

A Writer's Guide to Successful Book Marketing

A Short Report for the Brighter Writer

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Disclaimer

The information in this report is provided as a public service without warranty of any kind, and it shall in no wise imply guaranteed results of any sort. Individual results will vary, based upon such variables as amount of time and financial resources applied and random factors of timeliness, newsworthiness, media interest, etc. Each individual or entity making use of this information hereby acknowledges and accepts these limitations as beyond any one person's control.

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Introduction

Writers are called “writers” because they write. How’s *that* for stating the obvious? Nevertheless, not all forms of writing will get you tagged as a writer. Writers may write books, articles, short stories, or what not. The term “writer,” therefore, is most often associated with someone who writes in the creative and nonfiction fields, such as books and magazines. The most romanticized writers, it seems, are the creative (or fiction) writers, including poets, while nonfiction writers, including journalists (or news reporters), tend to be most respected for their knowledge and expertise.

Someone who writes advertizing content, however, is called a copywriter, rather than a writer, though copywriting is still most definitely in the field of writing. In fact, copywriting requires a unique skill that both fiction and nonfiction writers alike must master to succeed in today’s writing world.

Copywriters are sometimes called “marketers,” too. Copywriters, or marketers, are called such because they write ads or sales copy for products (such as books) or services (such as editing or proofreading).

Nowadays, writers in the traditional sense must also be good marketers, if they wish to enjoy true success with their writing and publishing endeavors, whether they are self-publishing or publishing through another source. If a writer is not a good marketer, he or she must either get good at it or hire someone who is already good at it. Helping the average writer “get good at it” without having to hire someone else is the aim of this report.

Furthermore, since it is the goal of this report to help writers market their book(s), I will not focus on marketing any other form of writing, such as journalism or Web sites. You’re on your own for that. While some of these same principles may still apply to marketing other products, we’ll remain focused on book marketing for this particular report. Having said all that, let’s get started.

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Chapter 1 Where Do I Start?

Let's just start at the beginning, shall we? The first thing you need to do is write your book and have it ready for publication. By "ready for publication," I mean ready to submit to a publisher. Without a completed book to market, it's more difficult to write your sales copy or plan your marketing strategy, since your book's content and/or purpose can change during the writing and editing process. While many publishers may not require you to have your manuscript complete before pitching it to them for publication, it's easier to compose good advertizing copy based on a completed book. Having a completed marketing plan to show a potential publisher will also help the publisher decide whether to take a chance on you, especially if you're a first-time author. Even if you choose the subsidy (or self-publishing) route, you will still need your marketing plan devised in advance so you can begin promoting your book as soon as it's available. You will lose valuable time and money otherwise.

Unfortunately, it's harder than ever these days for a first-time author to break into the so-called traditional publishing world, since the major publishers seem focused almost entirely on an author already being a celebrity before they will consider her/his manuscript. In Christian publishing, where I work, nearly all of the publishers in this field have adopted the requirement that an author must have an agent, or be recommended by one of their existing author clientele, or already be one of their authors before they will

consider their manuscript. What kind of an elitist approach is *that*? After all, if you're a first-time author, acquiring an agent is almost as hard as finding a publisher willing to consider your work, and how many authors do *you* know personally? This is why I decided to establish [Parson Place Press](#), so that I could help first-time Christian authors, in particular, to at least get a fair hearing before they were rejected. Okay, let me step down from my soapbox now.

Assuming you have completed writing your book already, the next step is to plan your marketing strategy. Answer the following questions, as a minimum:

- How will I market this book?
 - Word of mouth
 - Press releases
 - Book signings
 - Book Reviewers
 - "Cold calling"
 - Direct mail
 - Email marketing
 - Web site marketing
 - Web search engine marketing
 - Paid advertizing
 - Hire a publicist
- Where will I market this book?
 - Local
 - Regional
 - National
 - International
- How much time can I spend in marketing?
- How much money will all of this cost?

Now, let's talk briefly about each one of these. There may be several more ways to market your book in addition to those listed here, such as posting flyers on community bulletin boards or even

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on power poles, but I think these cover the major bases pretty well.

Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is pretty much a given, since you will probably find it next to impossible to keep quiet about your latest accomplishment anyway. Unless you are extremely modest (in which case, you *really do* need this report) you will almost certainly share your good news with all of your family, friends, and acquaintances, and they will share it with people in their social circles. As low-key as this may sound, the power of word of mouth advertizing simply cannot be underestimated.

Press Releases

Press releases are a relatively inexpensive way to announce and promote anything and everything, including your latest published book. The trouble is, everybody else is doing it, too, so you have to write a really good press release to grab the attention of the overwhelmed, ever-busy media. Nevertheless, it is still an effective way of getting your message “out there,” particularly for your local media.

Book Signings

Book signings are pretty much a standard practice as well, since bookstores, authors, and readers alike all benefit. While local bookstores are fairly easy to persuade, you may need more notoriety before taking your book on a regional or national tour.

Book Reviewers

Book reviewers are either fellow authors or avid readers who agree to write a review of your book in exchange for a free copy of it. Some may also

charge a fee. These reviews can be used as blurbs for the back cover or on a page just inside the front of your book (if acquired prior to publication), or they can be used as part of a promotional sales copy, or (where available) the reviewer can even post his/her comments onto a bookseller’s Web site, such as Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, etc. A well-written review can make a big difference in sales, and might even get you some much-needed media attention as well.

“Cold Calling”

“Cold calling” over the phone may be one of the least desirable methods covered here, depending on your personality, but it deserves mention simply because it is an option. As the term implies, it involves calling related booksellers or dealers to persuade them to stock and/or review your book. If you are very introverted or lacking in telephonic social skills, you may ask some of your more extroverted family or friends to do this for you.

Direct Mail

Direct mail can be effective, but it will also be costly. Here’s where your copywriting skills may be put to their most rigorous test. Of course, you can hire a copywriter, but that will cost you even more. The old adage, “It takes money to make money” certainly applies in the book promotion endeavor, however.

Email Marketing

Email marketing can be an effective tool (otherwise we wouldn’t be inundated everyday with all those junk emails!), but with the recent Can Spam Law, you have to be *very* careful. To comply with this law, you can send

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email marketing messages only to people with whom you already have a business relationship. This requires a much more in-depth discussion than I am prepared to give here, so let it suffice that I have mentioned it as an option and that you must approach it with extreme caution. You can read the text of the act on the FTC.gov Web site at <http://www.ftc.gov/os/caselist/0723041/canspam.pdf>, or you can read the compliance requirements for commercial emailers in this report: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/ecommerce/bus61.pdf>

Web Site Marketing

Web site marketing is a bit less demanding on both your mind and your pocketbook, providing you have your own Web site and you can develop link exchanges with other likeminded Web sites. You can also post an announcement, where allowed, in related Web forums, blogs, etc.

Web Search Engine Marketing

While the aforementioned Email and Web site marketing is basically cost-free (unless you pay for posting ads on some Web sites), Web search engine marketing is generally done on a pay-per-click (PPC) or cost-per-click (CPC) basis. The largest PPC search engines are Google, Yahoo, and MSN, though Google far outstrips all the other search engines. Be very careful with PPC, though, as it can be rather expensive, depending on the value and popularity of the keyword(s) you use.

Other Paid Advertizing

Other paid advertizing may be done in the traditional outlets of newspapers, radio, and television, as well as on the

Internet for Web-based print media, online stores, etc. Of course, there are also other options, such as roadside billboards, pocket calendars, automobile door magnets, etc. Let your imagination go wild, so long as you can afford it.

Hire a Publicist

Hiring a publicist may be the most expensive way to market your book, next to buying up all the advertizing you can afford on both broadcast and print media, but depending on the skill and notoriety of your publicist, it could be the best money you will ever spend. However, you really need to see some results from previous publicity campaigns conducted for other clients before you decide on which publicist is best for you.

Answering the question of where you will market your book is fairly straightforward, since you will want to begin at the local level and work your way out. It really makes no sense to pitch your book to the national or international media before your local media has even heard of you or your book. Furthermore, garnering success at the local level will serve as a springboard to greater success as your concentric rings of publicity move to each new level.

Determining the amount of time you can spend promoting your book can be key to your success. It largely depends upon your other time commitments, of course, but the more time you can devote to promoting your book, the greater the likelihood that you will eventually "hit pay dirt."

Finally, the cost of all this marketing will depend upon your individual choices. If you have an extremely limited or no marketing budget at all, you will

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be forced to rely entirely on the cost-free options listed here. Don't be too discouraged by this, however, as your success is not determined solely by the amount of money you spend on your marketing campaign. With the right conditions (some may prefer to call it "dumb luck," but I don't believe in such a thing), you can attain international acclaim without spending a single penny. This is precisely why I included that disclaimer at the beginning of this report. It's your money, so spend it as wisely as you care to.

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Chapter 2 What Do I Need?

The word “need” is a tricky one. If we take it in its truly definitive sense, we really don’t *need any* of the paid options, since it is technically possible to attain our goal of notoriety without spending anything. Therefore, I will simply delineate what you will need if you choose to follow this option or that.

Word of Mouth

For word of mouth, all you really need are some loyal relatives and friends who are willing to donate their time in helping you spread the word about your new book. If you want to add posting flyers to community bulletin boards and local power poles, you will once again need some loyal assistants to help you post them everywhere, plus the cost of paper and ink for the flyers.

Press Releases

All you need to submit a press release is the skill to write an effective, attention-grabbing copy, and, of course, you will need the fax numbers, email addresses, and/or postal mailing addresses for the media and local bookstores where you wish to announce your book’s publication. While writing a good press release is easier said than done, there are lots of sources on the Web to teach you some really helpful tips about press release writing. You can also pay some press release services both to write and to distribute your press release. Here again, you need to investigate them thoroughly to insure they can actually deliver what they promise for you.

Book Signings

For book signings, you need to contact your local bookstores (preferably in person) with a copy of your book to show them and to schedule a date for the event. Of course, you’ll then need to publicize the event in your local media at least a week ahead. That’s where word of mouth and your press release writing comes in handy, too.

Book Reviewers

All you need for book reviewers is a list of folks who agree to write reviews of others’ books either in exchange for a written review of their own book or merely in exchange for a free copy of your book. Actually, review copies of books are usually understood to be free to the reviewer, regardless of whether you agree to review a copy of their book, too. While this can be a fairly significant investment up front, it can pay off in increased sales in the long run, since many readers will buy a copy of a book (even by an unknown author) if it has a good review, especially if that review comes from someone they already know or someone whose credentials lend strong credibility, such as an author of another book. Let’s face it: even fairly well-known authors are still unknown to *some* readers at the time they purchase their book, so being famous is not a requirement to get people to buy and read your book. Overall, you might consider this review process “paying it forward” for other authors.

“Cold Calling”

“Cold calling” requires only that you have a telephone with long distance service and a well-written script of your promotional pitch. Of course, if you won’t be making any long distance calls, you won’t even need long distance service. However, you need the

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well-written script of your pitch, because it will keep you on track with what you want to say, and it will enable you to say the same thing to multiple listeners without omitting any important points. You should rehearse it several times until you feel very comfortable using it. It will work best if you sound relaxed and *without* sounding scripted.

Direct Mail

For direct mail, you will need at least two things. First, you will need a finely filtered, laser-targeted mailing list to which to send your direct mail marketing, or else you'll just be shooting in the dark. If your promotional copy ends up in the hands of disinterested recipients, you've wasted your money. Second, you'll need to write your promotional copy and have it printed on high quality paper and professional-looking envelopes. Using glossy paper for your promotional copy is more expensive, but it is also more attention-getting for the reader. What you print on your envelopes is very important, too, since this can be the kiss of death, if your recipient decides to trash it without even opening it. While I haven't yet used the direct mail marketing option personally, I'm of the opinion that the less sales-like the envelope appears on the outside, the better.

If you're going to be mailing to very large numbers (more than 200 per mailing), it will definitely benefit you to obtain a special bulk rate mailing permit from the post office. This requires you to complete an application form and pay a fee, but it could save you a lot of money in the long run. You can learn more about this process at the USPS Web site.

Even cheaper than bulk letter rate is the bulk post card rate. However, in this

latter case, the recipient can instantly see that it is a promotional mailing, and unless the recipient's interest is captured from the first headline, it, too, will be cast into the trash without a careful reading.

It is possible to hire a direct marketing company to do all of this for you, but it's about as risky to spend a lot of money without much result with them as it is if you do it all yourself. It's your call.

Email Marketing

All you need for email marketing is a computer with an email client installed, an email account, and Internet access. Of course, it's possible to use a Web-based email service rather than an email client, so that's your call. The benefit to Web-based email is having your email available to you everywhere you go, without having to transport a laptop computer with you. The draw-back, however, is a limitation on the size and, in some cases, the daily number of messages you can send with such email services, not to mention the necessity of borrowing a computer to check your email when you're away from home. Furthermore, most Web-based email services are very limited in how many recipients they will allow you to put in any single email, and the option for personalizing your emails is nonexistent. For real email power, I recommend Group Mail by Infacta Ltd., which I use. Even though the free version has limited features, it still includes email personalization, which I think is a very valuable feature indeed. After all, a message that begins with "Dear Mike" is much more appealing than "Dear Friend" or "Dear Subscriber" or whatever.

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Web Marketing

All you need for Web marketing is a computer with Internet access and a list of likeminded sites willing to swap links with you and/or permit you to post ads to their site (for a fee, of course, unless you agree to swap ads on each other's sites). You can post announcements in a variety of online forums, too, providing their rules allow for that.

Web Search Engine Marketing

For search engine marketing, you need only concern yourself with the top three: Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft Network (MSN), in that order. Google's AdWords, is the most popular, but Yahoo is next, and MSN is third. These work on a pay-per-click (PPC) basis, where you are charged a set amount each time someone clicks on your ad. The cost per click (CPC) is based upon the popularity of the keyword(s) with which you are marketing. Depending on the competition for your chosen keyword(s), you can get by with paying as little as five or ten cents per click. Highly competitive keywords can cost several dollars per click, however, so be sure you know how much you're agreeing to pay per click *before* you place your bid. You will be very wise to set a daily limit on how much your account can be charged, too, so you won't blow your entire ad budget all in one day.

Other Paid Advertizing

All you need for other paid advertizing is contact information for the newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and other sources with whom you wish to advertize. You can glean most of this information from their respective Web sites, or even from the

Yellow Pages section of your phone book. It may be time consuming the first time you gather it, but once you have it on file, an occasional update is all that will be required ever after.

Hire a Publicist

The most important thing you need for hiring a publicist is the publicist's contact information and a deep pocket. Since you will be spending so much money in this case, you should look and/or ask for testimonials from others who have used his/her services. Finding the right publicist that both meets your expectations and fits your budget is something that you must investigate and decide for yourself.

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Chapter 3

Who Should I Pitch?

The answer to this question depends upon your goals for publicity. Naturally, you should pitch locally-focused events to the local media, nationally-focused events to the national media, and so forth. For instance, you should pitch a book signing in your home town to your local media. You should not pitch it to non-local media, unless you are kicking off a regional or national tour, in which case you would then list the subsequent locations and dates where you would host future signings and send your press release to those upcoming locations. Moreover, you would conduct a book tour only if you are already sufficiently known to generate enough interest from the book-buying public or if you have written on a topic that will attract significant interest. A first time author should not consider doing a book tour, until her/his book has attracted widespread media attention and interest outside his/her local area.

Regardless of which media you choose to pitch, there is a contact person designated for this purpose at each outlet, and sending your press release or press kit to the wrong person could cause frustration and create ill will with them at best or get your press release or press kit thrown into the trash without a fair consideration at worst. You need to spend some time investigating who the proper contact person is for each media outlet to which you choose to send your press release or press kit. If you can't find the contact person specifically listed on their Web site, then call their business office and inquire personally who that person is. Failure to do so

could cost you time and money (if they trash your press kit without consideration) and/or good will with the media outlet to which you are trying to establish a favorable relationship.

Besides pitching to obvious media outlets, such as newspapers, radio, and television stations, you should pitch to your local bookstores, too. This, of course, is how you can arrange for book signings. Non-traditional outlets, such as specialty gift shops that cater to people interested in the topic of your book, are good places to pitch as well. If you use your imagination, I'm sure you can come up with a few more non-traditional markets also.

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Chapter 4

When Can I Expect Results?

This, of course, is the proverbial million dollar question. There's practically no way of knowing when, or even if, you will be contacted by any one of the sources to whom you've chosen to pitch your product/project. So much depends upon the current news and the interests of the media contacts to whom you make your pitch, not to mention how effectively you have written or stated your pitch, that it is impossible to gauge results. It is a risky business indeed. Nevertheless, developing a personal, or at least a personable, relationship with the media contacts to whom you submit your press releases or press kits can often be the difference between being denied publicity and being contacted for an interview. Perhaps the best way to do this is to establish yourself as an expert in your field by offering yourself as a resource to those reporters. Once you accomplish this relationship, you will be amazed that every time they need someone to quote regarding a particular news item related to your expertise, they will call *you!*

Maybe you're thinking, "Yeah, that *sounds* good, but just how do I go about achieving that?" Initially, until you become better known to these contact persons, you will simply have to work at building that relationship. You do this by writing personal notes and making personal phone calls to them. By "personal," I mean notes and phone calls that have nothing to do with your business. In other words, don't try to pitch to them every time you contact

them. As you develop this relationship, it will slowly evolve into a friendship, and you will find yourself wanting to help this person as much as you hope he or she will help you. Although there's no way of saying how long this process will take, once you have reached this point, you won't have to work nearly as hard at obtaining media attention.

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Conclusion

This short report has merely scratched the surface for you, but I hope you have found it useful nonetheless. Future editions will likely include even more helpful information. In the meantime, I strongly encourage you to check out each of the resources listed in the Marketing and Publicity Resources Directory in the appendices of this report. Of course, you are welcome to contact me with your questions, comments, or suggestions, too. Just email to info@parsonplacepress.com, and I'll reply as soon as I can. Thank you for taking the time to read this report, and I wish you well in your ongoing quest for publicity!

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Appendix A

Marketing and Publicity Resources Directory of Full-Page Sponsorships

Sponsors in this directory paid for a full-page listing. Click on their hyperlinked name below to view their full-page ad, which is linked to their company or product Web site. If you wish to advertize your company here, please visit the [sponsorship payment options](#) Web page or contact the author by email to info@parsonplacepress.com for assistance.

[Parson Place Press](#)

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Appendix B

Marketing and Publicity Resources Directory of Text-Only Sponsorships

Sponsors with active hyperlinks in this directory paid for a text-only listing, except for those marked as **Premium**. The **Premium** sponsors paid for both a full-page and a contextually linked reference within the narrative of this eBook, which included a text-only listing as an extra. Click on their hyperlinked name below to visit their company or product Web site now. If you wish to advertize your company here or activate the hyperlink to your Web site below, please visit the [sponsorship payment options](#) Web page or contact the author by email to info@parsonplacepress.com for assistance.

[Black Christian Book Promo](#)

A wonderful publicity resource for Black authors and those who write for them

[FaithWriters](#)

Post content articles, get reviews of your writing, and much more here

[Google AdWords](#)

Pay per click advertizing with Google's search engine

[Group Mail](#)

A feature-rich email client by Infacta Ltd.

[I Love to Write Day](#)

Get tips for book promotion by author John Riddle at the I Love to Write Day organization's official web site

[Microsoft Network Ad Center](#)

Pay per click advertizing with Microsoft's search engine

[Parson Place Press \(Premium\)](#)

Devoted to giving Christian authors and readers a fair deal

[Religion News](#)

Subscribe to this free press release and/or submit a press release through this service dedicated to religion news

[USPS](#)

The United States Postal Service mail services

[Yahoo Marketing Solutions](#)

Pay per click advertizing with Yahoo's search engine

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Full-Page Ad for Parson Place Press

If you wish to advertize your company here, please visit the [sponsorship payment options](#) Web page or contact the author by email to info@parsonplacepress.com for assistance. Each company who pays for a full-page ad listing will be allowed to compose a full-page, graphic and text ad of their own. You may use either a graphic image alone, such as a square or rectangular banner or button, or a combination of graphics and text, but the length must not exceed that of a full page word processing document with margins set to one inch all around. Ads which exceed the limit will be edited to fit.

