

2nd Edition

Writer's Market Companion

The essential guide to starting
getting it published

EXCERPT

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Promoting Your Work and Yourself

One of the most important but least considered aspects of being a successful writer is self-promotion. Take some advice from writer Victoria Secunda, who learned a lesson about promoting early in her book career: “Publishing is more than writing a book. It also about doing all the things that can feed your book, and that includes public speaking, the thought of which make writers take to their beds.”

Although antianxiety medicine may be required before a going to a speaking engagement, self-promotion is still something writers should work at tirelessly. Like Secunda, you should spend nearly as much time on promotion as on writing and research. You know your book better than anyone, which means you can promote it better than anyone. Ideally, authors should work together with publicists to find promotional strategies that work. But you must do some research in order present viable ideas to publicists. You have to know what your options are and what is feasible for both you and your publisher in relation to your particular book.

Sometimes you must do backbreaking research in order to do this effectively. Secunda compiled long lists of names, addresses, and phone numbers of publications and groups she thought might be interested in her work and gave them to her publicist. For her book on father-daughter relationships, for example, she went to the library and looked up men’s groups that could be sent a news release. Realizing that her title, *When Madness Comes Home*, is hardly light reading for the beach, she

got involved with the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, a group that supports families of people with mental illness. She spoke at the association's national convention and at several local chapters around the country, offering herself as a spokeswoman for the organization on local radio and television shows.

These opportunities did not present themselves to Secunda. She had to make them happen. The same is true for any author. When you create an opportunity for yourself, be aware that it is your responsibility to make sure it is successful. For example, while some news organizations have reporters who specialize on particular beats, it's more likely that reporters won't know much about you, your book, or even the topic. So help them do their jobs. Secunda once appeared on a radio show that didn't expect her until the next day. Although they weren't prepared, she was. She handed them a list of questions to ask about her book, and the next thing she knew, the hour was up.

Who Else But You?

Promotion doesn't start the minute the presses stop; many authors plan their promotional efforts when their books are still in the proposal stage. Success as a writer often depends upon speeches, book signings, newsletters, television appearances, radio interviews, Web sites, visits to groups, and campuses, and more. Who else knows your book better? Who else is as dedicated to its success? Who else can talk about it as ardently?

In fact, even though you may have a wonderfully written nonfiction book, oftentimes the good writing isn't all that is needed to make it a success. How much you are willing to talk about your book is essential because many publishers are not able to give each book the promotional attention it needs to make it a success. That is up to you, the writer. If you have a book with a wide national audience, the promotion plan is equally, if not more important than the actual contents of the book. Even well-known authors go on the road, give talks, and do interviews to promote their works. Self-promotion is even recognized by writers as a technique as much a part of writing success as knowing the difference between active and passive voice.

Speak Up

While public speaking is frightening to most writers, it is important to take advantage of any opportunity that allows you to speak about your work to an audience. Not only should you be willing to speak when asked, but you should also seek out speaking opportunities. Speaking gives you the chance to create excitement about your work in a personal way. You are forming a memorable relationship with the audience if you are prepared and enthusiastic. Getting to hear about an author and his work firsthand will prompt many people in an audience to be interested in your work. They will also be likely to tell someone else about it. If you can walk away with even just a handful of people interested in your book, you have created more potential sales than would have otherwise occurred.

To talk up your work, it can be helpful to think of an interesting angle or angles that will appeal to a broader audience than simply people who are interested in its topic. Find a way to hook people who may not know much about your topic. Be creative and confident, and you may attract more listeners than you would have ever guessed.

If public speaking gives you the tremors, enroll in a speech class at a local college for instruction, practice, and feedback. Toastmasters International (www.toastmasters.org) offers a good Web site for help in making speeches. You can contact Toastmasters by writing to P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92688, by calling (949) 858-8255, or by sending an e-mail to tmembers@toastmasters.org.

You also can call your local bookstores and offer to do a talk and a book signing. But be imaginative about other groups to address. *The Encyclopedia of Associations*, available at libraries, is a compendium of organizations around the world. It can help you find audiences. If you write about nursing, for example, you can find dozens of nursing associations, each of which may have newsletters for members and meetings where you may be permitted to give a presentation. Look up your topic in the *Yellow Pages* to find local businesses, churches, and groups that may agree to let you promote your work to their members.

Use visual aids. Whitney Otto created a slide show to promote *The*

Passion Dream Book, a novel that explores the relationship between art and the lives of artists. The slides also helped her add originality to her tour and broaden it to include libraries and art schools. Visuals are a great way to make your presentation more interesting and engaging, and even more importantly, more memorable.

Go Visit

Remember, part of your job as a writer is also to be a publicist. One way to publicize and promote is to make a point of visiting local bookstores to meet the staff and talk about your book. If bookstore staff know you, they're more likely to put your book in the window. They also may be more likely to recommend your book to customers interested in your topic because your book will stand out in their minds above the others.

Jeanne M. Dams used the *Deadly Directory*, which she calls an indispensable reference for mystery writers, to find mystery bookstores. She visited every store within driving distance to supplement the book tour arranged by her publisher. "Even when I drew very few people, I established a personal relationship with the bookseller," Dams said. "That really matters because mystery bookstores hand sell their books." Today, even the chain stores call her.

If you are aggressive in your promotion efforts, your publisher may be willing to put more time and money into you as well. Victoria Secunda's publisher believed her to be promotable because of her success on television and radio shows. So for her book *When You and Your Mother Can't Be Friends*, the publisher wanted to send her on a ten-city tour. Secunda, with the support of her husband, decided to add five more cities to the tour. Although they had to pay for the additional cities, she said, "It was worth every cent and gave me phenomenal experience." And after that book, the publisher sent her on fifteen-city tours.

If your publisher doesn't spring for book tours, don't be afraid to plan your own. Some writers have combined book tours with family vacations, hauling the kids and sometimes even the dog along as they traverse the country.

Libraries and bookstores often welcome visiting authors who wish to

speak or give readings. To find those outside your telephone book's area, try these sources:

American Booksellers Association allows you to search for members by state and zip code at BookWeb.org (www.bookweb.org).

American Book Trade Directory (R.R. Bowker) lists contact information for more than thirty thousand booksellers in the United States and Canada, arranged geographically.

American Library Directory (R.R. Bowker) lists more than thirty-six thousand libraries throughout the United States and Canada, arranged geographically, with names of department heads.

Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers (Gale) includes more than twenty-two thousand places that house special collections.

Once you plan your tour, send a news release to media outlets in every city you'll visit, then follow up with a phone call before you arrive. This will help ensure that you get some media coverage and publicity.

Use the Media

If your publisher doesn't do it for you, you should also write a news release and send it to your media and to any other publication or electronic news organization you want to visit. If you've written a speech, it should be easy to adapt into a news release, focusing on whatever major aspect of your work is most useful to a general audience.

You should send your release to the editor of the appropriate department at a newspaper, and also to the book editor if the newspaper employs one. For example, releases about books on management should go to the business editor; those on relationships go to the features editor. Send your release to the producer of television shows.

A radio "tour" allows you to promote your book without leaving your kitchen. But you may be doing interviews in early morning hours as local news broadcasts are starting earlier and late at night to meet deadline cycles of stations in a different time zone.

To let radio and television shows know you're available, you can take

out an ad in *Radio-TV Interview Report* (www.rtir.com), a publication made up completely of ads. It is published three times a month and circulates to more than four thousand radio and television producers looking for people to interview. Contact Bradley Communications Corp. at 135 E. Plumstead Ave., P.O. Box 1206, Lansdowne, PA 19050-8206, by calling (610) 259-0707, or by sending an e-mail to Circ@rtir.com.

Directories such as *Bradley's Guide to the Top National TV Talk Shows, Talk Shows and Hosts on Radio*, or *Talk Show Selects* also are helpful in finding hosts on radio and television. Television demands different skills than radio or print interviews, because your appearance is critical. If you're going to be on a television show and can't afford a media coach, try role-playing an interview and then watching a tape of it. Are any of your mannerisms distracting? Are your answers clear? Can you speak in sound bites of thirty seconds or so? Is your voice expressive? Are you entertaining? And, despite all those questions, do you seem relaxed?

Television can be an intimidating medium, so it's best to start small, with your local cable station. Your chances of scheduling a television interview will be better with a local station, and it won't be as overwhelming. These stations aren't as hectic and will be able to make you feel more comfortable about your experience. They may be more encouraging because they know you are a beginner. Knowing that the audience for these stations is smaller should also help to calm some of your public speaking fears.

If you are still intimidated and can afford it, consider hiring a media coach. They can help you learn how to do and practice doing interviews. Don't feel like this is necessary though, because as long as you are passionate about your topic, even if you aren't perfect, you will still be successful.

Check out the resource section at the end of the chapter for a list of books in the library that contain contact information for the media. And don't forget to send a release to wire services, such as the *Associated Press*, which transmit copy to newspapers and broadcast stations around the globe.

At the end of the chapter there is a list of some of the major publica-

tions that review books. But don't neglect your local print publications; a book sold in Dayton, Ohio, earns as much profit as a book sold in New York City. Call each publication for the name of the appropriate editor to review your genre or your topic, and send either galley copies (photocopies of the book's pages before it's published) or the books as early as you can—as soon as four months prior to publication.

Utilizing News Releases

A news release should be a page or two at most, double-spaced. At the top of the release, include a phone number where you can be reached, days and evenings.

The release's goal is to tell people not only what your work is about, but more importantly, why they should care. What's in it for them? It should lead with the most intriguing point of your book or the most useful aspect of your findings. Write it in third person, and include a few strong quotes from yourself.

Make it read like a news story you'd see in your paper, complete with a headline—smaller, overworked news staffs sometimes simply reprint releases. Larger news organizations may call you for an interview, using your release as a starting point for their own reporting. Either way, you win. But the better your presentation and writing are, the better chance you have of getting your release printed.

It's a good idea to prepare a list of talking points, questions that a reporter can ask that will highlight important parts of your book, because many reporters must fit author interviews between covering fires, reporting on car wrecks, and sitting through school board meetings. Assume they don't have time to read your book. If you go in person for an interview, bring a copy of your talking points, just in case they've misplaced the one you sent. You have to take on the responsibility of preparing not only for yourself but also for them.

Before you mail your releases, verify the names and addresses of editors and producers by phone. This will ensure that your release will reach the correct person and won't have to be rerouted, saving precious time. If you don't want to mail your own release, you can pay the PR Newswire to distribute releases electronically to print and broadcast news organizations across the country. Contact PR Newswire at: 810 Seventh Ave., 35th Floor, New York, NY 10019. Tel: (212) 596-1500 or (800) 832-5522 (toll free). E-mail: public_relations@prnewswire.com. Web site: www.prnewswire.com.

Write

Another way to promote your work involves writing. You are already a writer, so this avenue should appeal to you. One way to drum up interest in your work is to start a newsletter. You could do your own, or team up with other writers you know who are looking to promote their work as well.

Jeanne Dams and three other mystery writers, Barbara D'Amato, Hugh Holton, and Mark Zubro, started a newsletter to promote their books. They started their mailing list by asking their publishers to slip a postcard for a subscription into their books. They mail their newsletter to anyone who responds to the post card and also to anyone else they think might be interested. Into it goes an article by each author, mystery quizzes, even recipes for foods mentioned in their books. Most importantly, the newsletter always includes a list of the authors' appearances and their books in print. It can be a time-consuming and expensive promotional tool, but if you team up with other authors, you can split the costs and still reap the rewards.

In addition to mailing print newsletters, consider doing an e-mail newsletter. The cost for this could be significantly less. If you have a Web site (which you should), you can add a link asking people to subscribe to your free e-mail newsletter. Include information about your work, appearances, and anything else that might interest people who enjoy your work or the topics you write about.

Network

Everyone was a beginner once, and many successful authors remember how difficult it was to become established. These authors are often a tremendous resource to beginners. The book you're reading now wouldn't exist without the generosity of writers, agents, and editors who took time to share their expertise.

Joining a writers association and attending writers conferences can help you learn how to write and sell your work, but more importantly, these networks help you meet people who may be able to help you.

And whom you also may be able to help. You must be sincerely willing to help others and unafraid to ask for help yourself. You never know what someone else is willing to do for you until you ask. (See chapter fifteen for help in finding a community of writers.)

Writers groups also can help their members promote their work. C.J. Songer, author of the Meg Gillis crime novel series, used a list published by Sisters In Crime, a group for mystery writers, to reach independent bookstores. Through the group, she also bought a discounted ad in *Publishers Weekly*. “Although it was a fair amount of money, *Bait* was my first-ever book and it was a treat to myself,” Songer said. Because she had taken that ad, she also earned a discount on a promotional page for her book on the *Publishers Weekly* Web site at BookWire.com. “It was very gratifying to be able to go online and see my own book, plus it was accessible then for family and friends (and acquaintances) all across the country,” she said.

Get Linked

The Internet is a vast shopping mall, virtually as interactive as a real mall. Authors can capitalize on that fact. Create a Web site that offers brief reviews of your books, copies of the books for sale at discounts, and your e-mail address for readers. Add links to other Web sites that will be of interest to anyone interested in your work. If you write about science, for example, include links to scientific Web sites.

John Kremer, author of *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*, offers an electronic and paper newsletter with promotional tips for authors (to subscribe, visit www.bookmarket.com/newsletters.html). In one of those newsletters, Kremer mentioned that he noticed a listing for his book had no reviews at Amazon.com other than the one he provided. So, he offered a free copy of a book to anyone who wrote the best review. And he suggested that other authors do the same for their books.

Think of your Web site as a storefront. Once it's built, you'll need to invite people to come in and browse. But first, you need to let readers know it's open for business. You can submit your site's URL directly to major search engines and directories by following onscreen directions.

The online sites for Amazon and Barnes & Noble allow authors to submit information about their books, and, important for small presses, provide a distribution network for those books. Writers Write (www.writerswrite.com) includes information on promotions and markets. Writer's Write also offers book promotion services for a fee. Author L.L. Thrasher shares some useful tips at her "Practical Book Promotion for Writers" page (www.teleport.com/~baty/promo.html). Para Publishing (www.parapublishing.com) is full of promotional tips, particularly aimed at self-publishers, and it also sells mailing lists. The Gebbie Press also has some solid advice on promotional strategies (www.gebbieinc.com/article.htm).

Hundreds of other promotional tactics, ranging from buying mailing lists of potential customers to creating refrigerator magnets, can help you sell your work. While many beginning writers simply want to write, many successful writers know that if you want readers, you'll have to promote yourself. You may even end up enjoying it. Contact with other people who are interested in you and promoting your work can be very exciting and encouraging.

Promotional costs for early books may not pay off in increased book sales. But you must take the long-term view, and consider how promotion now will benefit you down the road. You may have to make some initial sacrifices to be successful in the end.

Resources for Promoting Your Work

The directories, magazines, and books listed below can provide you with the information you need to successfully promote yourself.

Directories

Some of the directories listed below may be difficult to find, so be sure to check your local library:

The Adweek Directory (Adweek Directories). Lists about 9,000 contacts in top markets in radio, broadcast and cable television, daily newspapers, and magazines.

Bacon's Newspaper/Magazine Directory (Bacon's Publishing).

The multiple volumes list nearly 15,000 trade and consumer magazines, and daily and weekly publications.

Bacon's Radio/TV/Cable Directory (Bacon's Publishing). The multiple volumes include more than 10,000 radio and television stations, including college, public television, and cable stations.

Broadcasting & Cable Yearbook (R.R. Bowker). Lists all television and radio stations in the United States, its territories, and Canada, with names of contact people.

Burrelles Media Directory (Burrelles). Lists 60,000 print and electronic media outlets in North America, with names of key contacts.

Editor & Publisher International Yearbook (Editor & Publisher). Lists newspapers in the United States and Canada, with names of department chiefs.

Gale Directory of Publications & Broadcast Media (Gale). Contains more than 50,000 entries, including listings for radio stations, television stations, and cable companies. Each entry provides addresses and phone numbers.

Literary Marketplace (R.R. Bowker) Includes lists of contacts and addresses for book reviews, direct mail specialists, lecture agents, and public relations services. It is well worth the trip to the library.

Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory (R.R. Bowker). A huge listing of more than 240,000 periodicals and newspapers worldwide.

Magazines

Below, are major publications that review books. See their Web sites for specific submission guidelines:

The Booklist, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Tel: (800) 545-2433. E-mail: library@ala.org. Web site: www.ala.org. Reviews books in all categories; galley proofs must be submitted fifteen weeks prior to publication.

Chicago Tribune Books, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Room 400, Chicago, IL 60611-4022. Tel: (312) 222-3232. E-mail: pub-

liceditor@tribune.com. Web site: www.tribune.com. Contact the publication or check the Web site for more information on the reviewing process.

Kirkus Reviews, 770 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. Tel: (866) 890-8541. E-mail: Kirkusrev@Kirkusreviews.com. Web site: <http://Kirkusreviews.com>. Reviews books in their publication that comes out twenty-four times annually; submit galleys two to three months prior to publication.

Library Journal, 360 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10010. Tel: (646) 746-6819. E-mail: ljquery@reedbusiness.com. Web site: www.libraryjournal.com. Reviews all books except textbooks, children's books, technical books or books in a foreign language (unless it is a bilingual book). Submit galleys three to four months prior to publication.

Los Angeles Times Book Review, 202 W. 1st St., Los Angeles, CA 90012. Tel: (213) 237-5000. E-mail: bookreview@latimes.com. Web site: www.latimes.com. Reviews books in a separate Sunday section; submit galleys three months prior to publication.

Midwest Book Review, 278 Orchard Dr., Oregon, WI 53575. Tel: (608) 835-7937. E-mail: mwbookrevw@aol.com. Web site: www.midwestbookreview.com. Reviews books in several monthly publications for library systems in California, Wisconsin, and the Upper Midwest.

New York Review of Books, 1755 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10019. Tel: (212) 757-8070. Web site: www.nybooks.com. Accepts books for reviews in all categories and will contact you if your book is chosen for review.

New York Times Book Review, 229 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10036. Tel: (212) 556-1234. E-mail: the-arts@nytimes.com. Web site: www.nytimes.com. Accepts books for review in all categories; children's books are submitted to a different editor.

Publishers Weekly, 360 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10010. Tel: (646) 746-6758. E-mail: pwreviewstatus@reedbusiness.com. Web site: www.publishersweekly.com. Reviews adult and children's books in every issue; submit galleys three months prior to publication.

USA Today, 7950 Jones Branch Dr., McLean, VA 22108. Web site: www.usatoday.com. Contact the publication or check the Web site for more information on the reviewing process.

Wall Street Journal, 200 Liberty St., New York, NY 10281. Tel: (212) 416-2500. Web site: www.wsj.com. Contact the publication or check the Web site for more information on the reviewing process.

Washington Post Book World, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20071. Tel: (202) 334-6000. Web site: www.washingtonpost.com. Contact the publication or check the Web site for more information on the reviewing process.

Books

Check your local library for the following books that can help you reach more people with your work:

1001 Ways to Market Your Books, for Authors and Publishers (Open Horizons), by John Kremer. Offers practical tips and ideas for promoting books and cites real examples that have worked for other writers.

An Author's Guide to Children's Book Promotion (Two Lives Publishing), by Susan Salzman Raab. Shows authors and illustrators how to get their books looked at by teachers, librarians, booksellers, and reviewers. Includes a resource directory with children's book sources and trade and educational publications.

Book Promotion for the Shameless: 101 Marketing Tips That Really Work (Spilled Candy Publications), by Lorna Tedder. Gives book promotion and marketing techniques for penny-pinching authors and includes a section specifically on Internet marketing.

Guerrilla Marketing for Authors: 100 Weapons to Help You Sell Your Work (Writer's Digest Books), by Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman, and Michael Larsen. Shows writers hundreds of low-cost ways to market their books, before and after they are published.

Jump Start Your Book Sales: A Money-Making Guide for Authors, Independent Publishers and Small Presses (Communication Creativity), by Marilyn and Tom Ross. Teaches you how to get free publicity and capitalize on it. Contains resource lists, forms, checklists, and samples to help you get started.

The Publicity Handbook, New Edition: The Inside Scoop from More than 100 Journalists and PR Pros on How to Get Great Publicity Coverage (McGraw-Hill), by David R. Yale. Offers guidelines for working with journalists to create valuable publicity and includes a step-by-step publicity plan.

Publish to Win: Smart Strategies to Sell More Books (Rhodes & Easton), by Jerrold R. Jenkins and Anne M. Stanton. Helps you evaluate the marketability of your book before you write it. Gives advice for the market, and has thorough information on nontraditional markets.