



The Art of Creative Promoting

Edited by Brenna Lyons and Val HM

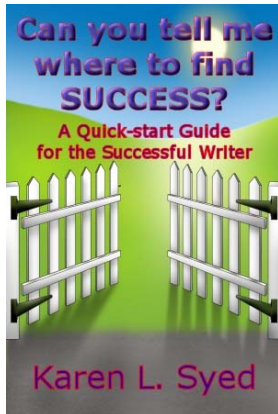
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Introduction by Brenna Lyons and Val HM

This free guide of promotion is to help published authors to become successful authors. Promotion is scary, intangible, and exciting. Think of promotion not as a painted dream you must pay for or capture, but a piece of art you cultivate. Like cultivating a garden, only by careful promotion will your writing career grow and bear fruit.



Chapter One:

Can You Tell Me Where To Find Success? A Quick start Guide for the Successful Writer

By Karen L. Syed

INTRODUCTION: Why am I here?

The first thing every "writer" should learn before venturing into the world of publication is what is expected of them as an "author." Until you reach the levels of Stephen King, Nora Roberts, or Nicholas Sparks, you will be required to sweat blood and tears. It's called paying your dues. Everyone does it in every industry.

DEFINITIONS: What's it all mean?

Publisher : one that publishes something; *especially* : a person or corporation whose business is publishing

Publicist : one that publicizes; *specifically* : **PRESS AGENT**

Marketing: to expose for sale in a market

Promoting: to present (merchandise) for buyer acceptance through advertising, publicity, or discounting

Advertising : to announce publicly especially by a printed notice or a broadcast **c** : to call public attention to especially by emphasizing desirable qualities so as to arouse a desire to buy or patronize

Selling: to influence or induce to make a purchase

Publicity: an act or device designed to attract public interest; *specifically* : information with news value issued as a means of gaining public attention or support

Budget: a plan for the coordination of resources and expenditures

Responsibility : the quality or state of being responsible : as a : moral, legal, or mental accountability

Effort : the total work done to achieve a particular end

Determination : the power or habit of deciding definitely and firmly

Goals : the end toward which effort is directed

Commitment : an agreement or pledge to do something

Success : favorable or desired outcome

POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS: How bad do I really want it?

Every writer out there should ask themselves that question before they ever sign a contract with a publisher. Becoming an author means endless days of constant effort. There are no free rides in the publishing industry-not for anyone. Being an author costs money, it costs time, and it costs energy. It can be agreed upon by most that each of these things is in short supply. This fact must be accepted and then overcome. There is no limit to what an author can achieve with determination and positive effort.

GOAL SETTING: Will it really help?

Experts say, yes. But you will have to establish and commit to your own goals. Set goals realistically and then reward yourself each time you achieve. NO success is too small if you believe in what you are doing and in yourself. By setting goals you are mapping out a course to success. Only you can accomplish these goals.

RESPONSIBILITY: Whose job is it?

If you want a job done, then do the job yourself. Taking responsibility for your own actions is the first step to success. You wrote the book! You want to sell the book, so SELL IT! Simple. No one should or will ever feel

the level of enthusiasm for your work that you do. Let that enthusiasm be your most effective selling tool. If you don't feel it, no one else will. By taking responsibility, you determine the level of your own success.

SATISFACTION: Is it really worth it?

After signing a contract is not the time to ask yourself this question. If you don't know by then you will never be satisfied with any achievement. Every task done should be a task well done. By going out and doing YOUR very best you will always find satisfaction in a job well done. If you are not satisfied with the job someone else has done, the only resolution is to go out and do it yourself.

BUDGETING: How much is too much?

There is no correct answer to this question. Each case is different and should be approached independently. No author should go into publication expecting someone else to pick up the tab. Those instances are rare. To be effective you must learn to budget your money, time, and energy. If you are short of one, compensate with one of the others. Whatever the compromise between the three, make the most of it!

SUCCESS: How will I know it?

Don't sit around and wait for it. Go out and make it happen!

EXERCISE: Fabulous Five

Commit to five minutes each day developing new and innovative ways to market, promote, and sell yourself and your books. Then commit to one hour each day of the business week to implement one of those programs/ideas-no matter how big or small. The result?

**5 minutes of time (per day) x 5 hours of energy (Per week) = UNLIMITED
SUCCESS**

SUGGESTED READING:

Guerilla Marketing for Writers (Jay Conrad Levinson)
ISBN089879983X

Up the Bestseller List (Kathleen Brehony & Karen Jones)

ISBN 158062409X

A Simple Guide to Marketing Your Book (Mark Ortman)
ISBN 0963469940

FREE PUBLICITY (Jeff Crilley)
ISBN 0972647406

A Crash Course in Marketing (David H. Bangs & Andi Axman)
ISBN 1580622542

The Magic of Thinking Big (David J. Schwartz)
ISBN 0671646788

101 Ways to Promote Yourself (Raleigh Pinskey)
ISBN 0380785080

The Complete Guide to Successful Publishing (Avery Cardoza)
ISBN 1580420974

Soft Sell (Tim Connor)
ISBN 1570713936

The Frugal Book Promoter (Carolyn Howard Johnson)
ISBN 193299610X

Worlds Best Known Marketing Secret (Ivan R. Misner)
ISBN 1885167040

Success Methods: www.successmethods.org

Meet the Author:



Karen Syed is the president and owner of Echelon Press Publishing. Her goals as a publisher mirror those of her alter ego, author Alexis Hart; to entertain readers with the written word and to present readers with the highest quality books and stories. Karen Syed is a member of Romance Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, Horror Writers of America, and the Electronically Published Internet Connection, of which she chairs the EPIC Publisher's Coalition. She is also the founder of the IP Directive (Independent Publishers Coalition.) Alexis Hart has had eight full length novels published as well as six short stories and a

number of articles both nationally and internationally. You can find Karen/Alexis at www.echelonpress.com and www.hartofthematter.com

Chapter Two:

15 Commandments for Getting FREE Publicity

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

An Excerpt from **THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER:
HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T**

A huge retailer once said that advertising works, we just don't know how, why, or where it works best.

What we do know is that advertising's less mysterious cousin, publicity, works even better. It is the more reliable relative because it is judged on its merit alone and carries the cachet of an editor's approval. It also is surrounded by the ever-magic word "free." The two are easily identified as kin.

These two often walk hand-in-hand and yet they can be incompatible. The editors of good media outlets will not allow the advertising department to influence them. Still, in an effort to be completely impartial they reserve the right to use advertiser's stories editorially if they deem them newsworthy. That is why it is helpful to use advertising in a vehicle that plays to the audience you would like to see standing in line for your book. This paid-for exposure then becomes an entrée to the decision-makers. A contact in the advertising department may be willing to put a news release on the desk of one of his editors, maybe even encourage her to look at it. There are no contracts, but it does sometimes work. If you're going to try this route, choose a "little pond", a bookish brochure or an "arty" weekly so that the dollars you spend will be noticed.

Sometimes a magazine or newspaper will run a special promotion called advertorial. These are sections where you pay for an ad and then the newspaper assigns a reporter to cover the story you want told. The article carries some of the prestige of editorial copy – that is the general reader may assume the article has been chosen only on its merits because of its copycat character. The writer or editor you meet can be approached when you have something exceptional.

Fellow author Erin Shachory (Eshachory@aol.com), who handles consumer publicity and consults on advertising strategies, knows that her clients hire her—at least in part—for her "great database." It is something that, over time, you can build for yourself.

Still, advertorial isn't exactly FREE. If FREE sounds more like the fare that will serve your needs, carve out some time to do it yourself and follow these 15 commandments:

Educate yourself: Study other press releases. Read a book like *Publicity Advice & How-To Handbook*, by UCLA Marketing Instructor, Rolf Gompertz, a SPAN member. Order it by calling 818-980-3576. Join publicity oriented e-groups.

Read, read, read: Your newspaper. Your e-zines. Even your junk mail, a wonderful newsletter put out by the Small Publishers of North America (www.spannet.org) and one called The Publicity Hound (www.publicityhound.com). My daughter found a flier from the local library in the Sunday paper stuffed between grocery coupons. It mentioned a display done by a local merchant in the library window. My second book, *HARKENING: A COLLECTION OF STORIES REMEMBERED*, became a super model in their lobby and I became a seminar speaker for their author series. Rubbish (and that includes SPAM) can be the goose that laid the golden egg.

Keep an open mind for promotion ideas: Look at the different themes in your book. There are angles there you can exploit when you're talking to editors. My first book, *THIS IS THE PLACE* is sort of romantic (a romance website will like it) but it is also set in Salt Lake City, the site where the winter games were played in 2002 and, though that's a reach, I found sports desks and feature editors open to it as Olympics © fervor grew and even as it waned because they were desperate for material as the zeal for the games wound down.

Cull contacts: Develop your Rolodex by adding quality recipients from media directories. The website (<http://www.gebbieinc.com>) has an All-in-One Directory that gives links to others such as Editor, Publisher Year Book, and Burrell's. Some partial directories on the web are free and so are your yellow pages. Ask for help from your librarian—a good research librarian is like a shark; she'll keep biting until she's got exactly what she wants.

Etiquette counts: Send thank-you notes to contacts after they've featured you or your book. This happens so rarely they are sure to be impressed and to pay attention to the next idea you have, even if it's just a listing in a calendar for your next book signing.

Partner with your publicist and publisher: Ask for help from their promotion department—even if it's just for a sample press release.

Publicize who you are, what you do: Reviews aren't the only way to go. E-books are big news right now. Katy Walls, author of "The Last Step," coordinated an "anthology" of recipes from authors who mention food in their books (yes, some of my family's ancient recipes from polygamist times are in it). It is a free e-book, a promotional CD, and great fodder for the local newspapers. You can download it at (www.TLT.com/authors/carolynhowardjohnson.htm). Use it as a cookbook and as a sample for your own e-book promotion.

Think of angles for human interest stories, not only about your book but about you as its author. Are you very young? Is writing a book a new endeavor for you? Several editors have liked the idea that I wrote my first book at an age when most are thinking of retiring, that I think of myself as an example of the fact that it is never too late to follow a dream.

Develop new activities to publicize: Don't do just book signings. Use your imagination for a spectacular launch. Get charities involved. Think in terms of ways to help your community.

Send professional photos with your release: Request guidelines from your target media. Local editors won't mind if you send homey Kodak moment--properly labeled--along with your release. Some will use it; it may pique the interest of others and they'll send out their own photographers. It's best, however, to send only professional photos to the big guys.

Frequency is important: The editor who ignores your first release may pay more attention to your second or twenty-fifth. She will come to view you as a source and call you when she needs to quote an expert. This can work for novels as well as nonfiction. I received a nice referral in my local newspaper because I am now an "expert" on prejudice, even though my book is a novel and not a how-to or self-help piece.

Follow Up: Shel Horowitz, author of *Marketing Without Megabucks* (<http://www.frugalfun.com>), reports that follow-up calls boost the chances of a press release being published. Voice contact builds relationships better than any other means of communication.

Keep clippings: Professional publicists like Debra Gold of Gold & Company do this for their clients; you do it so you'll know what's working and what isn't.

Evaluate: One year after your first release, add up the column inches. Measure the number of inches any paper gave you free including headlines and pictures. If the piece is three columns wide and each column of your story is six inches long, that is 18 column inches. How much does that newspaper charge per inch for their ads? Multiply the column inches by that rate to know what the piece is worth in advertising dollars. Now add 20% for the additional trust the reader puts in editorial material.

Set goals: You now have a total of what your year's efforts have reaped. New publicist-authors should set a goal to increase that amount by 100% in the next year. If you already have a track record, aim for 20%.

Observe progress: Publicity is like planting bulbs. It proliferates even when you aren't trying very hard. By watching for unintended results, you learn how to make them happen in the future.

Carolyn Howard-Johnson is the author of *THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T*. For a little over 2 cents a day *THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER* assures your book the best possible start in life. Full of nitty gritty how-tos for getting nearly free publicity, Carolyn Howard-Johnson shares her professional experience as well as practical tips gleaned from the successes of her own book campaigns.

Carolyn Howard-Johnson is an award-winning author of both fiction and nonfiction and former publicist for a New York PR firm and a marketing instructor for UCLA's Writers' Program. *THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER* tells authors how to do what their publishers can't or won't and why authors can do their own promotion better than a PR professional. Purchase it as a thick, full-

size E-book or paperback at (<http://ebookad.com>) or as a trade paperback at (www.BarnesandNoble.com).

Learn more about the author at (<http://carolynhowardjohnson.com>)

Chapter Three:

How To Handle A Booksigning

by Elizabeth Delisi

What's the scariest part of being a writer? Is it digging through your subconscious to come up with an idea that's worthy of a novel? Sitting down and writing the first draft? Figuring out how to revise and polish your manuscript before you send it in? Submitting it to one publisher after another, hoping for an acceptance instead of a rejection letter?

Believe it or not, for some writers, the scariest moment is the booksigning. Writing is a solitary pursuit. We writers work in the confines of our homes or offices, insulated from the rest of society, with very little input or feedback. Most of us aren't used to dealing with the "public," and would rather have a root canal than give a speech. The idea of doing a signing, of shaking hands with strangers, making witty small talk, and urging them to buy a copy of a book we wrote is enough to send many of us into a panic attack.

There are some preparations you can make beforehand that will help the event run more smoothly. With a little forethought, you might even find you enjoy yourself!

Before the Booksigning:

Stay in close touch with the store. Ask them how and where they plan to set up the signing. You'll feel more comfortable if you know ahead of time what the layout will be.

Choose what you're going to wear. If you purchase something new, wear it around home for a few hours before you make the final decision. A dress that's uncomfortable or shoes that pinch will make you miserable during what should be your finest hour.

Many stores send out announcements for booksignings and other events to a special list of customers. Ask them if you can give them names and addresses to add to the list, and make sure you supply them with the information for everyone within driving distance you think might attend. You'll feel much more comfortable with familiar faces around.

Ask the store what kind of publicity they will provide. Tell them you're available for newspaper, radio or television interviews. Provide them with a business card, publicity photo, description of the book, and any reviews you may have received.

Think about how you'll sign the books. For friends and family, a special, personal remark is in order. For strangers, you can use something generic like

"Nice to meet you," "Happy Reading!" or "Hope you enjoy the book." You might try something that ties in with the book title, story line or genre. At a signing for my first book, *FATAL FORTUNE*, I used "Wishing you *good* fortune," a play on the book's title. Plan to inscribe each book to the individual by name, and sign your complete name. Some authors add a date or place as well.

Put Together Your Booksigning Necessities:

Before the signing, put together a packet of materials to take with you to the event. This packet should include a pen to sign with, and a spare in case you run out of ink; several of your business cards; a small notebook, in case you want to write down someone's name and address or phone; photocopies of any reviews you've received or any newspaper articles; and small "Autographed Copy" stickers. (You can order these from a printer, or make them up yourself on your computer.) If you're previously published or have other books upcoming, include copies of a list of your previous and future releases, perhaps on bookmarks to give out with purchases. Bookmarks or other inexpensive promotional items can also be given out to those who don't make a purchase, as a reminder to come back to purchase your book later.

Prepare your answers for standard questions like, Where did you get the idea for the book? How long did it take you to write? How long before it sold? How did you find a publisher? What's the book about? Are you working on another book? It's especially important to have a one- or two-sentence, compelling description of the book you can rattle off when asked. You can also plan things to say like, "If you liked [name of bestseller], you'll love my book." This helps potential readers decide what type of book you're selling and whether they'll enjoy it.

During the Signing:

You may have a crowd of dozens of people lined up to buy your book, or you may have only your faithful spouse standing by your side. Regardless of the number of customers, here are a few suggestions for the actual signing. Take a deep breath as the event begins. Smile, smile, smile until your cheeks ache. Make pleasant small talk with everyone who approaches you, whether they buy a copy of your book or not. Write with a steady hand. Project an air of calm, even if you don't feel that way on the inside. Remember, the customers believe you're an old hand at this--it would never occur to most of them that *you* might be more nervous than *they* are. Have fun!

After the Signing:

Before you leave the store, ask the manager if you can autograph any unsold books that remain. Sign them with a generic phrase and your name, and put one of your "Autographed Copy" stickers on the front. Autographed books often sell better than unsigned ones, especially when the author is relatively unknown. If you're able, you might offer to come in and autograph books personally for customers if they desire. The store can hang onto the book until you're able to come in and sign it.

Send a thank-you note to anyone who interviewed you, or provided any help or publicity. Also, send thank-you notes to friends and family who were there to support you.

Last but not least, send a special thank-you note to the book store manager the day after the event. After all, you want the store to be ready, willing and eager to host your *next* signing!

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Chapter Four:

How To Prepare For A TV Interview

by Elizabeth Delisi

When the phone call comes, asking you to do your first TV interview, you'll no doubt say "Yes!" without thinking. Once you hang up, though, the panic sets in. What will you wear? How much makeup should you put on? What will you say? What will the interviewer ask you, and how can you be prepared? The doubts are probably inevitable, but there's a lot you can do to prepare for your interview. If you're fully prepared, you'll be much less nervous and will enjoy yourself instead of dreading the event. Here are some suggestions to help get you through.

First and foremost, research your interview topic thoroughly ahead of time. Even if you think you know the information cold, your wits may desert you when the lights come on and the camera starts filming. Make sure you can recite the material in your sleep.

Contact your interviewer, and offer to send suggested questions and/or research material to him ahead of time; or at least bring suggested questions and topics with you to the studio. In addition, bring a short bio of yourself and blurbs of your books.

Practice your answers to the questions you've prepared. Come up with answers for questions you dread but suspect you may be asked; i.e., rehearse saying something like, "I really don't know how to answer that." Be prepared for at least one unexpected curve ball question—for example, if you write romance, they may ask, how do you research the sex scenes? Or if you write sci-fi, they might inquire, isn't that just for adolescent males? Be prepared to answer those questions either with a comical comeback (I research enthusiastically! Just ask my husband) or a serious but brief and honest answer (Actually, the demographic most science fiction novels aim at is...), then steer the discussion back into the areas you wish to cover.

Many people panic most over what to wear to the interview. Here are a few suggestions to get you started.

Simple and elegant is best. Select solid colored clothing—no white, it will wash you out. Black can also be very harsh. Jewel tones are good, but not pastels—they, too, can wash out your complexion. For men, a nice gray suit works well. Don't wear clothing with any type of stripe, check or pattern. Make sure the outfit you choose is comfortable, fits well and makes you feel great. A nice, dressy pantsuit instead of a skirt works best if you don't have great legs. If you opt for a skirt, make sure it's not too short. Don't wear "noisy"

fabrics that rustle or crackle. Don't wear vests, suits or shirts that pull across the middle when you're seated.

Polish your shoes. If you're going to bend over or demonstrate something, make sure your neckline isn't too low. Women, choose a two-piece outfit, not a dress or one-piece outfit, because the mike cord will be threaded up under your "front" and clipped to your lapel or neckline. Look at yourself in the mirror standing and sitting; check for bulges, gaps, etc. before making your final wardrobe decision.

Bring a change of top/shirt to the studio in case your first choice is the same color as the set background, or clashes violently with it; also, women, take along a change of pantyhose in case you get a run.

Don't wear clanking or glittering jewelry. When in doubt, opt for simple earrings and no necklace. Pearls are always in fashion! As for makeup, ask if they can make you up at the studio. If not, use a little more makeup than usual and include lipstick, powder (the studio lights can be hot and leave you with a shiny face), and eye makeup. Try to steer clear of sparkly or frosted shades. Men, all you should need is a touch of your wife's powder to keep your face from shining. Get your hair done if you're not confident you can handle it; however, this isn't the time for a new hairdo or dye job. If you have long hair, style it away from your face. If you wear glasses, leave them behind if you can get along without them. If you'll be demonstrating something or holding up your book, consider getting a manicure.

Along with suggested questions, bring along several copies of your book(s) that can be set up in a nice display. It provides something for the camera to focus on for a change of pace. Ask if you can arrive early, to familiarize yourself with the set and to display your materials.

Before going on camera, do a quick check for exposed labels, tags or straps, unbuttoned or misbuttoned buttons, makeup flakes on your face or clothing. Don't drink too much before you go on the air! When on camera, don't cross your legs at the knee, ladies; it's safer to keep your legs together and angled against the chair to one side, or crossed at the ankle. Smile frequently and warmly, but not too widely. Try not to gesture, especially not too widely, but don't sit stiffly, either.

Focus on the interviewer. That's who you're talking to, not the cameraman or the audience. Don't look at the monitor. Treat your interviewer like a friend. Try to be yourself, be positive, be confident. Your attitude is very important! When the interview is over, thank the interviewer. Let him know he can count on you as a resource for future interviews, and send a thank-you note as well. Ask for a copy of the finished interview, even if you're taping it on your own VCR or DVD player.

Above all, remember that you have the information the interviewer wants—that's why he's interviewing you. You're the expert! So relax, and have fun with it.

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Chapter Five:

What Seems To Work For Me

By Dusty Rhodes

Hello! . . . I'm Dusty Rhodes!

I've had so many questions and requests for the "details" of my book signings that I thought I'd just put them down in a "white paper" and offer them free to anyone that asked.

First, let me be quick to say that what follows is simply what I have found that seems to work for Dusty Rhodes; it may or may not work for you. I make no claim of any special "secret for selling" or that I am a "super salesman" as some have suggested. I simply offer my experience. If something I say sparks an idea or inspires you to try something different, something "out of the box" so to speak, then my time in putting this together will not be in vain.

Let me also explain that what I'm selling & signing are my printed books. This in no way means I prefer the printed books over the electronic version. But until I discover something that works equally well for my e-books I'll do what seems to be working for me.

From the outset my goals were simple:

1. To sell as many books as possible.
2. To build a "following" for Dusty Rhodes.

All of us should have realized by now that the reading public is not going to come looking for us and beat down our door for the opportunity of buying our books. What's the alternative? It should be obvious. We have to go to them!

Since October 1 of 2003, I have been doing week-end book signing events almost every week-end.. At each of these I sell between \$1,000.00 (my least one) to in excess of \$5,000.00. Yes, to sell that many books at one event requires a sizable inventory and no, I didn't have the money to purchase those kinds of quantities when I started.. For several months I worked smaller events, such as library signings, school assembly programs, "How To Get Published" seminars, etc. At first ordering small quantities of only a few (twenty or so) books and working steadily upward until I now purchase in quantities of 500 of each of my four (soon to be five) published books.

I attend events where there are LOTS of people that would be likely to purchase my genre (historical western novels) such as Arts & Crafts Festivals, Cowboy Days, Rodeos, State Fairs, Country music & Bluegrass music festivals (with attendance ranging from 10,000-300,000 or more.) There are literally thousands of these events scattered all over the country.

I purchased an E-Z-UP craft tent at Sam's Wholesale for \$ 189.00. Had an attractive banner made locally for \$ 150.00, printed my own business card, Dusty

Rhodes brochure, and “re-order form” on my computer, bought a folding table at Sam’s Club \$65.00 and purchased a professional table covering with “Dusty Rhodes” printed on the front panel.

I find an event that looks promising, rent a 10’ X 10’ space for anywhere from \$50.00 to \$ 300.00, set up my booth, and I’m in business.

I wait until a potential customer shows interest (by making eye contact with me, or showing interest in my books or banner when they are passing my booth. I reach out to them and offer them a business card. 99.9% will stop and accept the card. That’s when I introduce myself.

“Hello! . . . I’m Dusty Rhodes. I write Western Books.!”

Invariably they will then pick up one of my books and start examining it. As they do I point to my “Man Hunter” book on display and explain . . .

“This book was named the best western e-novel of 2002. I write a lot like Louis L’Amour in that there is no bad language or sexual connotations in any of my books.”

That’s it! . . . From there all I do is be friendly and answer the usual questions like: “Where are you from?” or “How long have you been writing?” or “How long does it take to write a book?”

An observation from experience . . . I have learned that if I simply sit and wait for someone to stop by my booth and “express interest” in my books I wouldn’t sell a dozen books. I have to “create an interest.”

For the upcoming year I have booked at least forty events. I am gradually building my inventory and booking larger and larger events. One of my “anchor” events is a permanent booth in a monthly event that draws 300,000 at each show.

I’m not suggesting this method will work for everyone, we all have to find our own “niche” that works for us, but I will sell in excess of \$120,000.00 of my books this year using the methods I have described.

Hope this helps motivate someone else to get out there and sell your books!

Hugs & Happy Trails!

Chapter Six

How? When? Where? & Why?

By Arts Editor Pamela Faye

Stop trying to sell your novels and start telling the story rattling around in the confines of the author's closet.

The author has written a novel, possibly several, and is now trying to promote the new release, in an effort to bring about sales. What's new? There are a million books out there in bookstores... resting silently on shelves with only the book cover to attract the avid reader from silently pleading, "Please buy me."

There is only one - individual - unique author with their name below the title on the book, so tell the story of the author and stop trying to sell the novel. Yes... Stop trying to sell your novel to the media when you are writing a Press Release. The media are 'Hungry Wolves' when it comes to a story give them one.

To groan, there is not much of a story to tell, is to disclose the author's limitations in the field of creative writing, at best. What is it in the author's life, which finds them running for pen and paper? In Steven King's case, nightmares are the inspiration for storytelling. In John Grisham's world, lawyers play the field with intensity, matching few. Wilbur Smith breathes from the heart of a harsh dry land where the spicy scent of Africa forever rises from the crack of lightning over tribal savannahs.

Life delivers endless experiences, allowing writers to produce compelling stories. Behind the author there is a trail of stories, a trail of swirling emotions to gather any given situation from. It is one of the many traits of a good storyteller to have lived not merely survived.

Intrigue for murder, mystery, science fiction, fantasy, children's stories, romance, historic fiction, and frequently nonfiction, delivers inspiration to the creative writer. The spirit within a creative writer always finds another tale to tell. A story may also be inspired from adversity suffered by those who are close to the writer's heart, as in the life of Billy Connolly written by Pamela Stephenson.

It is the 'real life' story forever intriguing the media editor who will automatically halt this creature in full flight, to gather up this story and run with the How? When? Where? & Why? The depth of meaning these four words present, is the most important a writer will ever learn. All four walk hand in hand when it comes to writing a Press Release.

When a novel is opened to read, from the first page it is expected of the author to reach out and gather the reader's full attention. With a Press Release, there is another art form to deliver to the media, that art form is to grab the

editor with the first sentence or your story is likely to be flashed away to the delete folder before you have meandered anywhere near the crunch line. There is a vast difference between writing a novel and a press release. Sensationalism must charge forth for journalism if the author's promotion is to be taken notice of.

Begin a Press Release by provoking, or shocking the editor into paying attention. An example of running headlines: "Outrageous? A naked man shoveling snow from the sidewalk would seem less outrageous!" With one sentence a picture is painted, a picture that speaks a thousand words.

Look past the storytelling of the novel you are promoting and focus on the story behind the author. Search for the pivotal moments in time leading the author along the path only a creative writer follows. Deliver this "shoveling snow" before the driving force behind media editors. Speak the language they understand, not the language of the meandering author.

Each Press Release is as individual as the story behind the author, do not present to a media editor, "I am thrilled to announce the release of my latest novel, 'With Heart in Hand'." By the time the editor scans this sentence he will be groaning, "Dear Lord give me a damn story! You are supposed to be a creative writer!"

How? When? Where? Why? Four words every writer needs to learn the meaning of, before becoming a published author. It is the true meaning behind the word "Promotion."

Submitted By:

Pamela Faye
Arts Editor & Marketer
Australian Author
<http://www.rollingseas.com.au>

Chapter Seven:

Using your EPIC Membership for PR and Marketing

Val HM and Brenna Lyons

EPIC is the organization for e-book and print published authors who are interested in the art form of e-book publishing.

1. EPIC has the most prestigious and longest running e-book awards, the EPPIES. Members' contest fees are reduced, though non-members can submit. EPIC provides extra promo, free of charge, to EPPIE finalists and winners.
2. EPIC has over 30 publisher members. Members learn first what the publishers want to see in submissions, are often placed to the front of the line when submissions are read, and have the opportunity to network with publishers on list and at the con.
3. EPIC allows writers to find writers in like minded genre groups to split ad costs.
4. EPIC is one of the most cost efficient writer's organizations for its size, only \$30 a year.
5. EPIC offers education, friendship and networking via EPICon. EPICon also has dynamic speakers and classes.
6. The possibility of getting your publisher and author information at cons and festivals through the use of EPIC trifolds or EPIC-sponsored tables. Con goes post for promo materials to accompany them to cons all over the world
7. EPIC members have access to free EPIC PR e-books that help the author develop their promotion.
8. EPIC helps publishers get noticed in the world of e-publishing. The publisher's coalition allows for collective bargaining with POD printers and other service providers.
9. EPIC provides banners for authors to use to educate readers on e-book reading.
10. EPIC members can schedule use of the chat room on the EPIC site for e-book promotion chats and e-book education chats.
11. PR specialists on the lists are always ready with information about promoting and forming market plans in addition to help finding or even providing banner-creation and other necessary services.
12. EPIC maintains a CafePress store where authors can purchase e-book promo shirts, bumper stickers, posters and more.
13. EPIC provides printable flyers for authors to use to educate readers on e-books and as a promotion tool.

Chapter Eight:

Self Promotion at a Conference

From an Epic PR Committee Member's Viewpoint

By John Schembra

So, you're going to be attending a conference as an author. You have reserved your table, got all your promotional materials together, have copies of your books to sell, and are rarin' to go.

The big day comes and you set up your table with all your stuff displayed, and you sit back and prepare for the crowds to gather around you. And you wait, and you wait, and you wait.

Sound familiar? I know it does to me, and I learned a lesson I would like to share.

When I realized the crowds weren't beating a path to my table, I started wondering what the other tables had that I didn't. It didn't take long for me to find out. All I had to do was look around and it became very clear why there were plenty of people at the other tables; there was some sort of eye-catcher that made them gravitate to the table.

Several people had banners on the front of, or behind, their tables. Some weren't commercial products, but had been made by the author using PrintMaster or some other similar program. They were colorful, unique, and prominently displayed. Some authors had their book covers on the banners; others had their titles, graphics, and even a photo or two, either their author photo, or one relating to their genre. The banners looked as good as the commercially produced ones, and I actually liked them better because they were more personalized and original.

I saw other authors were handing out freebies, which always is a good draw. There were pens, bookmarks, key chains, refrigerator magnets, bottle openers, and on and on. Researching this later, I found there are a ton of internet companies that offer promotional materials, and you can get scads of them for a very reasonable price. The larger the quantity, the less the price per item. If you don't like doing business over the internet, look in the yellow pages for trophy stores in your area. Most offer the same promo items as the internet companies, however they may cost a bit more.

Some had little goodie bags all made up with a bookmark or key chain or magnet, or all three, and stuffed with their promotional materials. They were a very good draw and a popular item.

I saw author photos, website, and book title(s) on posters prominently displayed. Some were attached to the wall behind the table, others were on an easel, but either way they were very eye-catching and a good draw. They also

had excerpts from reviews on the table or wall, and some even had a two or three chapter excerpt from their book(s) at the table free for the taking.

What great ideas!

A few were holding free prize drawings. Everyone who came to the table received a drawing ticket, and the winning numbers were posted in a book or chalk/white board. The prizes varied from free e-books/print books, to discount certificates for the author's books, T-shirts, or just fun things. It didn't seem to matter too much what the prizes were, just that it was a free drawing.

Some had music playing, just loud enough to catch the ear of the passersby, but not loud enough to be a disturbance. I would suggest the music be geared to the crowd in attendance. I wouldn't be playing opera at a Sci-Fi convention!

Even with all those great promotional ideas, and there are lots more I am not aware of, the single most important thing I learned was that we are only limited by our imagination!

As we learned in basic writing 101, you must have a "hook" to capture the attention of your audience, and this applies to conferences, too, where you have a table. Think outside the box, be imaginative, unique, and original. What would attract you to someone else's table? If it's attractive to you, it will be to many others.

Having an imaginative promotional plan will bear good results. I found out it is essential to sales and overall recognition.

I can hardly wait 'til the next conference!

JOHN SCHEMBRA:

John is on the Epic PR committee PR committee responsible for having EPIC represented at writers conferences, book fairs, and other author/literary events around the US, Canada, and anywhere else Epic can find one.

In the year 2004 alone EPIC has been represented at 12 conferences, book fairs, and author/literary events in the US and Canada, reaching thousands of attendees.

John also supplies the EPIC promotional materials to the member(s), along with other supplies and banners, to help promote EPIC and the e-pub industry. I have attended several conferences both as an author and an EPIC member, and have staffed an EPIC table at one conference.

John has a second book, a thriller about a serial killer in San Francisco, at the publisher awaiting edits, and is working on his third book, another thriller set in S.F.

John has had several training articles published in law enforcement magazines, and a short story published in the true police story anthology, True Blue: Police Stories by Those Who Have Lived Them.)

Chapter Nine:

Don't Let Promotion Items Sink Your Budget

By Val HM

I love to receive pens and book promo items at cons and book signings. Don't get a promo item that eats into your profit. Now, if you're only making a dollar or two for book a 15 to 79 cent pen or pencil isn't worth the cost unless the publisher is footing the bill.

You'll need promo items that are 10 cents and under.

Does your promo item bring people to buy your book?

Is there a surge of book or ebooks sold after an event?

You have to think creatively.

1. Hunt after holiday sales. I have done this to make gift baskets for a free raffle promotion.

2. Make your own labels to make sure your promo items are labeled. Labels can be bought at any office supply store and be printed on your home computer.

3. Make something that relates to your book. Jennifer L.B. Leese a.k.s. JV Harlee made black paper roses to promote the gothic romance *Gargoyle's Tear*.

4. Lynne Hansen the award winning YA author creates value to her books by offering Oragmi classes at various stores. Can you sew or teach a craft related to your book?

Remember be smart and be creative.

Chapter Ten:

Getting Book Reviews Doesn't Require Magic But Seven Lucky Tips Might Help

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

Award-winning author of

THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR
PUBLISHER WON'T

I've never met an author who didn't bemoan that "getting reviews" is nigh on impossible. I hear the wails no matter what kind of books they write or how big and famous their publisher is. In my college extension classes. In my critique groups. At the seminars and workshops I do at conferences and expos.

You may think you need a magic wand to get reviews, but it doesn't require Voodoo; it's all about networking and knowing the ropes. Here are the seven most important steps:

1. Know about promotion and networking long before you publish. My how-to book, *THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T*, would be a good start.
2. Get to know the media. Pay attention to directories of editors every time you're on the web or read a newspaper, magazine or review journal. Make a point of reading everything you see—even the throwaways you find in racks as you enter Denny's, Borders and Starbucks.
3. Enter the names of editors and reviewers in a data base. Include e-mail addresses; it may take a phone call to get them. Pay special attention to editors who might be interested in the kinds of books you are interested in writing. If you write business books, as an example, you'll want to collect the names of business editors as well as calendar, book, entertainment and feature editors. Read what they publish and research their guidelines.
4. Abide by reviewers' rules. The nation's most desirable review journals require a galley or ARC sent at least 12 weeks before the release date. Send a media kit and a query letter along with it. (Yes, *FRUGAL* shows you how to do this, step by step!)
5. Approach individual reviewers with query letters, not media releases. Tell them who you are, a bit about your book and don't bother reviewers who review mysteries if you write science fiction.
6. Follow up with personal contact whenever possible.

7. Know that there are many ways other than reviews to drum up exposure for your book. FRUGAL lists hundreds of ways for readers to know about you, on the Web and off.

Chapter Eleven:

Making Your Electronic Marketing Work for You

By Brenna Lyons

First presented at EPICon 2005 in Long Beach, CA.

The biggest myths debunking e-marketing- There are those who will tell you that you can't sell books unless you go to the major reader cons, advertise in certain venues, get reviews from the right places... Those venues are primarily aimed at the traditional print market.

Fact! E-book readers are usually computer literate and spend time online. They cruise chats, lists on things that interest them and web sites. Fact! Many people who congregate in those same venues are not e-book readers, yet. Many of them don't realize how simple it is to read an e-book. Fact! Many computer literate people WITH a PDA or smart phone don't know they can read e-books on it. Fact! We have a growing market, often looking for the right information at the right place and time to flower.

Can it be my only form of marketing?- Of course it can! But, will you sell any books? The point is to meld the standard forms of marketing with marketing targeted primarily at computer users, not to exclude the traditional market. We want e-publishing to grow. That means we have to appeal to both markets. The problem many authors have is relying on one or the other exclusively. You have to promote. Unless you are Nora Roberts in a wig and sunglasses, your marketing is going to fall largely on your own shoulders.

Even if you don't like interacting, always attempt to do so- Ads are pretty. Reviews are nice, but the bottom line is that readers like an author they can relate to, interact with, and come to know as a person. But, here's the twist...

Pros of e-marketing: perfect for the shy: the personal touch without the touch- E-marketing offers the ability to reach out and touch someone without having someone in your personal space. If you are the type of person who carries a book in your hand so you don't have to shake hands or hug, this type of marketing is right up your alley. It is perfect for the shy, the person who can't stand crowds...and we all know that many authors are actually introverts.

The web page, your #1 priority in marketing- Web pages don't have to be made and updated by a professional service. They just have to reflect YOU and allow readers access to the writer and the books. You can make web pages in many web browsers and WORD, but you can purchase a program like FrontPage or Dream Weaver if you feel comfortable with it. There are free web page servers like Yahoo, but most online services offer free web space that you can use for your web page with each e-mail account you have. With Earthlink/Mindspring, that means you could have eight web spaces assigned to you and use them for your web page. It's not enough to have one. You have to let people know you

have a web page. Put it in your tag line. If your publisher will, have them link to your page from your book pages. Put it on your promo gear.

How not to offend readers- Choose colors that are easy on the eyes. A light color with a dark color type is usually best. If you use a dark background, make sure your type is not close in intensity. Even if it's a contrasting color, dark on dark or light on light is difficult on the eyes. Don't use bright colors like hot pink or fluorescent...anything! Make the page easy to load. Remember that not everyone has DSL or Cable modem. Use small pictures; not only will they load faster, but they won't eat up your bandwidth as fast. Keep the motion graphics to a minimum. Motion is distracting and hard on the eyes. Don't use sparkly or flashing cursors or pointers. Get a site that doesn't have pop-ups, or make a generic site and buy a domain name and redirect to that site WITH FRAMES to block the pop-ups. Keep your site updated! If it's wildly out of date, readers will stop checking back. Remember, if you annoy the reader with your site, they won't be coming back.

Make sure your page has the correct key words- Pick as many APPLICABLE key words as you can to alert the search engines to your site. Don't use anything that doesn't fit (for instance...ducks, if your page has nothing to do with ducks), or you will annoy people running searches. Contrary to popular belief, most people running an internet search really don't want to see a porn site when they searched for public schools.

Make it interactive- Readers love interacting in any way you allow them. Have e-mail links to talk to you on your site...or to ask questions of characters. Have a guest book. Have a pin map for readers to put themselves up on the page.

Make it easy to navigate- At the moment, my site could be called a royal mess, but it's about to get a revamp. Everything branches off of the main page. Making navigation panels on each page makes it easier for readers to find what they want. Having links on graphics or buttons is another good move.

Hidden links and associated fun stuff- Having games, hidden recipes, outtakes from books, free short stories, anecdotes about writing the book... All of these things will bring readers back again and again. Keep your page fresh and new. Keep adding new things on. My site has grown so large that I literally have it split onto three separate FTPs. That does make updating interesting, but if you are organized, it's not so bad.

Contests- Holding a monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly contest on your site will bring readers back for more. It's not always a good idea to give free copies of your books, especially not your new books, since you want people to buy them and not wait to see if they won it first. Instead of offering your book, why not offer a prize that connects to your book: a necklace like the one described in the book, a pamper yourself/romance basket, a tin of regional cookies, a promo pack (many readers love promo packs with signed items), exclusive read of a short story connected to the book the month or two before it goes on your site (this

was one of my best contests!). Some authors even give a copy of another author's book that they like...a new one, of course.

Blogs: Pros and Cons- Blogs are the train wrecks of the 21st Century. They aren't always pretty, but people just have to look. Blogs will bring people to your site...or to the blog site and then to your site. They allow you to lay out more of yourself to the hungry readers who want to know you. In short, they give readers what they want from you...but... You have to weigh your time and patience against it. Will you take the time to actually write in it? Will you have anything to say? Blogs are not for everyone.

Cross-linking: raising your scores- Among other things, search engines keep track of your web score...how many times other sites link to yours. Link exchanges are a good way to raise your standings. However, you do want to make sure the links you include reflect what you want them to. Having CafePress links, publisher links, EPIC, WRW and BroadUniverse links says something very different about an author than having links to five different sex shops. You may want the image of the sex shops...or you may not want it. Make sure the links you choose reflect the image of you that you want to create.

Chats: Readers love an author they can talk to!

Chat etiquette- It's a good idea to go to other author chats as well as your own, but you should always beg off if someone tries to drag you into the conversation of your books when it's not your chat, even if it's a chat for other authors at your publisher. Even if it is not your intent to intrude on their chat, it will create bad feelings. The correct response is to nicely move the attention back to the core author/s and promise to answer outside the chat or after the chat ends.

Gauge your responses by the room. If the room isn't a wild room, leave the discussion of sex toys at the door. Follow the protocol or moderation of the room. Don't ask questions out of turn. Be nice!

Making yourself at home: you have to be comfortable- Readers want to talk to you. They don't expect you to be perfect. Chatroomese allows for typos. It's almost real time, and mistakes are expected. They want you to relax, let your hair down and have fun. If you can't show a fun persona in chat, you aren't going to have many chat visitors. They aren't a firing squad, so think of them as your sisters or best friends, all having a glass of wine and discussing movies, if it makes you feel better.

Choosing a chat venue: moderation or not, wild or not- You have to choose chat venues that are comfortable for you. If you are a shy person who doesn't like a fast-moving room, you want a staid chat room with moderation. If you like a bunch of questions flying at you from all sides and cannot be embarrassed, you want a wild room with either protocol or no moderation. In some venues, you can call "no holds barred" and have a great time. Neither extreme is wrong. You cannot relax in a venue that is at odds with your personality, and the point is to relax and have fun.

Buddy chatting the RIGHT way- Authors, especially new authors, can benefit from buddy chatting, but you need to do it right. The buddies you chat with should have more in common with you than sharing a publisher or sharing a community like EPIC or WRW. You should choose chat buddies that are of a similar genre and a similar temperament.

Why a similar genre? The point of buddy chatting is not just to teach you to chat but to allow crossover of readers of author A to author B and vice versa.

Why a similar temperament? If one author is shy and the other outgoing, the outgoing author may end up taking over the chat. That leads to an unequal sharing of chat time, the shy author retreating into a shell and not relaxing into the chat, and hard feelings between the authors. The one time this is not the case is when you pair a shy author with a nurturer that will steer the chat to the shy author, but the author should learn to handle the chat on her own over time.

You can have more than two chat buddies, but it is important to schedule with an eye to time limitations. In an hour-long chat, the maximum optimum number of chat guests is three. If you have more, not everyone gets to talk about their books, the readers have no time for questions, and it's generally a miserable chat.

Promoting the chat- The chat site will promote on their web site, so make sure you get the information the coordinator needs to him/her in plenty of time to get it up on the site. In addition, it's always a good idea to put chats in the publisher reader list's calendar and your personal newsletter's calendar as soon as it's scheduled. Set the calendar to send a reminder to the list 2 days in advance and an hour in advance. Don't stop there. Invite people on lists that allow it to your chat a few days in advance of it. A reminder that chat is starting a few minutes before is usually allowed as well. It is typically considered in poor taste to announce your chat with site A on site B's list, so watch that. Remember that your chat announcement counts as your promo per month on many lists. Use the newsletter announcements via your publisher, lists like PNR, and promotion lists to get the word out. Put it on your web site. Put it in your tag line for a week before, if you have the room. If no one knows about the chat, no one will be there.

Chat cheats- SOME chat rooms will allow you to cut and paste a line or two at a time into the message bar. If you are a slow typist, consider having a cut and paste WORD file open with blurbs and such about your book in it. If you type well but can't seem to organize your thoughts, make up post-it-notes or tape 3X5 cards up next to your computer to help you type in what you want to say quickly. The more you can talk in your hour, the more readers like it. Always have a topic of conversation ready to throw out if the chat starts tapering off. There is nothing worse than dead silence in a chat room.

Groups/lists: Broaden your readership- Remember that this applies to having your own newsletter or chat group as well as others you choose to join.

Finding groups in your genre is a click away- Yahoo and Smartgroups are both huge list warehouses. Many people think it's hard to find lists that deal with their genre, but it's typically not. If you search key words like GENRE NAME, reader, book, publisher, writing, author...in any combinations, you will likely come up with hundreds of lists. Finding cross-genre lists is sometimes harder, but it can still be done. Your only problem will be weeding through them and coming up with which ones are right for you.

Choosing lists to your comfort level and needs: cross genres, list size and volume, list membership- Which ones are right will depend on many things, first and foremost, your comfort level. Do you like lists that have a lot of posts or only a few? Who are you targeting and why? Personally, I prefer lists with large memberships and active members. It means that you will more likely find something to talk about and you will reach more people when you do talk. A list with 15 people on it doesn't give you much exposure, but a list with 1500 people that only generates 10 messages per day won't either. You want a healthy balance of people and activity.

Always read the list rules. If the list seems like it will clash with you, it probably will. If it doesn't even allow tag lines, let alone marketing, you might not want to stay, because it's been my personal experience that lists like this will count any mention of your book as marketing, even if it's pertinent to the discussion.

Are you looking for a list populated mainly by authors or mainly by non-author readers? You'll want to choose ones that fit what you want.

List etiquette- Few lists, except your own, exist solely for your marketing. It is rude to get on list and talk about nothing but your own books. Talk about whatever interests you that the list is talking about. Start new conversations "on topic." If your books relate to the topic being discussed, say it. If they don't, don't try to force it.

Follow the list rules.

If the limit for a tag line is 4 lines, don't post 6. However, if your tag line is a 3 line tag line and the formatting of the list makes it appear 5, don't change it just for that list. It's generally a good idea to make your tag line short enough for the shortest allowed on a list.

Don't send excerpts to a list that doesn't allow them, embed HTML in a text post or send NC-17 or higher excerpts to a list that is not in the adult section of Yahoo or that has asked not to have such excerpts on list. Don't send off topic posts unless the list encourages them, and don't spread rumors. Don't cross post to dozens of lists at once, especially not in the same header. Don't carry on personal discussions on list.

Be open to new ideas and be ready to back up assertions you make on list. Most of all, saying that you'd heard something on another list aside, NEVER take someone else's post or a portion of someone else's post from list to list without

the express permission of the original poster. First of all, it's a copyright issue. Secondly, it will likely get you banned from both lists.

USE tag lines correctly- In addition to length rules, you should use common sense about tag lines. Always have your URL and your publisher's URL or URL to purchase the book as the top line. Rather than listing every book you have out or coming, try using a blurb or quote from a single book along with the title and coming/available from company name. Have several of these and switch them out every few days. That keeps the readers looking to see what it will say next. It's much more interesting than a laundry list of titles with nothing of interest about it.

Tickle, don't tackle: promos under the wire- Don't try to hard-sell your books. Teasing comments about a book will catch reader interest and encourage questions about the work faster than beating someone over the head with information. I also call this "promo under the wire." You should know your books and be able to spot correlations between the topics of conversation and what you've written. But, you don't want to cross the line of blatant promo on lists that don't allow it.

Some lists are VERY strict. I had one list owner that was offended when my first paper book released, because my comment to the list was that it released in both paper and e-book. Apparently, she believed that telling people what formats the book was available in went over the line. There are some lists I simply will not promote on AT ALL because of these types of rigid interpretations of the rules.

Remember that your interpretation is not always going to match the interpretation of the person in charge.

Always be honest- Always be yourself. It saves you getting caught in a lie later. Some people will agree with you, and some will disagree, but don't try to please. Don't set out to be antagonistic, either. Remember that no one can see your face or hear your voice. Sarcasm is usually not well received on lists. In the same vein, don't assume you know the mind of the other person. You could just as easily be misreading them.

Offer your assistance/expertise: authors are readers too- This doesn't mean you have to do a line edit on someone's book, but give feedback, answer questions they post, and generally share what information you have. If you seem knowledgeable, especially if your books sell well, you might make a few more sales from people who see you post.

You can also get some "under the wire" promotion this way. On a list with 5800 authors, editors, and agents, someone posed the question of writing blurbs, synopsis and cover letters. I replied with a LONG post...and used examples of my own work. What better way to educate than to use examples, and that means people are reading the blurbs or cover letters for the books, which generates interest.

Don't overload: You need time to write- It's nice to talk on lists...unless you are frustrated out of your mind. If a list is doing nothing but frustrating you, you really should consider leaving it. Some lists will not be a good fit for you, no matter how much you try, and endless frustration rarely has a good enough payoff to make staying worth it, no matter how many members there are or how active it is.

Even if all of your lists are easy sailing, there comes a day when you look at your daily mail and realize that 2000 e-mail a day is too much. You're spending too much time on mail and not enough writing and doing other marketing. It IS advisable to evaluate your lists and cut the ones you find yourself not participating in, not finding anything you want to talk about on...or lists that mirror the conversations on another list. You will want to keep a cross section of lists...genres, reader versus author lists...and it isn't advisable to drop publisher lists, though you may want to take them to digest. Personally, I loathe digests. I would rather weed out 75% of single messages than wade through a digest.

There are ways to keep sane with a lot of lists, though. You can have your e-mail sort by subject line. Read a new thread until you determine you have no interest then bulk delete all further posts with that subject line. This will save you a lot of time. However, you may miss posts you would have enjoyed, because people don't always change subject lines promptly. This means you might come in at the middle of a new discussion and have to research your way back to the first post in another thread...or just start in the middle.

Promo Sites, reviews, interviews, listings

Does it do any good?- Do reviews sell books? Do interviews? Listings on sites? Promo spotlights? The answer to all of them is "possibly." Some people research reviews, some take the word of a few trusted reviewers, and some disregard reviews. It is a selling point for those who pay attention to it. Most of these things are selling points for people who pay attention to them. The question is, do you want to spend the time and effort to capitalize on it, or do you want to write them off as a waste, though a PORTION of the audience you want to reach use them?

Ideally, anything that costs you a minimum of time and effort and little or no money for the possibility of exposure is a good investment. Links raise your site in search engines. The rest tells people about your books and (hopefully) gets them to your site or your publisher site, and gets them buying.

It's not just enough to HAVE reviews and interviews. You have to let people know about them. Celebrate good ones on lists. Put them on your web site. Send people there to read the interviews. Always save a copy of the interview. You can even place it on your site later...as long as you give the site credit for the interview. This will add to your "all about me" sections without a lot of extra work from you.

Features and returns on features: what should you look for?- How much leeway will you have in what goes onto the site for your feature? Will it fairly represent your book? Is it what you want to say about your book? Is there a cost involved and is it reasonable? (We'll get back to that.)

Here is a solid fact you need to remember. Promotion is cumulative. If I promote and bring people to my publisher, that is good for the publisher and all the authors at the publisher. If the publisher does promotion that gets people to the site, the same is true. Instead of viewing promotion as a race between authors of your company, you should be working with them.

You may not be able to afford \$100 for a banner at a major site, but you can make a banner that features three authors from your publisher and the publisher's banner, linked to the publisher site, and split the cost for \$34 per person. That means your book AND your publisher site get exposure, both of which are ultimately good for you...and it's in a major venue.

The same holds true for ads. You might not be able to afford a \$200 business card-sized ad in a major magazine, but with 5-8 authors going in on a full-page ad, you can chip in \$100-\$150 per person and lower your costs. And, in many cases, you can actually get cover and log line only exposure by splitting an ad 12 ways. Again, you get your own book exposure and your publisher. Good all the way around.

How much is too much? Do your homework, site stats per price- How much does the site expect you to pay for a feature? How many hits per month does the site get? Where on the site will your feature show? How many hits does that portion/page of the site get? These are all important questions, and any reputable promo site/review site will be willing to answer them.

Paying \$10 per month for a site that gets 20,000 visitors per month may sound like a good deal until you compare it to paying \$10 per month for a site that gets 100,000 visitors per month. You see the difference? This is where you want to do your homework.

Get out the spreadsheet and research hits versus cost of promotion. Some sites, like The Romance Studio, offer a ton of services for a \$2.50 per month member fee.

I HIGHLY suggest owning the programs to make your own banner ads. The software costs \$50 or so, which you will reap back within three ads you design for yourself. Don't just place banner ads on other sites. Place them on your own! They are eye catching and add pizzazz to your site.

The rule of seven to ten- Conventional wisdom says that a person considering a convenience purchase needs to see the item 7-10 times before it sticks. ANY appropriate venue where you can list your books and name increases the chance that the reader will see it enough times to buy. Of course, the offering has to be something that appeals as well, but let's assume it is. The only question that remains is whether the number of people are worth any cost you will incur.

Online press releases: less is more

When is it worth the cost of upgrading?- When your news is something of general interest, it is worth upgrading. If it's a personal thing, it probably isn't. I'll talk about tie-ins in a moment. The stories you want to upgrade are the ones that you can supply tie-ins for or the ones you've managed to create mass appeal for.

Is it possible to make people sick of seeing your name?- Absolutely. Reading many inane stories about the same person can easily turn people off from reading anything about you. Save the press releases for times when it's big news.

For instance, a press release for every book I personally release would be a waste, because I am prolific. It's a different story when a person who writes a book every two years puts out a press release for a book release. For me, it would be more like...Brenna just released her 50th is news. Brenna released another is not.

Until a milestone, it's actually counterproductive for me to do press releases; people would get tired of it very quickly. I save the press releases for yearly local news and (if ever) I WIN an award instead of finaling for one.

Making the most of your release- Give people a reason to read it. We're authors. If we can't swing doctor something to make it something people will want to read, we have big problems. How do you do that?

Make it interesting, make it timely, make it fun- This is where we get to tie-ins. Theme your press release to a holiday or a world event/local event. Making it timely (or giving a local tie-in) increases the likelihood that people will want to read it, but don't stretch. If the tie isn't there, don't try to invent one.

Make it fun. Press releases do not have to be serious. The press releases Jeff Strand makes to lists are a perfect example. If he posted one to PRWEB, it would be passed along as a spoof link to lists all over the world!

Use popular images to capture attention...within reason. Don't get yourself charged with trademark or copyright infringement, of course.

Play on themes people like. Example? When the SFWA authors stuck it to Publish America, it was an inspired move to make a press release of it!

What are the common themes people will want to read as a given? Revenge. Stupid news. Love found or lost. Celebrity shake-ups. Average Joe makes it big. A first time for some event...or something that only happens once in a great while. Seasonal stories. Political or religious pieces, though these can backfire on you as well.

Advertising in e-magazines

How does the price stack up?- This is akin to the idea of checking out web site investments. It might sound like a good deal to have a quarter page ad for \$30, but if only 200 people are going to see it, it's not a good deal. Find out what the readership is and weigh it against your cost before deciding.

How prominent is the venue?- The example I just made assumed a small venue, but what about the larger ones? E-mail newsletters or e-publications of major venues may go out to 100,000 people. They are also well-respected. Placing an e-ad in (for instance) Writers' Digest online is a much more solid move than placing one in Joe's Writer's World...I hope no one actually HAS that title. It's also a lot more expensive, but the number of people reading it (not to mention the established name of the company by association) may make the Writers' Digest e-ad a much better investment.

A viable alternative to reach readers when the print version of a venue is out of your price range- Major publications like Writers' Digest can easily run you into the thousands to place an ad in the print version. Few of us have thousands to invest in advertising. However, placing an ad in the e-version or on the publication site is usually a fraction of the price. If it's still too expensive, you can consider doing a group ad for your publisher or a group of authors.

Out of the box marketing: Keep it interesting/make it cool/make it new!

What promo materials do readers LIKE?- This depends highly on what you are doing. The #1 promo item I have found for readers is promo discs. Other popular items are pens, key chains, bumper stickers, pins, magnets and (especially for collectors) signed bookmarks, postcards and business cards.

SF/fantasy readers at WorldCon scooped up mini trifolds like candy, but they are the only group I've seen do that. Never underestimate mini trifolds. You would be amazed at how much information you can fit on one.

Keep in mind that every person walking around with your promo items is a walking billboard for you. But, don't forget that you need your publisher's permission to use your cover art for promotional items. Some give blanket permission, some give blanket permission if you aren't selling them, and some will only approve certain items. For instance, I cannot make myself a promo t-shirt for one of my publishers, because it's not allowed. The agreement with the artist doesn't allow for t-shirts, even for promotional purposes.

Promo CDs: The pros and cons of different types- We all love the business card CDs. They are small, sturdy, not as easy to damage as a full-size CD, hold more than enough information... Readers like them too; they are novel.

However, many people won't pick them up, because they don't know if the business card size will work in their machines. Many computers, especially older CD drives and laptops with the slide-style CD drive, cannot handle them.

Worse, some truly mechanically incompetent people will try to force a machine not equipped to use them and damage the drive in the process. Though this is hardly your fault, the reader in question may hold a grudge against you for the damage, and it is never a good idea to chance that.

There are pros and cons to each size, and you have to weigh durability and novelty against drive specs and limitations. Luckily, though the full size CDs don't fit in a wallet or back pocket, they are still popular with readers...and they are less expensive than the smaller CDs.

Make it something you can sign if it's a handoff- Many readers collect signed promo materials. If it can be personalized, all the better.

Flash and dash: starting conversations with promo gear, stickers, buttons, bumper stickers: Always carry extras- If you don't have a bumper sticker or a window cling on your car for your books, I ask why. If you don't own t-shirts, key chains or buttons for your books, I ask why. If you are EVER (except in a swimsuit) caught without business cards, bookmarks or business card CDs on you... You get the idea.

Promo materials make you a walking billboard. I have had people start up conversations based on my keychain, bumper sticker or t-shirt. I had one woman who stopped to admire my t-shirt art/cover art, and we started talking books. If it's a small thing like business cards, pins, or business card CDs, always carry extras. If they like it, they might use one...another new billboard!

Start conversations in interesting manners. My credit cards and debit cards have local author and autographed copy stickers on them to separate my business and home accounts. That is a conversation starter.

Read your books in public. Have a copy of one of your books open with your picture on the back. Sneaky? Heck yes. This is marketing.

Be on the lookout for contests! Entering REASONABLE contests through a major venue can win you extra advertising for a small cost- Writers' Digest and Writers' Digest online offer a variety of contests. I personally wouldn't enter the self-published one. The prizes may be nice, but \$150 plus 3-5 copies of the paper book is more than I can swallow. There are others, though. They sponsor flash fiction contests and timed/themed contests for \$5-\$15 entry fee. The prizes are, again, nice. I would love to win \$3000, but I will be honest. Getting my story listed as a winner or honorable mention in the magazine is worth \$15 to me. Which brings me to the next subject...

Look for the backdoor- It's a given that none of us are going to get a review from LOCUS anytime soon. Few of us can afford to buy an ad just to get an Romantic Times review or to buy an ad in Writers' Digest. However, you still might be able to get a mention of your book in these venues.

LOCUS, like many magazines, has a column for books received. For the cost of a single copy of your book, sent for review, and postage, you will get mention of a book release in the magazine. LOCUS is one of the magazines that people are known to read cover to cover.

Write an article for Writers' Digest. That gets you a byline. Use it to your best advantage.

Sometimes, the direct route isn't what you want or need.

General marketing advice

Know your books: always have blurbs ready to pull out- NEVER make the mistake of not knowing your books inside and out. Practice answers to common questions with someone. What genre do you write? Blurbs for books.

Get at ease with answering them. If you are excited (okay, sometimes it's manic, but the readers mistake it for enthusiasm), they will be excited for or with you.

About the author:

Brenna Lyons lives in Haverhill, MA with her husband, three children, and a zoo of pets. She was born and raised in the Hazelwood/Glenwood area of Pittsburgh, PA and toured the east coast as a Navy wife for thirteen years.

She enjoys the Society for Creative Anachronism and is a member of such groups as Broad Universe, EPIC, WRW and ERA. For the last several years, she's acted as EPIC PR co-chair and promotions maven for several author groups, including Dark Romance Group, a group of Triskelion authors and eXtasy/Zumaya.

An author with seven different publishers, part owner in an e-zine and with two self-published books out, Brenna is known as a highly prolific author. At the moment, she has 37 books out and another 29 contracts signed.

Brenna can be reached via her site at <http://www.brennalyons.com>