

# The self-publisher's marketing handbook

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# THE SELF-PUBLISHER'S MARKETING HANDBOOK

## The marketing challenge

Congratulations on deciding to publish your own book. With any luck, you'll find the whole thing fun, exciting and, of course, rewarding.

Once you've finished all the writing and design, you'll want to get out there and sell your book. That's where marketing comes in. For many self-publishers, promoting their book can seem like the most daunting part of the whole process. But, the unfortunate truism is that, no matter how good it is, if no one knows about your book, no one's going to buy it.

There is good news. With a little planning and perseverance, you may be surprised just how good your marketing skills are. The basics of marketing can really be broken down to this:

- Identify who you want to talk to
- Figure out what you're going to say
- Decide how you're going to say it
- Go on and make it happen
- Keep going...

Sound easy? Well, it is...almost that simple.

You see marketing is more of a marathon than a sprint. It's the Forth Road Bridge of publishing. When you think you've reached the end, it's time to start at the beginning again. You'll need to select the right marketing tools for what you want to achieve. And, you'll have to decide how much you're willing to invest and what return you want from your investment.

There will be highs – like when those great reviews start to appear – there will be lows – like when the editor from that no account local rag puts the phone down on you again – but it is such an essential part of being your own publisher.

To help you along, we've put together this small handbook. It's hardly the book marketer's bible but it will give you some pointers to get you started.

Good luck.

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# BREAKING THE MOULD

The thing about the Internet and print on-demand technology is that it doesn't just change the way you print your book. It can change the way you promote it as well.

Traditionally, book sales came through the book trade and other retail outlets. You'd approach a wholesaler who'd sell it into the bookshops. Each would take their cut and you may even get some money yourself. The advent of on-line services like Amazon didn't really change things too radically. They still wanted to use the established book trade mechanisms.

This is changing slowly as the on-line services and bookstores grudgingly become more approachable for self-publishers. In some part, that's due to writers being able to use the Internet to do it for themselves.

## Using PABD's free sales tools

Instead of sending people to your local bookshop to buy your book, you send them to your own web site where they can buy it directly. The advantage here is that you have no middlemen demanding a cut.

With PABD, you receive your own Personal Selling Page (PSP) and are placed in the PABD bookstore. All the transactions, printing and distribution are handled for you. All you have to do is tell people where they can buy your book.

This does have one other advantage. You can launch your book as soon as it's ready to be printed as you don't really need to tell people months in advance that your book is going to appear.

You can even put your book on pre-release through PABD prior to launching it to the book trade. That way, you can judge what demand is going to be like and test some small marketing campaigns to see exactly what works.

# Planning your launch

Using PABD sales tools solely is one way to promote your book that can be very effective. However, most writers want to use several different ways to sell their book. And, that requires a little planning.

The book trade has developed to work in advance of publication. If you think about it, this is common sense as you need to inform people about your book and make sure that the people who are going to sell your book are able to order it. In fact, some publishers plan up to a year ahead. You don't need to plan that far in advance but a few months is probably a minimum. Here's why:

## Getting your book data out there

Supplying bibliographic data to right agencies is the starting point to successful book distribution. However, this takes a little time. Each agency will need time to accept, process and publish your information. The ISBN Agency will cover the book trade and the CIP programme will take care of the library system. You'll need to give your data to CIP at least four months before the launch of your book. However, there are other bibliographic agencies that you should investigate. Bowkers is the key database in North America and it has the worldwide Global Books in Print facility that is used by many thousands of bookshops around the globe.

## Dealing with the book trade

Let's say you wish to deal directly with bookstores. You can simply approach your local bookstore and try to persuade the manager to stock your title. Having a number of copies that they can stock immediately will be helpful. However, it may be that you don't have the time to visit every store. In this case, you can send out copies of your Author's Information (AI) sheet and follow this up with a phone call. You can then supply the shops that are interested. This can take a number of weeks but the bookstore will still want to know they are getting a new release.

If you wish to investigate using a book wholesaler, then you have to work months in advance. Most will be preparing their catalogues around four or five months in advance. Again, you should send through an AI in the first instance and then follow this up with a Phone call. Remember that both bookstores and wholesalers will demand significant discounts on your Selling Price – which can be as much as 60%.

## Arranging book reviews

The best result has to be that book reviews start to appear as close to your launch date as possible as this will give a good boost to early sales. But it can take a number of months for reviews to appear. So, you have to plan your review strategy well in advance – especially if some of the titles you are interested in are monthly magazines. You can send out press releases much closer to your launch date but that may still need to be five or six weeks if you are dealing with monthly publications.

## Arranging a launch event

It may be that you wish to announce your book with a bang. Organising a launch event is the best way to create some interest. See our section about 'Organising a book signing' for some advice on creating an event.