

The Do's and Don'ts of Marketing Your Book: Part 1



by Penny C. Sansevieri

As an indie author, the process of marketing your book can seem overwhelming. There are so many marketing tools and resources at your fingertips that it can be difficult to figure out where to start! To guide you on your marketing path, I've created a series of Marketing Do's and Don'ts. In Part 1, we'll talk about Do's and Don'ts to help you create a marketing plan for success!

Do: Understand Your Industry

Knowledge is power, so as you compile this marketing plan, get to know your market. Research and prepare a list of bloggers who you should pitch for advanced reviews. While you're compiling this list, keep track of who to contact, and when you need to pitch them. You can also research the top authors in your industry to investigate what types of marketing efforts they are implementing. Success leaves clues, so you can learn from these top authors what marketing efforts work best in your industry.

Don't: Rely on opinions

It's natural to want to ask for advice as you begin to market your book. However, you should make sure that the person you're consulting has something helpful and relevant to say. While your friends and family may be willing to help you, they may not be in the best position to provide relevant insight. When you ask someone's opinion about your book, topic or marketing, make sure they are either working in your industry, or know your consumer. Try to align yourself with experts in your market.

Do: Think Long Term

When creating your marketing plan, think long term. In order to give your book the best launch possible, you'll want to have a marketing plan in place months before your book is out. Don't spend all your marketing dollars in the first few months of a campaign, but, rather, make sure you have enough money or personal momentum for the long haul. Publishing is a business. You'd never open up a store and then just sit around hoping people show up to buy your stuff. You advertise, you run specials, you pitch yourself to local media. You work it. But what does "working it" mean? Well, it means that if you have a full-time job, you find time each week to push the book in some form or fashion. You find time. You make time. You cannot just sit by and hope people buy your book, but, rather, you should be engaged in your own success. Even if you hire someone to do this for you, you should still be involved. Sometimes it doesn't take much, but it does take a consistent effort.

Don't: Rely on Metrics

Planning your marketing plan on metrics alone is not realistic and, at times, can deter you from pursuing marketing efforts that will contribute to your success in the long haul. What do I mean? Sometimes, authors forgo getting reader reviews, thinking: What's the metric in that? Well there isn't one, technically, but you never know if a new buyer will see that particular review and be prompted to buy your book. Yes, you could pitch 100 bloggers and get only one response and you think: the metrics of pitching bloggers is terrible, I won't do that again. In reality, maybe it was your pitch that was weak, or your email subject line, or maybe the book wasn't right for them. I know that sometimes it's easier to blame metrics, but in most cases, metrics aren't the issue.

Now that you understand how to create a marketing plan for success, stay tuned! In Part 2 of this series, we'll talk finances, and how you can best allocate your marketing budget.

The Do's and Don'ts of Marketing Your Book: Part 2

As an author, I know how much time and effort authors put into crafting the perfect book. In order to give your book the best chance at success, you must put the same amount of effort into crafting your marketing plan.

In part one of this series, we talked about how to create a successful marketing plan. Next, we'll talk about how to best allocate your marketing budget to support this plan.

Do: Invest Your Money

First and foremost, it's crucial to understand where you should spend money. My advice is to trust the experts when it comes to designing your book cover and website. Why?

Consider these facts for a minute: shoppers in a bookstore spend an average of 3 seconds looking at the front cover of a book and 7 seconds looking at the back before deciding whether to buy it. Further, a survey of booksellers showed that 75% of them found the book cover to be the most important element of the book. Also, sales teams for publishers or book distributors often only take the book cover with them when they shop titles into stores.

Your website is similar. It's like your business card, and is a reflection of who you are as an author, and your book. Let's say you designed your own site, which saved you a few thousand dollars paying a web designer. Now you're off promoting your book and suddenly you're getting a gazillion hits to your site. Like your book cover, if your website is not appealing, it will not convert visitors to your site into a sale.

While you are the expert on your book, most authors have little expertise in book design, or website design. Unfortunately, I see a lot of authors who try to either design their book cover themselves, or leave the design to someone who is not an expert. Even though you may save money upfront, if your book cover does not attract readers, and your website does not retain visitors, how much money did you lose by foregoing the designer and doing it yourself?

Don't: Fall for "Deals"

Like I said in part one of this series, when creating your marketing plan, it's important that you have enough money or personal momentum for the long haul. In order to make the most of your marketing funds, it's tempting to take advantage of any marketing deals that you may encounter. But sometimes you have to be critical when evaluating marketing deals. I would also urge you to be skeptical if someone offers you a deal that seems too good to be true.

Say someone offered to market your book for \$300. Ask questions about exactly what you get for your money, because while \$300 dollars isn't much, you may find yourself needing to supply an extra \$100 here and \$99 there. Eventually, it all adds up. When spending money on your promotions, I suggest that you get a detailed list of deliverables so that you know what you are getting for the money you are spending. While finding a deal isn't a bad thing, it can sometimes lead to a waste of money, or simply turn out to be a false promise.

With parts one and two of this series, you now know how to create a marketing plan and allocate your marketing budget to support this plan. But a successful marketing plan is not just about logistics. Remember what I said about ensuring that you have enough money or personal momentum for the long haul? In the third and final part of this series, we're going to talk about the best attitude and habits to support your success!

The Do's and Don'ts of Marketing Your Book: Part 3

In this series, we've talked a lot about the logistics of a good marketing plan (research, timing, and budgeting) to ensure that you have a successful long-term plan. For the final installment of this series, I want to talk about the best attitude to cultivate relationships and support your success. When you're marketing, the right attitude can open a lot of doors and keep you motivated!

Attitude is Everything!

Do: Be Grateful

At any phase in your career, it's likely that you need the media more than they need you. So what does that mean for your marketing efforts? If you book an interview, keep in mind that most media people don't have the time to read your book. So, make it easy for them to promote you. I've found it's useful to carry an index card with book highlights on it and hand it to them prior to the interview. After the interview is over, thank them, and send a follow up thank-you note after the interview.

Also, never ask for an interview to be redone. I mention this, because it actually happened to a producer friend of mine who did an interview with a guy, and he decided he didn't like it and wanted a second shot. As I said before, members of the media are busy – they do not have time to redo an interview. When interacting with the media, the best thing you can do is create relationships. Put your best foot forward: show up on time, prepared, and always, always, always be grateful.

Don't: Be Negative

There's a lot of negativity out there. However, I'm going to ask that you ignore that negativity. Your mental attitude has a lot to do with your success and your personal stamina to keep going and keep marketing. Yes, there are a lot of books out there, and a lot of other authors competing for the same virtual shelf space you are. The more you can stay positive, the more wind you will have in your sails. Believe me, this is true. I don't mean to ignore the realities of being in publishing, but I would advise you to just stay above it all.

I once worked with an author who was one of the most amazing writers I've ever seen. Honestly. Every book this author wrote had mega-bestseller written all over it. But he was always, always negative – about everything. He was eventually dropped from his publishing house, because he was so hard to please and so hard to work with that no one could stand him. Don't waste your time and energy on negativity, but focus it on your long-term goals.

For many authors, marketing can seem like an impossible task. But, that's why I created this series of marketing do's and don'ts. In Part 1, we talked what you should research, and which "experts" you should consult to create a long-term plan. In Part 2, we talked about where you should and shouldn't invest your marketing budget. Finally, in Part 3, we talked about the best mindset to cultivate relationships and support your success!

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