

The Three Phases of an Effective Book Marketing Campaign

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A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You Build Your Platform and Reach Potential Readers

PHASE

1

Before you
publish

PHASE

2

Before your book
is released

PHASE

3

After your book
is on the market

You've done the hard work of writing a book.

Now it's time to market your title to potential readers. For many authors, marketing is a mystery and creates some unique challenges, but with this guide you will:

- Learn the crucial questions to ask as you build your marketing plan.
- Understand the main phases of a marketing plan and the tasks associated with each phase.
- Create a timeline and action plan to help you connect with potential readers.

If you wait until you're done writing to begin marketing, you're waiting too long.

What do good books and good marketing plans have in common? They both have an effective beginning, an engaging middle, and a powerful ending.

Depending on where you are in the writing and publishing process, you're already engaged in marketing as you consider your target audience, your book cover design, and other factors.

Knowing your audience is the critical first step.

Before we explore the phases and elements of your marketing campaign, it's important to identify your book's audience. Here are some simple things for you to consider as you build an audience profile:

- Describe who you think will be most likely to read your book in terms of gender, age, occupation, and any other relevant details.
- Write a simple statement as to why someone will want to read your book.
- Identify where you think your readers look for information. If they're engaged on social media, be specific about which platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter. What events do they attend? Can you establish a presence there as an exhibitor or speaker? Can you think of anywhere locally your target audience might congregate?

With a clearer picture of your audience, you're now ready to consider the three phases of an effective campaign.

In the following sections, you'll learn how to approach each of the phases and become a more effective marketer.

PHASE 1) Before You Publish

Ask the important questions.

Thinking about the following questions before you submit your manuscript is a good idea, and you can always revise your answers as you go about the book marketing process and learn more about your audience.

What are your marketing goals?

Identifying goals that are observable, measurable, and attainable is the foundation of a solid marketing plan. Selling a million copies may be your aspiration, but begin with more realistic starting goals.

Keep in mind that goals are not restricted to only sales and marketing results. For example, you may want to set a goal to record a book trailer, to blog twice a week, or to plan an event. Set short-term targets you can feasibly hit quarterly, monthly, weekly, or even daily. Doing so will keep you focused and allow you to measure progress and celebrate success along the way. Prioritize your goals and set deadlines for when you want to accomplish them.

Without the right marketing and publicity, your potential readers might never have the opportunity to be introduced to your writing.

What are the competing book titles?

Search bookstores and online retailers for books that focus on a similar topic or have a similar title to your book. The potential titles for your book should appeal to readers who are drawn to these topics, but you'll want to have a unique spin that sets your vision apart.

What's your title?

Short and memorable is always best when it comes to book titles. Avoid obscure terminology and ditch words that are hard to pronounce or spell. In an attempt to be provocative or stand out, authors will occasionally choose unusual or confusing book titles. Don't be tempted. Obscure words score points in Scrabble, but they rarely work in book titles.

■ Have a clear subtitle for a nonfiction book.

Consider adding a subtitle if it adds important detail about your book's topic. If you are writing a nonfiction book, a subtitle helps readers understand what to expect from the book. For instance, *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*, published by Berrett-Koehler, teases readers with the subtitle *Getting Good People to Stay*—an especially catchy, short phrase designed to spark curiosity.

■ Do your research.

Once you have a title—or titles—you like, research your genre to see if there are already books with the same or a similar title. You may miss out on potential readers if your audience is confusing your book with another of the same name.

■ Ask your readers what they think.

If you have viable title options, try testing them with your readers. Use your blog or mailing list to present the title ideas to potential readers and let them vote. Along with learning what they prefer, you help market your book before it's available.

What will your cover design look like?

You've probably heard: "You can't judge a book by its cover," but readers do. That's why it's important to give serious consideration to your cover design. Go to your local bookstore or library and look for book covers that jump out at you. Notice the color, layout, image, and typography. These are elements that contribute to an effective cover. Don't forget to consider how easy it is to read your cover at full-size and smaller, internet-friendly sizes. Your cover should be as eye-catching online as it is on bookstore shelves.

There are certain cover design conventions that help readers identify your book's genre at a glance. For example: a dark background and bold typeface typically indicate horror or mystery; calming colors and a script font indicate self-help; bold, bright colors and a handwritten font indicate young adult titles.

These same design considerations will come into play as you create a website, promotional materials, and other online branding elements. Keep in mind that all elements should have the same look and feel as your book cover. This will establish cohesive branding and reinforce your identity as an author. It will also show your professionalism and reflect positively on your book.

What can you do to position yourself as an author?

Think about how you can give yourself credibility. Depending on the subject or genre of your book, you may be able to cite particular experiences, professional accreditations, or other compelling factors that lend authority to your status as a writer.

This may seem more straightforward for nonfiction writers, but fiction writers have options too. Consider where your writing has been previously published, what positive reviews or feedback you received, any training you've received in the same field as your writing, as well as any awards or prizes you may have won.

What are your key selling points?

When you speak to book buyers, potential readers, or media representatives, you want to have a quick and compelling reason why someone should buy your book. An effective pitch is key to gaining the initial attention of your target audience.

Are there any endorsements you can secure?

Having quotes from well-known or respected people can give your book added credibility in potential book buyer's eyes. Think about who might be willing to endorse your book, then use their quotes on your back cover as well as in other sales materials. Always ask permission before you use someone's quote, and be sure to thoughtfully choose quotes and sources with regard to your book and its target audience.

Give careful attention to the message on your book's back cover. It could mean the difference between a pass and a purchase.

What will your back cover copy say?

Watch people at a bookstore. If a cover attracts their attention, they'll pick up the book, flip it over, and read the back cover. You'll want to give careful attention to the message on your book's back cover. It could mean the difference between a pass and a purchase.

The need for short, enticing copy doesn't end once the back cover copy is done. Online book summaries, sell sheets, and even tweets and Facebook posts present constant opportunities to re-evaluate and fine-tune your messaging.

PHASE 2) Before Your Book is Released

Gather your resources.

Holding a copy of your book for the first time is exciting! Celebrate this significant milestone and use that excitement to maintain momentum for the next phase of marketing your book.

Develop your book's media hook.

Sometimes called the "elevator pitch," this is the two-minute speech you'll give to get media outlets interested in featuring your book. Above all, make sure your pitch is brief, clear, and unique. Don't just talk about your book; make sure to talk about the topic of your book in your pitch. Be sure to convey something about your book that would make a compelling article or feature for that media outlet.

Plan your book launch event.

One of the key elements of your marketing plan should be a book launch event. This is a way to generate interest and start the grassroots promotion of your book. Launch parties also provide an outlet for you to sell your book directly to people and meet potential readers. If done correctly, it may even be a way to gain valuable media attention.

Be creative in your planning and location. Tie it in to the theme or subject of your book. Consider whether an intimate, invitation-only event or a more public launch party is the right approach for you, your book, and your target audience.

Most importantly: Don't forget to have fun. Publishing a book is an accomplishment. Take pride in your achievement and enjoy sharing the special moment with others. Plus, your upbeat attitude and excitement can be infectious, inspiring friends, family, members of the media, and other attendees to spread the word about your book following the event.

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Identify venues for book signings.

Most bookstores and libraries will welcome authors who are interested in speaking or holding book signings, but they'll want to plan for them in advance. So even before your book is available, make contact with locations you think would host a book signing. However, don't set a date until your book is available for purchase.

Conventional locales such as libraries, bookstores, and coffee shops aren't the only places you can host events. A historical fiction writer might consider a local museum; a spa might be a good fit for self-help authors; and many places of worship welcome a variety of books. Opportunities abound for those willing to think outside the box.

Build your mailing list.

When it comes time to invite people to your events, you should have a quick and easy list you can use to distribute announcements. Prepare that list now, and be sure to accommodate for both email and regular mail. Do not share the list with others, and blind carbon copy (bcc) the email addresses when you send a message to your entire list of email contacts.

Remember to add to the list as you continue marketing. At events, provide a sign-up sheet so people can provide their name, email, and mailing address. Include the same opportunity on your website. Always give people a simple way to unsubscribe or opt out of print and digital communications too. While this may shorten your list, it will ensure you are speaking to the most engaged audience and using your time and money wisely.

Send your book launch invitations.

When you approve your galley copy at the end of the publishing production process, send out your book launch event invitations (print and electronic) and include local members of the media in your guest list. Be sure your venue can accommodate the number of guests you've invited before you send out the invites.

On your invites, include a phone number and email address so guests can RSVP. This will help you determine the amount of food and beverages to have available—it is a party after all. Even if your venue doesn't allow food and

drinks, you'll still want to know how many people to expect. That way you can be sure to have enough copies of your book and any promotional materials you want to distribute.

Refine your marketing plan, calendar, and budget.

Sustained effort and constant evaluation are key to an effective book marketing campaign. Based on the framework you created before, continue to polish your plan as you learn more and make strides in achieving your goals.

PHASE 3) After Your Book is on the Market

Follow through.

The final phase, "post-publication," might also be known as liftoff, because your book is now officially launched and ready to soar. It's an exciting time, so make the most of it. As mentioned previously, successful marketing is the result of continuous effort, so there's no pressure to do everything at once. This is why you've already established your goals, budget, and schedule—to help you stay focused over time.

This is by no means a complete list, but it's a great starting point of actions you can take to raise awareness, build your platform, and attract the readers and fans you want.

Hold your book launch event.

Congratulations! You're a published author. It's time to celebrate. In fact, this is one of the most important things to do once your book is live. It's a great way to recognize your hard work and share the joy of becoming a published author.

Schedule other events.

You laid the groundwork in the previous phase. Now follow through and finalize a calendar of events where you can promote your book and sign copies. Don't just think locally. As you travel, plan ahead and look for bookstores or venues that might be interested in having you sign your book. Also, if you're part of a church, synagogue, or other organization, consider asking the leadership if there are any speaking opportunities.

It's critical to communicate with your audience directly at these events. This will give you the opportunity to learn what they did and didn't enjoy about your book, what parts of your book are resonating most with people, and other bits of useful information.

Beyond readings, book signings, and speaking engagements, you can attend trade shows, festivals, and workshops. Some of these events draw large crowds, giving you the opportunity to gain credibility, promote your book and your name, and possibly even make direct sales. Events where other authors and publishing professionals, such as editors, agents, and publicists, congregate also present great learning opportunities.

Pitch to local and online media outlets.

Contact local reporters at newspapers and broadcast media (radio and TV) to try to get your book featured. The easier you can make it for them to understand why you and your book are newsworthy, the better shot you have of being featured. This is where the media hook you developed in the previous phase will come into play.

Identify websites and bloggers that might be interested in your topic, and make a pitch to them as well. Many online media outlets include writers' names and email addresses, making it easier to reach the right people. National coverage may be one of your goals, but the best place to start is locally.

You're trying to build a relationship with potential readers, so as in any relationship, sporadic or infrequent contact is not a good thing.

Commit to a social media schedule.

One of the keys to social media is being clear on who your audience is and what message you'll deliver. It's also important to be consistent. You're trying to build a relationship with potential readers, so as in any relationship, sporadic or infrequent contact is not a good thing. Plus, the more quality content you share with your audience members, the more they will have to share with their friends and followers on your behalf.

If you have a blog (and you should), encourage reader interaction with your posts. Comments allow for feedback from readers, offering you the chance to learn what they liked and disliked about a certain post or even a certain section of your book. Paying close attention to what your followers say can help you further understand your target audience and identify new opportunities to market to them.

Participation is also important to successful social media use. Engage in conversations to keep people interested in you and the content you're sharing. To attract a loyal following, be responsive to people's comments and questions; thank them for sharing your content and comment on their content; and share if it makes sense for your audience.

Remember:
Talk with people, not at them.

Evaluate and revise your plan.

Even the best-laid plans will not go exactly as you expect or hope. Be willing to evaluate results and make adjustments.

If something is working well, try to find a way to expand your efforts in that area. If something didn't work, adapt or try something new. To accomplish your goals, make changes based on your experience.

It's always a good idea to start your marketing efforts locally. As you learn what works best, you can adapt and improve your plan while you gradually expand your efforts into larger markets and nontraditional venues.

It's time to get started

No matter where you're at in your publishing journey, following the steps in this paper will help you in your marketing efforts. Marketing is a journey too, but with this guide you have a roadmap to help you along the way as you build your platform and reach potential readers.



A GPS for your publishing journey

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Keith Ogorek • *President, Author Learning Center*

As an industry thought leader, Ogorek has helped drive a number of significant innovations in the self-publishing industry and is featured in the book, *Innovation--How Innovators Think, Act and Change Our World*. He also has authored three books, *A Clear View*, *Eli the Stable Boy* and *7 Secrets of Successful Self-Published Authors* and written a number of helpful white papers including the popular *4 Paths to Publishing* and *Three Phases of an Effective Book Marketing Campaign*. You will also find him speaking at leading industry events such as the Indie and Digital Author conference, Textbook and Academic Authoring Conference, The Singapore Writer's Festival, Havana Book Fair and the Florida Writers Conference. In addition, he is a regular webinar presenter for The *Author Learning Center*.