

Author Promotion Guide

Part One: Getting Started in Social Media

1. Observe. Start out by joining and watching. Pick a venue to get yourself started. It could be Twitter, an online forum, or a site dedicated to books like [GoodReads](#), [Shelfari](#), or [LibraryThing](#). You don't have to do anything at this point other than watch and learn. Be a sponge and absorb what is going on around you. Get a feel for the place. Wait until you are comfortable.
2. Participate. When someone makes a comment that you agree with, support their position. Expand on it. Give an example from your own life that illustrates the point. If you disagree, do so respectfully, offer supporting information for your opinion.
3. Contribute. Once you are comfortable talking with others, it's time to go to the next level. Start contributing. If you read an article that people in your group might find helpful, post a link to it. If you read a book by someone in the group and liked it, tell others. Be supportive. Be helpful.
4. Form Relationships. This is what social networking is all about. Make this your "end game." You're not participating to sell your books. You're here to make connections. If a fan writes a nice review, thank them. Most don't expect to hear from authors. But after hearing from you, they'll remember you even more. They might even share with their friends "how nice you are."
5. Provide Information. Let the people in your group know about what's going on in your life. Do you have a signing coming up? Is a new book being released? Have you posted a sample chapter for free? Did a magazine publish one of your short stories? This isn't selling; it is informing. You aren't telling them to buy; you are letting them know what you have and leaving the decision to them.

Part Two: Author Platform

In today's environment where readers want to connect with their authors, remember the following:

- Everyone starts from a platform of none. It takes time to build; it won't happen overnight, so don't be discouraged if you have none now.
- Don't think of building a platform as selling. Think of it as making connections and helping others. It's about being a member of a community.
- Successful platforms are built on reciprocity—give and you shall receive. The more generous you are toward others, the more people will gravitate to you.
- Platform building is like laundry. If you do it a little at the time you'll be less likely to be overwhelmed.

Create three bios to use:

1. Super short: for twitter (160 characters)
2. Medium: 500 – 600 characters
3. Long: 500 – 700 words

- Give the reader insight about you
- Be engaging
- Be truthful and heartfelt
- Tell a story

The four questions your viewers want answered in your bio:

1. Who you are
2. What is your expertise
3. How does your expertise address their problem or goal
4. How can they contact you

DO keep your professional bio as short as possible.

DO be selective; don't list your entire professional background.

DON'T be bland; let your personality show.

DON'T include information that isn't relevant to your audience.

Part Three: Priority #1 – Your Own Site

You MUST have a site controlled by you that you can direct people to. Period. Don't ever think author pages from: your publisher, Amazon, or Smashwords are "good enough." You must have a site exclusive to yourself that you are in complete and utter control of.

- One site is best. It is difficult to maintain multiple sites and inactivity will cause readers to lose interest.
- The site should be associated with your name. Your name won't change, as opposed to the titles of books and series. Your website is the place where readers can find you.
- Again if you are using your name as your main site then you can have separate tabs for each series.
- Pick a URL based on your name, not your book's name. Even if you have only one book now you might have more books in the future.
- The cost of websites is minimal. There are generally two aspects to the cost: Registering a URL (required) – the name of your site; and hosting (optional)
- Pay the few dollars a year it takes to purchase your own URL. You can even purchase several – for instance yours, your book titles, and your series titles – as long as they land back to your one and only blog/website. Through redirection you can have several URL's land at the same place.

- Pen names: You should have only one site. If one of the names is the “Real you” then that should be your site name. If all of them are pen names, focus the site on the most popular of the authors, then have separate tabs for each of the “writing as” names.
- What to put on your website:
- Have pages for at least the following:
 1. Books
 2. Reviews
 3. News
 4. Author Bio
 5. Contact

The Books Page

The books page should have the following:

- The cover of the book
- Back of the book “blurb”
- Reviews or testimonials
- A link to buy the book (either direct from you or Amazon)
- A sample chapter
- Book Trailer (optional)
- Your ISBN’s

The Reviews Page

Reviews sell. Period. One of the things you need to do as an author is encourage those you talk to who enjoy your book to post reviews online. Then you need to repeat these testimonials on your website.

News Page

This is an important page to show how active you are. If you are not currently doing press releases, start. It is a way to generate some buzz about your book.

- Awards you were nominated for or won.
- Author interviews you did (with links to them).
- Book Bloggers who reviewed your book (with links).
- Upcoming Events, including Conventions, book clubs, and book signings.
- Recent News: a summary of all your press releases – did you expand your website, post a free chapter online, make a trailer, go to a conference? These are all things to highlight in your news area.

- Previous Events – Especially important if you don't have any recent book events, this way people can see where you have been in the past and this will help to establish "legitimacy" to your book.

Contact Page

Always leave a way for readers, reviewers, or others to contact you. This can be as simple as listing your e-mail address or having a form where people can sign in and leave their information and notes. Encourage people to tell you how they liked (or didn't like) your book, or post typos etc. If you are using a form, make sure you store their email address and send them a personal thank you afterwards.

Part Four: Blogging

Advantages of a blog:

1. Multi-Functional – A blog can work as a website. A tab at the top of the blog site can guide the viewer to your web page.
2. User Friendly – You feel more in the driver's seat. A blog is easy to create and you can do it yourself with no html skills. You don't need software or an expensive web designer.
3. Timely – By updating regularly, you can stay current with the "needs" of your audience.
4. Interactive and Personal – A blog is a great way to stay in touch with your readers in a more informal manner. Your audience can get involved by submitting comments. You can generate a following with this connection, discover what they want so you can delve into the requested direction of their interests or concerns, and YOU get more exposure through marketing yourself/your book(s).
5. A Showcase of Your Ability – You write and they read for themselves your awesome abilities, style, and voice.
6. Free – Many blog hosts are free.
7. Higher Search Engine Exposure – More exposure for you. Using links and tabs, each key word will pop up in search engines.
8. Easy to Maintain – Through expert technicians, free and quick assistance is there if needed. They will provide answers to any questions and solve any concerns.

Popular blog platforms

- WordPress
- Blogger
- Typepad
- Tripod
- Squarespace

What to Include

1. First/Feature Page or Home Page

- Updated posts with information your followers will find useful. Try and put your feet in your target audience's shoes. The key to promoting yourself or your book is to understand your customers and their buying habits.
- What you decide you want as your focus will determine your first/feature page. If you want to promote yourself/book(s), make sure you at least either expose your picture/cover of your book on the sidebar of each page or feature this as your first page. You may even decide to have your bio/synopsis or pitch as your first page.
- Make sure your blog is easy to comment on – send a warm, inviting message. Remember, first impressions are lasting impressions. Also, people need to trust you before you pitch your book. This is why I would recommend keeping your “advertising about your book” page separate from your feature page.

2. Widgets on your side bar(s). Going from the top down:

- A friendly and professional picture of you. Link the photo back to your bio page.
- A badge your followers can click to subscribe. Easy to follow instructions: “Click here for your FREE bi-weekly subscription.”
- Your book cover. Link this to another page where you can detail information – About/Price/etc. (Note – WordPress does not allow you to advertise so you may want to use Blogger as your platform if you are selling your book.)
- A search space. For example, you can use google in addition to your own search button for easier navigation.
- List of Blog rolls
- List of Groups you belong to
- Categories. List 3-5 only
- List of Recent Posts
- List of Resources
- List of Writers (usually fellow writers you share links with)
- Archives
- Recent Comments
- Meta or Log In button
- Subscribe RSS button. Very important so you can link your other blogs together.
- Blog stats. (This is questionable)

3. Bio Page:

- The most viewed and commented on page is usually your bio page. Sell yourself. Present an eagerness to talk about you and your work.
- Write in third person.
- List facts not wishes.
- Cite relevant information.
- Write tight. Limit to three to four sentences.

- Add a hook.

4. Contact Page

5. Promotional Page

- Design: View the dynamics of your blog to make everything look user friendly and attractive. Do not clutter the page. More doesn't necessarily mean better.
- No fancy flashing buttons, music or slow to download animations.
- Remember, your audience is there to read your material and they don't have a whole lot of time. Give the reader what they are looking for right away. The fewer times they have to click to find what they want, the greater the chances they will stick around.
- Give cohesiveness to each page—same format and structure.
- View other sites and ask yourself why you like or dislike their pages. Nothing wrong with borrowing ideas.
- Promotion: people will discover your blog through:
 - Search Engines – The key is to get your name listed at the top of these engines. You need a brand, keywords repeated often in your content, links, and tags.
 - Marketing – Constantly post your “signature” everywhere: in forums, blog comments, and emails.
 - Promoting – Promote your site – Advertise in MySpace, GoodReads, FaceBook, Ning, BookMarketing, MyLogBlog, twitter. Promoting is time consuming and must be done constantly to be effective. If you are tight with deadlines or want to focus solely on your writing, you may want to consider paying someone to build your author platform and promote your book.

Top 5 pieces of advice for a successful blog?

1. Be prepared to market and promote your blog.
2. Present your blog in a professional and user-friendly manner. It must be attractive for the viewer.
3. Target Your Audience – Submit relevant, factual, and interesting information and encourage the reader to contribute.
4. Discover the balance between selling and presenting. Feel comfortable expressing yourself. Have fun writing – this will show in your voice.
5. Edit – Polish each post. Make sure you have included all widgets necessary for your viewer to navigate and gain the knowledge they seek.

Part Five: Other Useful Sites

Bitly: <http://bit.ly/>

This site does two things:

- Takes a long URL and makes it shorter
- Tracks clicks to that shortened URL

Use it whenever you make a link and in particular:

- When tweeting
- As a signature in a blog comment
- As a signature in a forum

It's very simple to use, and like most great things on the Internet is 100% free. Basically you paste your long URL in a box – and it returns you a short URL. As people click on the link, bitly records this information. By watching bitly hits you can see who is interested in what topics.

QR Codes (Quick Response)

These codes are read by various camera phones (such as the iPhone) and will take you to a URL. You should make liberal use of QR Codes on marketing materials. To generate one you can use: <http://qrcode.kaywa.com/>

BookTour

[BookTour](#) is a site where authors can list their upcoming events: Signings, Lectures, Conventions, even virtual events. Readers who are interested in going to author signings register and get emails and RSS feeds whenever an event is near them. In addition, a number of other sites “pickup” the BookTour feed and you get free publicity through them posting events in their areas.

The BookTour system is very easy. The first thing you should do (as with most sites) is create your profile. The site provides a number of places for you to provide “more content” about yourself, which people will see when they click through. For instance:

- Your head shot
- An overview of you (bio, awards, reviews, and “blurb” of each book)
- Book Trailers
- List your books (shows cover and provides links to Amazon and local retailers)

BookTour provides a great little widget (plug in) that you can put on your site so that your followers can know where you will be when. It provides “real-time” data that you have entered into BookTour so you don't have to update your website every time you add a new venue – simply add it to BookTour and it will show up automatically on your site.

This is how you do this:

1. Make a two column table on your website. In the first column put something simple like “aaa.” In the second column put all the content you currently have now.
2. From BookTour, do a search to find yourself, and get on your “profile page.” On the right, directly below the red “Request a visit from this author” button, click on the “On my website” link.
3. Decide how many events you want displayed at a time (depending on how long your page is).
4. Where you currently have “aaa” replace the “aaa” with the data from the first box. The “number” identifies “your” page as opposed to someone else.
5. Take the code from the second box and paste it directly above the “/body” of the page.

Amazon

- Tags are the only factor that define placement on customer community pages.
- Each user may only tag a book once, but if you get enough tags then the book gains a top spot.

The answer – joining a “tag team.” A “tag team” is a group of authors who work together to tag each others’ books to help them achieve the top spot in their chosen customer communities.

“Tag My Book on Amazon” is a blog which currently has approximately 200 authors who are all working together to tag each others’ books. Most of these authors are close to or are already at the top spot in their customer communities.

<http://tagmybookonamazon.wordpress.com/what-is-tagging/>

GoodReads

Author pages are a great way to connect with readers and advertise.

What to include:

1. Information Dump – information about the author and relevant links.
 - a. First line: Title, Author, and Genre
 - b. Second line – Publication info (ISBN, Publisher, Publication Date)
 - c. Third line – Previews (Book trailers, samples, etc.
 - d. Fourth line – Links, to the author’s website, a books website (if separate from author’s), blogs, and also your GoodReads pages (author and book).
 - e. Last line – Buy Links
 - f. General Availability (able to buy from Amazon and Retail Stores) or limited availability (able to buy from author and publisher’s sites only).
2. Book Overview – headline and blurb
3. Awards (optional)

4. Reviews: Pick up to five of your best “1 sentences” from reviews. Think carefully about the order of the reviews based on the source not the content. List the source as a link; this way viewers can click on the source to read the full review.
5. Other – anything else
6. Book Cover – Should also be “linked” to a relevant page – either the GoodReads Book Page or the Author’s Page.

GoodReads Group – You should make yourself a fan group on GoodReads. This is a place where people can ask you questions, you can post information about upcoming signings; it’s basically a forum between the author and their fan base.

Part Six: Other Promotional Tactics

Reviews

- Amazon top reviewers – It is worth contacting top Amazon reviewers and sending them copies – for instance, Harriet Klausner has been the top reviewer for years and is easy to get a book to (harrietklausner@worldnet.att.net).
- Blogs – the blog community is great and growing. There are many looking for books to review and they tend to talk amongst themselves and are active in social networking sites. They are great for spreading news about a book they really enjoy.
- Giveaways – Can be a great marketing tool. If you are at a book fair or a convention, put out a bowl for people to add their email addresses or business cards, then pull one at random and send it to them. This gets you email addresses for your direct marketing efforts
- Use a social networking site. Goodreads has a “free giveaway” section. To further encourage readers, you can contact those who did not win with some other offer, such as a discount.

Don’t put a free giveaway on YOUR website. This doesn’t help because anyone coming to your site already knows about your book – so you are just throwing away money advertising something they already know about.

An exception to this rule is if you are using it as a way to drive people to your site: if you put a free giveaway on your site and then go out pounding the pavements in order to send people to your site to sign up that is fine – but don’t do one without the other.

Lastly, use those bloggers again. Many “genre” blogs have thousands of readers, and they offer giveaways as a way to keep their readers coming. Contact the blogger and offer the giveaway. You’ll get a bunch of free advertising.

Internet Bloggers

Internet Bloggers are extremely influential and getting a review from them will result in many people hearing about your book since they are in the business of telling others what books are good to read.

Compile a list of bloggers that write reviews for your genre. The list will grow quickly as most bloggers have a blogroll of similar sites. Consider making a spreadsheet and including relevant information:

- Whether they Tweet
- How many posts in 2010, how many in 2011
- How many followers
- Date added to spreadsheet
- Start with smaller blogs. Many of these sites do reviews from books they buy themselves so they are delighted when someone offers to send them a free review copy.

You should approach querying bloggers, just as you would agents. Don't send mass blasted emails for requests. Check their website to determine their submission requirements, personalize to them, and let them know you value your time by researching their stated preferences. Once you get a few solid reviews under your belt, you can start querying larger and more influential sites; you'll even find that if you generate enough buzz reviewers will start seeking you out.

Readers

On sites such as GoodReads, LibraryThing, Shelfari, and Amazon, readers love telling others about the books they've read. Many bloggers not only post the review on their own site, but also Amazon and GoodReads as well. Targeting these people is important as you get three reviews from a single reading.

Don't be afraid to ask your readers for assistance.

- When you receive a fan mail singing your praises, or see someone give a high rating of one of your books via Goodreads, mention that you're glad they enjoyed the work, and if they would like to help others to take a chance and give your stories a try to please post a review on Amazon or add commentary to a ranking on GoodReads.
- Explain that they do not have to write full reviews, just a few sentences explaining why they liked the book. Also be sure to mention that any review helps – good, bad or indifferent – all you really want from them is a fair assessment.

A bad or so-so review will actually help you: When readers see only 4 and 5 star reviews they come away with the impression that the posters are friends or relatives of the authors. Having a variety of opinions helps to ensure that the sampling reflects real reading habits.

What not to do:

- You should never pay for a review. It completely undermines your credibility.
- Avoid the exchange of reviews with other authors. What if you don't like their book? What if you don't like theirs? Do you risk your own credibility by saying something that is junk is wonderful? Do you refuse to post and get the author mad so that he leaves a negative review in response?

Samples

Everyone will sample first: Whether it is through an eBook sample download, or Amazon's "Search Inside the Book," a reader is going to take a gander at your stuff first. Now more than ever it's important for you to come out of the gate with something compelling.

People Quote First sentences: Today readers and bloggers share first sentences and if written well enough this can be a little ad for you.

Where to place samples: You should not just think about one way for people to get at sample chapters. You should use a series of weapons in your arsenal including:

- Amazon Search "Inside the Book"
- Google Book Search
- Authors Den Book Excerpts
- GoodReads Excerpts
- Author's Website
- All-in-one Book Page
- Blogging on Amazon Pages

Getting "your" message on your product page is a huge advantage, and Amazon provides a mechanism for writers to talk directly to their audience through Amazon Connect.

To use this feature you will have to verify you are the author. An online form provides you a way to specify the publisher contact information and then once they have verified you are who you say you are you can post information in the form of blog posts directly to any products you are the author of.

*****These tips are taken from Robin Sullivan of Ridan Publishing and her invaluable blog: [Write to Publish](#)*****