

■ Book Marketing Tips

Marketing an unknown book by an unknown author can be a challenge, to say the least. Self-publishers generally do not have the contacts or the clout to maneuver their books into the major book selling avenues. Another stumbling block is quantity vs. cost.

Printing 1,000 books is considerably more expensive per book than printing 10,000 books. Therefore, there is less profit in selling books from a short run. Gambling on being able to sell 10,000 may not be a good bet either. The general consensus seems to be to print a smaller quantity and hope to break even, and then go into a second printing if warranted. A second printing is less expensive because most of the setup costs have already been paid.

Targeting your audience will help you in your marketing efforts. Consider who your readers will be, how many there are and where they are located. It is often helpful to talk to bookstore owners about your project. They may be interested in handling your book and have insights about potential markets.

Some authors deal with subject matter that has a small field of interest. These books are sometimes easier to sell because it is easier to identify the market. For example, a book on rock hunting in Western Washington might be promoted with greater success by sending out flyers to rock clubs than by trying to work through a mass market bookstore.

Over the years, we have talked to many authors about their self-marketing efforts. The following pages list some techniques they have found helpful.

BEFORE THE BOOK IS SUBMITTED FOR PRINTING

If you wish to sell your book in bookstores—you will need to obtain an ISBN number which will be placed on the back cover in the form of a barcode. This barcode should also include the price of your book, to make it easy to process the purchase by bookstores.

If you think your book would be of interest to libraries—obtain a Library of Congress Control Number that will make your book available for purchase by libraries.

Consult a professional editor—to help polish your book.

Create a logo—This might be a logo of your own company or a logo simply using the title of your book, in the same design that is on the cover. Place this logo on all correspondence and publications that market your book to aid in recognition of your title.

DURING THE DESIGN PHASE

The back cover—Your back cover should include the subject category at the top, this will help make it easy for bookstores to know where to place it on the shelves. It should also include a concise explanation of what is inside to book in language that will help to sell the book to prospective buyers.

An order form—Placed on one of the last pages, the order form should include the price of the book with its ISBN, any taxes that must be added, as well as the shipping cost. It should also include the address of where to send the payment and the space for the customer to place their name and address for mailing. An informational phone number for customers is also recommended.

Book Marketing Tips

WHILE THE BOOK IS IN PRODUCTION

Get a website—Obtain a domain name for your company or book title. Have a website created that showcases information about your book, including excerpts, an image of your book cover and a way for book orders to be submitted to you via the web. You might also want to link your page to any others that could help get traffic to your site.

Create promotional pieces—decide what printed items would assist you in your marketing efforts; such as bookmarks with your web address or phone number, posters, fliers, brochures or extra printed covers. Have a professional designer create these for you.

Arrange to use a distributor—Many bookstores prefer to buy their books from distributors as it is generally easier than dealing with multiple publishers. A regional distributor may handle your book for a fee (usually 50–60%).

Approach stores—Approach locally-owned bookstores or other retail outlets and get your books into as many of them as possible. Even if they require a 40 to 60% cut, the exposure is important.

Approach online bookstores or retailers—Sites like *Amazon.com* and *Barnes&Noble.com* make it easy for customers to find your book and convenient to purchase as well. It is advisable to obtain a graphic of your book cover to submit to the bookseller's website, to display to online buyers.

AFTER THE BOOKS ARE PRINTED

Create an email announcement—A simple email letter with an image of your book cover can help you spread the word about your book.

Contact newspapers, magazines or local radio and television—To promote your book, make yourself available for an interview or a book review. Try specialized publications that apply specifically to your title. You might also want to purchase advertisement space.

Host an autograph party. Send out invitations and fliers in advance to advertise the release of your book. Offer refreshments, socialize, display your books for sale and autograph them.

Arrange speaking engagements—Offer to speak for free as an expert in your field and subject matter, and sell your book afterward. As an instructor, you could also use your book as the class textbook.

Enter writing or design competitions. Many organizations sponsor awards for excellence in writing.

Targeting your audience will help you in your marketing efforts. Consider who your readers will be, how many there are and where they are located. It is often helpful to talk to bookstore owners about your project. They may be interested in handling your book and have insights about potential markets.