

## **Introduction**

Publicity is another marketing activity you can engage in. Its results in terms of book sales will be difficult to quantify. Publicity may lead to book sales, but its real purpose is to spread the word about you and your book.

Here is a quote from a public relations firm: *“One of the biggest advantages of publicity is that it can massively improve your brand awareness. Branding your business takes time, but through consistent publicity where you’re getting your name into the media, there’s more of a chance for viewers, readers and consumers to recognize your brand, and then choose you over your competitors.*

*In addition to raising brand awareness, publicity will also help you to increase your visibility and credibility as it allows you to spread your message to a large audience. When an individual receives publicity – whether through TV, radio, print or web – they are given an opportunity to connect with hundreds of viewers, readers and listeners, as well as potential customers.”* Pace Public Relations

The topics covered in this chapter are:

- ◆ Blog tours
  - Guest post ideas
  - Interview ideas
- ◆ Promotions
- ◆ Media
- ◆ Press releases

## **Blog Tours**

Blog tours are an optional marketing task. They can be commissioned after the book launch but the ideal time to run a blog tour is to have it straddle the launch date. That is, have some blog stops prior to the launch and

some after the launch. This requires a degree of advanced planning. Whether you use a blog tour or not depends on your marketing budget. If you can afford it, a blog tour is a good way to get many people (i.e. potential buyers) to learn about your book.

Here is an explanation of a blog tour from the Penguin Random House web site: *A blog tour is a set amount of time, usually a week or two, in which your book will be promoted across various websites and blogs. The dates are set in advance; each blog knows what material it will be posting, and the content should be unique to each blog.*

Blog tours are not the same as writing blog posts for your own blog. In a blog tour, you are a guest on other peoples' blogs. Blog tours are usually set up by a company who specializes in these tours and who have a lot of blogger contacts. You can set one up yourself if you have a number of blogger contacts, but it will require a lot of effort and time to contact the bloggers and schedule the acceptances.

If you sign up for a blog tour, expect to pay a chunk of money for it. Refer to the budgeting information in Chapter 1. You will also have to invest a substantial block of time working on it. For instance, if the tour encompasses ten stops (i.e. blog sites), you may have to prepare ten separate blog posts, and these blog sites expect original material, not cut and paste exercises.

Some of the bloggers' requests may include:

- ◆ An author interview. The blogger will generally provide a list of questions to answer
- ◆ A scene or two from the book
- ◆ Answers to a list of questions
- ◆ A post on why you wrote the book and any problems you ran into

The most important use for a blog tour is to get book reviews. Some blog tour operators specialize in book reviews. For this activity, you will

have to furnish the operator with a copies of your book. The operator will need one copy for each format: pdf, mobi and epub. The operator will then will furnish the book to the reviewer. Some bloggers won't review an ebook, only a print book although these types of request are getting rarer. To get timely reviews around the launch date, the blog tour will have to be commissioned a few moths before launch.

You can find blog tour operators by searching on the web. You can also ask other writers about their experiences with various operators. Use your LinkedIn groups for this research. Typically, once you sign up and pay, you'll be assigned a tour guide who will answer your questions, find the appropriate bloggers and establish dates for the tour.

Here is one caveat about blog tours. It won't do much good if the blog stops aren't appropriate for the book you wrote. If you wrote an adventure story, don't get involved with blog tour operators who specialize in romance blog tours, even if the price is reasonable. In this case, you'll have wasted your money because the visitors to your blog stops will have no interest in your book.

You should be aware that some clever blog tour operators run scams. These tour operators don't send out requests to bloggers: they simply use their own blog sites. For instance, if the tour operator offers a ten-stop tour, they'll create ten new blog sites and use them for the tours.

Technically, you are getting the ten stops you signed up for, except no one will visit the sites. This is because these ten blogs don't get any traffic. The only people who ever visit them are the authors who think they are on a grand promotional tour.

### **Guest Post Ideas**

Many bloggers love having guests on their site. Guest posts are a great way to for others to learn about you and your book.

So the question you may have is this: What do I write about?

This is an open-ended question that really has no answer because you can write about virtually everything and anything. Almost! Fiction books and non-fiction books have much different kinds of acceptable blog posts. Non-fiction is easier to come with post ideas. You can blog about:

- ◆ The reason for writing the book.
- ◆ How you came to have the knowledge you put into the book.
- ◆ About material that didn't make it into the book.
- ◆ Expand on a topic in the book

Novels on the other hand require much more creativity.

- ◆ Interview your characters, one at a time or a few at a time.
- ◆ Why is the theme of the book? Why?
- ◆ Is the main character based on someone you know?
- ◆ Is this the first book in a series?
- ◆ What's your next novel about?

I'm sure you get the idea by now. This is good time to begin writing some of these blog posts while you search for appropriate sites to query.

### **Interview Ideas**

Some bloggers like to post interviews with authors. This is another good opportunity to expand your name recognition and social media reach. These bloggers may or may not have a list of interview questions they will expect you to answer. In many cases the list may have a large number of questions and you'll be required to select ten or twelve to answer. This, of course, keeps the interviews that show up on the blog from using the same questions every time and adds variety to the posts.

However, other bloggers will expect you to come up with your own interview questions. In this case, it is wise to create a list of questions and

answers in a readily accessible file. The list should be long enough so that you can put together a number of different interviews for the bloggers.

Here are some questions and issues you can consider:

- ◆ Tell us about yourself.
- ◆ Why did you write this book?
- ◆ What do you want the reader to get from your book?
- ◆ What's different about your book?
- ◆ Where did the idea for the book come from?
- ◆ What's your next writing project?

You get the idea. Expand the list of questions and write the answers.

### ***Promotions***

If you budgeted for book promotions, it is best to start promoting the book before the launch date. But first you have to make a decision: how much are you willing to spend on a promotion? This is somewhat of a loaded question because promotions come in a number of flavors: inexpensive, moderately expensive and very expensive.

This task will require research on your part. I can provide some explanations and leads, but you will have to dig into the guts of other websites to find out all you can before committing money.

Some promotional sites are easy to understand and easy to use. Some, like Google Ads, are filled with techno-babble and are difficult to follow.

Generally, the more you spend, the bigger your reach (i.e the more potential readers you'll reach), but this isn't a hard and fast rule.

Promotional websites pop up continuously, and a web search will give you a list of sites to check on. Here is a link to a webpage that lists a hundred or more book promotion sites: <https://www.readersintheknow.com/list-of-book-promotion-sites>. The list contains a few sites that no longer exist, and I'm not recommending any sites in the list. Perform your due diligence in

going through the list. Some of the sites will only promote free books. As a former sales manager, I don't understand the logic behind spending money to give away books. Some of these sites will only promote books that are available on Kindle.

Then there are promotional sites which are nothing but scams. It is in your best interest to read all the fine print before you commit money to a promotional site that looks suspicious. What does suspicious mean? For starters, if a site guarantees a certain number of book sales, it most certainly is suspicious. This is because, given the total flakiness of readers, no one can guarantee a level of sales. Before you commit money to any promotion site that hasn't been recommended to you, ask about it on your LinkedIn and Goodreads groups.

### *Costs*

There are several different types of promotions. In one, you pay a flat fee to promote your book. With these, you fill in a data sheet with the title, author, description, price, buy links and the cover. The site sends out the information in an email or newsletter and (hopefully) people buy a copy of the book.

Most types of promotions are more complicated. First, you have to construct the ad. This usually consists of the book cover or the title and a very short sentence followed by a call-to-action (i.e. Buy Now!) and a link to a site selling your book.

The cost of the ad is a variable. In one version, you pay per thousand impressions. An impression is your ad showing up on some website. You hope the ad will result in viewers clicking on it. When they do, they are taken to a page selling your book. Typical prices are a dollar or two per thousand impressions and are usually fixed by the promotional site.

In a second version, you pay a fee every time someone clicks on your ad, but you aren't charged by the number of impressions. In these ads, the cost

may be ten, twenty-five or fifty cents per click. The fee can also be higher or lower. In most case, you set the price you want to pay.

With either version, you construct the ad using a set of options. You can set a start and end date, a daily budget and a total budget. Depending on the length of the ad and the daily budget, these promotions can become expensive, so you have to monitor your spending closely. Google Ads (formerly Adwords) is typical of this type of promotional site. The success of these ad campaigns hinges on the keywords you select for the ad. Google has tools to help you select the correct ones.

The third — very expensive — kind of promotion involves hiring a promotion company to promote your book. These promotions will require you to sign a contract and pay up front. In return, the company will do an enormous amount of work promoting your book. Since there are large amounts of money involved here, make sure you do a lot of research before signing up with such a company. LinkedIn may be a good place to start your research.

### *Promo Sites*

I've run a lot of book ads and here are some of the sites I've used or looked into. The following is not a set of recommendations.

Fussy Librarian: <https://www.thefussylibrarian.com> is an inexpensive site. How much your ad costs depends upon the genre. I've used this site a number of times with mixed results.

Bookbub: <https://www.bookbub.com/launch> is a big site that has two types of promotions: very expensive email lists and pay per click. Its email list is extensive and Bookbub is very selective about whom they allow to advertise, even if you're willing to pay the fee. You can submit your book free of charge and you'll be informed if it's selected or not. If your book is selected, you pay the fee (think a minimum of \$800 or \$900 dollars: it keeps going up!) The higher the price of your book during the promotion, the

greater the fee. If selected, you will sell a lot of books. Will it cover the cost of the campaign? I don't know. I've used Bookbub several times in the past, but that was when it first started out and the fee was a hundred bucks or so. The site became wildly successful, and the prices shot through the roof and it became very tough to get selected.

Bookbub also has pay per click campaigns you can use. They work similar to Google Ads.

If your book is on Amazon (and of course it is), you can use the Amazon Marketing Services <https://advertising.amazon.com>. Amazon has several options available including pay per click and other types of ad campaigns.

Success in using the AMS promotion is in selecting the proper keywords and using a lot of them. Each individual promotion is free to use and you only pay for individual clicks on the ads. Getting the proper keywords is awfully important here and with Google Ads. If you are thinking of using either AMS or Google consider hiring a knowledgeable marketer to do it for you, because doing it right is complicated. In fact, this keyword stuff is beyond my ability to deal with it and it will only work if I farm it out. Otherwise, I'm just wasting my money.

My friend and fellow author, Mark Cain, author of the Circles in Hell series of novels puts it this way: *"I'm an Amazon exclusive writer, and I like AMS because it's point-of-sale marketing. People who click on Amazon ads are looking for a book to buy. For AMS I hire out developing and managing my Amazon ads to a person who understands the amazon system much better than I do."*

When it comes to promotional companies, they are the very expensive ones mentioned earlier. I'm familiar with two of them: Smith Publicity and Author Marketing Expert

Smith Publicity <https://www.smithpublicity.com> is an international publicity company.

Author Marketing Expert <https://www.amarketingexpert.com> is run by Penny Sansevieri, who is considered a social media marketing guru.

In conclusion

Book promotions can be used to spread the word about your book and even sell copies. The promotions can also drain your wallet. Don't sign up with a promotional site without researching it. Once the promotion is running, monitor the results and especially your spending.

If you plan to use a promotion company contact them long before the launch date. It takes time for the company to complete the promotional work and you want the promotions to start prior to the launch of the book.

### **Contact the Media**

This is another iffy thing you can do. When you send out a press release announcing the availability of your book, send a copy to the local paper. A word of caution, copy and paste the release into the body of the email, don't make it an attachment. An attachment won't be opened and your email will be deleted unread. You can usually find an email address on the paper's website. Be prepared to be ignored. Having a book published these days isn't a big news event. It happens all the time now, so your book won't make a big splash in the local paper world.

Don't be discouraged. Remember, when your first book is launched, you are an unknown and papers don't like to publish reports on unknowns (unless you have also pulled off a despicable crime). The approach to use is to keep writing press releases (for new reviews, etc.) and keep sending a copy to local papers. This has the result that reporters keep seeing your name pop up from time to time and someday (perhaps!) one of them will get in touch with you.

Since having a book published is no longer newsworthy, another tactic you can use is to combine a book event with a local interest angle. This is much more likely to get a reporter's interest.

Radio and TV are other media outlets to address. Many stations look for authors and writers to contact them to help fill up air time with interviews. Granted, getting interviewed when you have little or no name recognition is difficult, but you have to start sometime. Getting the first one is always the hardest. After that, your query letter can list the first one as proof that you are an interesting character who should be interviewed.

One place to start searching for media interviews is Blog Talk Radio <https://www.blogtalkradio.com>. It has many talk shows that are eager to interview authors and is perhaps the easiest way to get a media interview. All the shows are recorded and are available to be listened to or downloaded as podcasts long after the live event. You'll have to search through the site to find the appropriate show hosts and then send them a query email describe your book and yourself.

### **Press Release**

There are a number of sites that will issue your press release. Do a web search to locate a few. Some of them are free. Some charge a modest fee and some are expensive. Generally, the more you pay, the bigger and more prestigious the media outlets contacted.

The purpose of the press release is to tell media sites about the availability of your book. The press release service will distribute the announcement to a large number of media companies.

The press releases sites will have a template or instructions you can use to compose the release.

Press releases start with a short, attention-grabbing headline followed by a longer, but still short, blurb. After that comes the main text area where

you can describe your book in depth. This is another place where the short synopsis is useful. Your book cover image also goes into the release as does your short bio and buy links. If you have a trailer, include the link to it.

Once the release has gone out, get a copy and send it to your local media outlets. You may get a write-up, and that will help your marketing efforts.

Here are links to a few press release sites:

PRLog: <https://www.prlog.org>

PRweb: <https://app.prweb.com>