

How can I market my writing?

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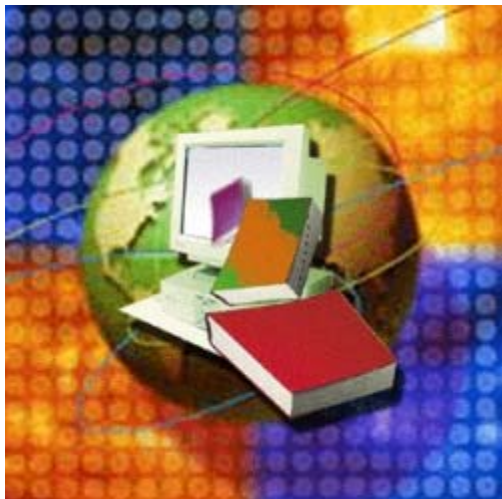
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As an aspiring author there is a great deal to learn. There are grammar and spelling rules. There is a tone. There is that certain ‘something’ that helps the reader connect with the message of the writer. Writers recognize this and spend a great deal of time at conferences and in critique groups honing their craft and finding ways to better express their thoughts on paper.

What writers are only beginning to realize is that running alongside this is the need for a strong marketing sense. For some people with a business background this could come more naturally. They’ve grown accustomed to networking and making sales contacts. For born writers, however, our more solitary nature sometimes makes the idea of networking about as appealing as dragging our tongue across razor blades. There is the perception that marketing our craft somehow sullies it, and thus, we want to leave that part to our publisher. Doing this will doom your work to obscurity. Therefore, we need to find ways to make marketing, if not pleasurable, bearable.

In this article we’re going to look at a few simple ways to begin to market your writing. While using all of these ideas together may give the best result, selecting only one or two can give you a significant jump start on establishing name recognition. Furthermore, most, if not all, of these techniques can be used before you even have your first book contracted. That makes these not only a

means of marketing our writing to readers but also marketing our writing to potential publishing houses.

Blogging

Blogging is a phenomenon that has only been around for a little over a decade and has received mixed reviews. One of the advantages of establishing a blog is that many blogs are free to start. The setback of blogging is the same as the setback of anything else, you must let people know it is there and give them a reason to come again and again.

This also requires consistent effort. You can't simply create one blog posting and expect to have a wild influx of readers. Instead you have to consistently post for weeks and then let your target readers know that you are providing information. This should be more than simply you commenting on the weather or your favorite place to eat. Make this a place where individuals can learn something relevant and engaging enough that they will come and tell others as well.

So do you have enough information to sustain a consistent blog? If you're in design you can keep people updated on trends. You can feature layouts and spotlight homes you've designed. If you write historicals you can write on research you've done on that particular time period. I write suspense/thrillers and I've blogged on how the techniques used in suspenseful movies can be applied to both the craft and the marketing of an individual's writing.

Once you have content people want to read you next must have a way to capture names. There are a couple of different ways to do this that will cost you little or no money. You can have subscribers to your blog as well as offer newsletters [more on this later]. You can gather subscriptions using Feedblitz [www.feedblitz.com] which is a free service that will email notices of new blogs to your readers as soon as it is posted.

To set up newsletters there are two different systems which offer low cost options: www.ConstantContact.com and www.MailChimp.com. I personally use Mail Chimp for a number of different reasons but check out both to determine what will best meet your needs.

Articles

Historically the way to publication began with an author writing a variety of articles and then “shopping” them around to various magazines and periodicals. The face of publishing, however, has been changing over the last 5-10 years with a transition from print publications to electronic publications. While this has led to a decrease in the number of paying markets for a writer to break in to, it has offered an increase in the potential of using articles to market YOU, rather than the magazine you are writing for.

One of the great ways to drive traffic to you website and newsletter is to write a series of articles on a variety of topics. You can expand on an existing blog or you can talk about something else. I write articles on everything from time management to my husband’s battle with Cancer a couple of years ago. The topics of my blogs are business principles for writers and money saving tips. While there are times that the articles I write have nothing to do with my blogs, for the most part, they either relate directly to the topic or are of interest to writers.

The key is to use the articles to instill confidence in readers that you know about your topic. Whenever possible include a brief bio that talks about you, your website and your business:

“Joe Writer is owner of ABC Widgets. They focus on widgets for light industrial and automotive industries. He also writes a daily blog, In the Driver’s Seat, where he talks about changes in the automotive widget industry. You can read his blog at ABCWidgets.com”

When this isn’t possible, don’t worry. The power of the search engine will cause your name to pop up with a simple byline. If a reader is interested in finding you-they can do it.

Newsletters

For people who like to stay in the know but who don’t like to read daily blogs there are newsletters. One benefit of the newsletter is the ability to add graphics to your stories and links to your blog and to other articles. Furthermore, a newsletter gives the perception of professionalism to some readers. I find that there is some overlap between my blog subscribers and my newsletter subscribers. Despite this, the two distribution means tend to reach different groups.

At this point you may be wondering where you'll find content for all of these publications, don't. You will not have to come up with constant information. Your newsletters will be an opportunity to share brief updates, point individuals to specific links and posts on your blog/website as well as share discounts and industry information. By sticking to a format and limiting most articles to a shorter word count [250 words or less] you can provide relevant information in a condensed format. Don't think of long articles like a person would read in a paper. These are highly condensed updates designed to provide your customers with the most relevant information possible in the shortest amount of time. [For more detailed information on this see my article "Using Newsletters to build your website traffic, and vice versa."]

Speaking

This is my favorite part of marketing. I love to write, but I also love teaching other people how to write. Therefore I spend as much time as I can speaking to business and writing groups. This option isn't for everyone but if you do have some interest in speaking, take the time to learn how to do it properly. Find some online classes and read books. Remember, just because you can talk, doesn't mean you can speak.

Once you do have the training, speaking offers the opportunity to reach an entirely different group of people who are purely focused on your message. This is a great way to practice the delivery of information-without sounding like a commercial.

Networking Communities

Finally, a great way to market your writing is by networking. Membership in online communities helps you with national and international connections while local groups help you develop your people skills. Make sure you focus on giving to these communities more than you seek to take.

One advantage of online communities is the ability to meet people in a variety of geographical areas who have a common interest. Many authors like to participate in groups [like Yahoo groups] that are specific to their genre. You can learn a great deal about historical events or the geology of a particular area by participating in these groups.

Having in-person groups help to make the personal connections that can lead to more referrals and a broader business base. While local writing groups can provide emotional support you shouldn't stick to writing groups alone. Participation in other groups, like business networking groups, can open the doors of opportunity for you. Don't get overwhelmed and spend so much time networking that you have no time to do your regular work. I would suggest being involved in no more than 3 or 4 groups and of those select one or two to be actively involved in. That will help you connect with people individually while still meeting a variety of people.

The key to success in these groups is to find a group where you can use your talents to help the group. Networking is not about what you can get, but making the entire group better through the gifting of each individual. This must all be done in balance [don't say yes to EVERY thing you're asked to do if you simply don't have the time]. The key is participating and meeting people.

This is not an exhaustive list of ways to market your writing but gives you a start. While these tips and ideas may not help you with the nerves inherent in putting yourself out there, they will help you to develop the relationships that will make marketing your work a much more pleasurable experience.

For a more expanded view of marketing and developing your writing check out my ebook *Writing and Business: A Guide for Freelance Writers*. Available on this website in written or audio format.

About the author:



Author Bio: Tiffany Colter is a passionate freelance writer whose credits include national magazines, local papers, E-zines and blogs. Topics have ranged from reporting on-assignment about local businesses to national trends in the writing market. She can speak as readily on overcoming challenges by faith as she can reaching a target market through platform development.

Every month more than 40 pieces authored by Tiffany appear online or in

print. She speaks regularly to Writers groups & Business Owners as well as individuals.

The Writing Career Coach Program was born out of her desire to provide affordable options to aspiring writers.

Tiffany has a degree in Political Science from the University of Toledo where she graduated Summa cum Laude from the Honors College. She is fluent in three languages, writes suspense-thrillers and reads business books as readily as she does a novel.

You can learn more about how to build your writing business, whether one article or a series of novels, by visiting Tiffany's blog at <http://WritingCareerCoach.blogspot.com>

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