talking it up or reviewing it. It doesn't need to be expensive: You could just serve light snacks and soda, and have it at your house, in a library meeting room, at a park, or in an inexpensive rented hall.

## GETTING BRANDED

Consider giving yourself a personal tagline. These are the little nicknames you'll often see that look something like this:

Joe Vitale is "Mr. Fire!"  
Joan Stewart, The Publicity Hound  
Craig Garber, The King of Copy  
Randy Gilbert, Dr. Proactive  
Sheila "Mama Gums" Wolf

I recently adopted the tag "The Writer's Writer." It took exactly one day to catch on. I had just added that phrase to my website, and the following day, someone wrote to me using that nickname.

It helps the media (and readers) remember you as an expert on your particular topic. As an editor, when I want to quote someone about publicity, who pops into mind? Joan Stewart, the Publicity Hound. Would I remember her name without that tagline? I'm not sure. Maybe now, once I've already associated her that way, but not when I was first "introduced" to her.

And if I'm writing about dental health, who do I think of to interview? Sheila "Mama Gums" Wolf.

Be careful of making your tagline too narrow if you're planning to write more books. This works best if you have some kind of established niche that's not *too* narrow.

For example, if your first book is about raising chinchillas, you might be tempted to call yourself Jane "Chinchilla Chick" Doe. But if your next book is about raising ferrets, the tagline is no

longer appropriate. Better to go with something that encompasses all you plan to write in the near future, like Jane Doe, The Animal Ally.

Use your tagline in your signature, on your site, and in your media material—and preferably on your book itself. You may even incorporate it into your business card and stationery.

For more on branding, see

[http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/branding\\_yourself.htm](http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/branding_yourself.htm).

## BARTERING

Writers often put certain promotional activities out of their minds because of the expense involved. But never underestimate the power of bartering.

What can you do in return for services or products that will help you promote your books?

I have recently begun exchanging "fillers" with other businesses and authors. For example, when I do book signings, I hand out postcards or fliers for Jennifer Lawler's book Dojo Wisdom for Writers. She does the same for me: When she does a signing, she gives her attendees one of my postcards.

I also exchanged freebies with Linda Formichelli: When she does a signing, she's free to hand out a shorter version of my Editors' E-mail Cheat Sheet (which, of course, includes my book's information and my website address on top), and at my signings, I'm free to hand out examples of her successful query letters (with her book info and url on top).

Not impressed yet? Okay, how about this...

I also got free services from book marketers (worth thousands of dollars), a publishing coach (\$200), a submission service (\$100), free e-book cover art (\$100), free banner design (\$50), free membership in two paid clubs for authors (\$119)...

Yeah, now you want to hear more, don't you?

Well, I have a great advantage: I have the Absolute Write Newsletter. It reaches 75,000 writers a week. So I had an

obvious barter: If these people would help me, I'd give them free advertising in my newsletter. It worked because my audience is in each of their target markets: They all want to reach writers. We worked out deals so the advertising I gave them was actually worth more than the services they gave me, which made them happy—and I got a lot of help I couldn't afford otherwise.

But you don't need to have a massive newsletter to strike up barterers. There are so many ways you can help other people with your writing skills: Offer to write up an interview or profile of the person and submit it to magazines and websites. Offer to write marketing materials or website copy for them. Offer to proofread their existing marketing material or website copy. Offer to ghostwrite an article for them that they can submit to their local newspaper or trade magazine. Offer to write (and possibly submit) a press release for them. Offer to include their contact information on your site and in your book. Offer to recommend them on writers' lists and bulletin boards. Offer to do anything you can think of to help promote this person in exchange for his or her help promoting you.

What shouldn't you offer? To cut someone in on your book's profits. It's insulting to most professionals in this business, not to mention a highly difficult-to-track venture. One publicist told me she regularly gets approached by authors who promise her "a piece of the action" in exchange for publicity. The publicist can do her job beautifully, but your book still may not sell—because you're a lousy speaker, the book isn't much good, it's overpriced, it's not easily available, the cover art stinks, the reviews are bad... there could be many reasons. The truth is that most books don't earn out their advances and most authors' "profits" are slim. It's the same sort of situation writers are warned against when publishers ask for free articles with the promise that "Once we

become profitable, we'll pay you! You're getting in on the ground floor, bay-bee!"

Skip it. Find other ways to offer something of value.

What can you barter for? Printing services (postcards, bookmarks, posters, magnets, etc.), graphic design, listings in media directories, mentoring services, press release distribution, advertising, memberships in promotional associations...

Website owners are particularly open to barter arrangements because they often need volunteers. Offer to moderate a message board in exchange for free advertising, or to write articles or proofread their newsletter in exchange for solid publicity.

## PERSISTENCE

If you aren't prepared to market your book, it's unfair of you to expect anyone to invest time and money publishing it—and that includes you.

Gone are the days when authors could just write and expect the publisher to handle everything else. Because there are more than 50,000 books published every year, and because people increasingly have other leisure activities (TV, the Internet, videogames, etc.) that take away from reading time, you must do something extraordinary to convince readers to get off their couches and into a bookstore to pick up your book in particular, instead of the thousands of other worthy books they have to choose from.

Hone and practice your messages: Know exactly why someone should buy your book and be prepared to spell it out. Know exactly how you can help a radio host's audience. Know how your expertise can benefit a reporter. Know why a bookstore manager should bring you in to do a signing.

The whole publicity process can seem exhausting... and I won't lie—sometimes it is! But it can also be exhilarating getting to see your hard work pay off in the form of media appearances, positive reviews, and everybody's favorite: book sales.

If you're in it for the long haul, remember that the promotion work you do today could lead to the next opportunity and the next. After a while, publicity does snowball and it gets easier. Nowadays, even though I still make plenty of contacts on my own, I also get a ton of requests from interviewers, reviewers,

editors, and radio hosts who found me thanks to my past promotional efforts.

Make it a point today to be brave and make some new contacts or send out some new media releases or articles. Fortune favors the persistent promoters.

## RESOURCES

### Bestseller Mentoring

<http://www.bestsellermentoring.com/aw>: Randy Gilbert and Peggy McColl teach authors and publishers how to market their books online (theirs is the system I used to get *Outwitting Writer's Block* to #4 on Amazon's best-seller list). Not cheap, but guaranteed.

### Books to Read

1001 Ways to Market Your Books by John Kremer:

<http://www.bookmarket.com>

The Frugal Book Promoter by Carolyn Howard-Johnson:

<http://carolynhowardjohnson.com/>

Beyond the Bookstore by Rusty Fischer:

<http://www.absolutewrite.com/ebookstore/beyondbookstore.htm>

Publicize Your Book! By Jacqueline Deval:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0399528636/absolutewrite>

Jump-Start Your Book Sales by Marilyn & Tom Ross:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0918880416/absolutewrite>

### Sites to Visit

<http://www.celebratelove.com/articles2.htm>: A fantastic array of articles about book promotion

<http://www.bookmarket.com>: Super articles and a free newsletter with publicity opportunities

<http://www.writerswrite.com/bookpromotion/resources.htm>: Several directories and articles.

<http://www.writing-world.com/promotion/index.shtml>: More great articles and links.

<http://www.publicityinsider.com/>: Free e-zine and publicity leads.

<http://p197.ezboard.com/fabsolutewritefrm42>: Message board where you can get and give advice about book promotion.

### **Jenna's Publicist**

Marsha Friedman of Event Management Services:

<http://www.event-management.com/>

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Show Jenna some love!

Visit her site at <http://www.jennaglatzer.com> and find out how you can get a FREE Editors' E-mail Cheat Sheet when you order her latest book, **Make a Real Living as a Freelance Writer**.

There, you'll also find out about her other books, upcoming author appearances, and her writers' workshop at the Omega Institute.

You can also visit her online magazine for writers at <http://www.absolutewrite.com> and pick up a FREE list of literary and screenwriting agents who are open to new clients. (Not to mention the fact that the newsletter itself is pretty darn good, too. 75,000 subscribers can't be wrong.)

Hope you enjoyed! Happy promoting!