

Promote Your Book: 5 Free and Low-cost Ways to Boost Book Sales

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Sample of Content:

Have you self-published a book and are wondering how to get the word out? Have you been accepted by a traditional publisher and want to help increase sales? Here are some simple, inexpensive things you can do to help promote interest in your book.

Content:

Congratulations! You've published a book! The hard work, all those hours of writing, of editing, and of sweating over just the right word, are over.

Right?

Not quite. Now it's time to take off the "artist" hat and put on the "marketing" hat.

If you're self-published, this is one serious hat that you'll have to wear often if you expect to earn back the money you've invested in your book. But even if you've been published via a traditional publisher, you'll need to do at least some of the marketing yourself. Publishers have only so much money to spend on marketing, and most of that money goes into a few big, blockbuster titles. The more you can help promote your book and increase sales, the happier your publisher will be with you -- and the more likely they'll be to look on your next book with a favorable eye.

1. Website

Every author should have their own website. It can be as simple as a single page with your name and contact information and links to where people can buy your books. It can be as complex as a full-service site with articles, a blog, links pages, and other helpful things that will keep your visitors coming back for more.

If you've never made a website before, consider starting with a blog. There are lots of large blogging sites out there, such as Blogger.com. Choose a simple name for your blog that will make you easy to find in the search engines. Your own name would be a good choice. The title of your book would be another. Then keep the blog content fresh and active so that people will want to return to the site. Your blog will be indexed with the larger blog community so that people can find it.

If you design your own website, learn everything you can about website promotion. Before you can promote your book through your website, you need to promote your website so that people can find it. Learn about Search Engine Optimization at Organic SEO Wiki. Don't worry if you don't understand everything you read there. There's some pretty technical bits. Follow the advice that you do understand, and you'll be ahead of most of your competition. If your book is listed on Amazon.com, consider signing up for Amazon's affiliate program, and use your affiliate code in your links to your book on Amazon.com. You'll receive a small commission from Amazon for each book that is sold through the link.

When it comes to contact information, protect your email address. Spam robots search sites for email addresses, including those that are in the page's code but hidden from the viewer, such as addresses hidden in a "contact the author" form. You can use a paint program to make a graphic that includes your email address. Robots can't read graphics. This is a bit inconvenient for other people, however. Another way to protect your name is to use a service, such as Bravenet, that will allow you to make contact forms to post on your site that will direct the mail to the service, which forwards it to you.

After your site is up and running, think of ways to get people to visit often. You might include articles on writing or on the topic that you've written about. Bulletin boards, JavaScript games, and other interactive features can also help bring return visitors.

2. Book signings

When you think of book signings, you may think of a grand event, where the pampered author sits behind a table, facing a long line of adoring fans, signing book after book,

while the bookstore personnel or a private entourage bring cool drinks.

In reality, unless you're Stephen King or John Grisham, a bookstore signing is a much humbler affair, with a lone and sometimes desperate-looking author smiling stiffly from behind a table, hoping that someone might at least come over and say hello. Still, even so humble an event can get your book out in front of the public, and the contacts you make one evening may pay off months or even years later.

The key to a good book signing is preparation. When your book is just about to be shipped, call your local bookstores to arrange book signings. Independent bookstores are often very willing to assist local authors. Even the big chains can be open to arranging a book signing. Discuss with the bookstore owner whether you will provide books to sell through them, or if they will order the books for you. Ask if they will provide a sign for your table, or if you should make one. You can go to an office supply store and find nice acetate stands made for slipping a printed sheet of paper inside. You might also buy your own bookstand so you can prop up a copy of your book at the signing table.

Have something that you can give away. Bookmarks are great giveaways. If your publisher doesn't provide them already, search online for printers who will print mass quantities of bookmarks cheaply. Put a picture of the book cover on the bookmark (with publisher permission), add a blurb about it, and put in the URL of your website. Also add information about where people can buy the book. It may be obvious to you that practically every book in print on the planet is available through Amazon or Barnes & Noble online, but that may not be the first thing that your visitors will think of. Make it as easy as possible for people to find and buy your book later.

Call a couple of days ahead of time to make sure that all arrangements are in place, and that the bookstore has your books if they are doing the ordering. Arrive early and check the arrangements. Stack your books neatly, and set one in a bookstand so that the cover is easily visible. Have three or four good pens ready. When customers wander near, smile and them, greet them with a cheery, "Good evening!" If they seem inclined to talk, engage them in a conversation about your book or about writing in general. Don't monopolize their time, and don't do the hard-sell on them. You want to draw people in with your warm personality, not drive them away with a desperate sales pitch. Hand them a bookmark. Hand them two. "Take two, they're small. Maybe you have a friend who would like one." Then let them wander away.

One or two people may buy books right then and there and get them autographed. Some people will need to wander around and think about it. Some people will take the bookmark home, use it, see it often, and months later may order your book for themselves or as a present, thinking, "Oh, yeah, that nice author, maybe I ought to buy his book." All of them should be impressed by what a nice person you are.

3. Discussion Boards

There is a right way and a wrong way to promote your book via discussion boards.

The wrong way is to sign up for a discussion board solely for the purpose of promotion, post a hard-sell message about your book, and disappear -- or worse yet, return again and again to promote your book, report on sales, give away t-shirts, or otherwise sound pushy or desperate.

The right way is to become a trusted member of the board, to participate in discussions, to help others, to be grateful for the help that others give you, and to put a link to your website or your book's site in your signature.

Writing discussion boards may have a place where members can post announcements about their latest publications. If you're an active member of the board, go ahead and announce your new book. But don't sign up for the board if that's the only place you're going to post.

4. Online Articles

If writing and publishing a book has made you an expert on a topic, consider writing articles for publishing online. You won't get paid for most of these articles, but writing online articles gives you a tremendous opportunity to post links back to your website. Don't use the article to promote your book, of course. This is a hard-sell tactic that won't win you readers. Instead, give something to your readers. Give them information they can use. Suppose you breed chihuahuas and have written a book on chihuahua care and training. You might write an article on "Choosing a Healthy Chihuahua Puppy." Then in your signature you can put "John Jones is an expert chihuahua breeder and has recently published a book on the topic, *The Chihuahua Expert*." Make the book title into a link back to your website, where the reader can get further information. If the article is syndicated and used elsewhere on the web, the links back to your site will be multiplied.

5. Newsletters

Consider starting your own email newsletter. If you've written a nonfiction book, your newsletter might be on the topic of your book. You could also write a newsletter on writing. Or if you're writing a fiction series, your newsletter can include "The further adventures of..." thus giving your readers more stories for free.

Use a mailing list service to mail your newsletter. If your website's server doesn't provide one, there are several on the web that are free up to a certain number of subscribers (such as Bravenet). Fill each newsletter with useful information. You can either write it all yourself, or find useful articles on the web, write a teaser for each, and include a link. DON'T reproduce the article in its entirety and pretend that you wrote it. Plagiarism can ruin your reputation as a writer.

Free mailing list service providers will also provide the code for a newsletter sign-up form to put on your website. The form will email the service directly, so your email address won't get spammed.

Include a link to your book in every issue of your newsletter, and use the newsletter to announce any new books. Your subscribers will appreciate the useful information that you send them, and will be more open to reading short promotions about your new book.

For more ideas about writing newsletters, try signing up for several author's newsletters and see what kind of information they provide.

Conclusion

There are, of course, hundreds of ways to promote your book. These five will get you started, but if you're serious about marketing, be sure to read all that you can get your hands on about book promotion. Don't expect your publisher to spend piles of money on you and your book. Your success as an author is entirely up to you.

About the Author

Karen E. Bledsoe is a children's book author, and has written many books for the school and library market. For more information on writing for children, including a writing discussion board, see her website at <http://www.gkbledsoe.com>

Macintosh users: Get the best novel-writing software at [Glass Writer](#)

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