

Self Publishing Success Starts With Marketing

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For an author to become a successful self-publisher, he or she must make a paradigm shift in consciousness from author to entrepreneur, and view their book in the same way that Madison Avenue gurus view the newest shampoo. An author has to be able to do a dispassionate analysis of the market the book was meant to reach. Is its greatest appeal to young people? Senior citizens? Men? Women? Members of a minority group? The definition of a market - or markets - will help to determine and focus the ensuing marketing campaign.

Next, the author must develop a marketing plan. How can I reach my market most effectively? Freelance authors are already aware of the plethora of niche publications on the market. Now, instead of contacting these publications for submission guidelines, the self-publisher needs to contact the advertising department for rate and data information. Information such as 1) per-issue circulation, 2) average response rates for classified and / or display advertisements, 3) advertising rates and specs for display advertising will allow a self-publisher to determine the cost per contact. If a book involves specialized information, the self-publisher can afford to advertise in low-circulation, niche periodicals, as the audience of those periodicals may well be the exact type of individual most likely to benefit from the book.

Books which were written to appeal to a wide, general audience will have to be marketed with a larger media blanket. Diet, self-help and money management books do better with radio or television publicity. These media have higher costs, but over the long run, the per-contact cost is smaller, due to the greater number of people reached.

The question of cost brings us to the next challenge: a marketing and advertising budget. How much are you willing to spend, and for how many years? Launching any new business venture generally requires five years to begin turning a profit, and the first two years concentrate on developing an identity and "brand awareness." In other words, it may take an author two years for anyone to become aware of his / her existence, let alone want to purchase their book! Too many self-publishers give up on marketing after the first year, and wind up selling their book at garage sales.

Finally, marketing efforts need to begin before the book is published. If an author builds interest and excitement while their book is still in the "proofing" stage, the outcome could easily be immediate demand upon release of the book. One of my clients did this, and sold 100 copies of his book before he received his first shipment.

Along with publications written to help authors improve their writing skills, the self-publisher should reference books or audiotapes relevant to promoting and marketing small or home-based businesses, such as Jay Conrad Levinson's *Guerilla Marketing*. Promoting your work doesn't have to be torture or outrageously expensive. Well-planned, consistently executed promotion will get your book on bookshelves, as long as you are willing to invest patience and persistence in your marketing efforts.

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