

BUILD BOOK BUZZ



6 surefire ways to promote your novel

By Sandra Beckwith

The biggest mistake most novelists make when promoting their books is believing that it's all about book reviews. Wrong. Book reviews are valuable and securing them should be on any author or publisher's book promotion to-do list, but your novel deserves more widespread, long-term, and ongoing exposure than it can get through reviews alone. It deserves to be talked about month after month - as long as the book is available for purchase.

Here are six tips for helping you see the publicity and promotion value in your fiction so that you generate the ongoing buzz your book deserves:

1. Find the nonfiction nuggets in your manuscript and use them to create newsworthy material for relevant media outlets. Is your heroine a jilted wife starting over in the workforce as - let's say - an account executive at a high-flying packaging design firm who finds love with her client at a consumer products company? You've got publicity opportunities with the packaging and marketing trade magazines. Is she a radio jock? The female morning drive time personalities would love to interview you by phone.

What about locations, products, or services in your novel? A story set in a national park or a convenience store gives you news pegs for exposure in the relevant trade magazines. A character's obsession with a little known beverage brand could get your book into that company's employee newsletter. If you're writing your novel now, work in some nonfiction nuggets you can capitalize on later.

2. Use your content to identify promotion allies. Is your protagonist an athlete in a wheelchair? Connect with groups such as the National Wheelchair Basketball Association or the National Wheelchair Softball Association. What about the professions of the people in your book? Does it feature a secretary? Contact the Association of Executive and Administrative Professionals. There's an association for just about every profession.

But don't just send them a note that says, "I've written a book your members will love." Send a copy of the book with a letter outlining promotional possibilities and what's in it for them. You might offer to speak at their national meeting, do a Q&A for their member publication, or offer a discount to members.

3. Leverage what you uncovered while writing your book. Did you learn about a period in history or a specific region? Use this knowledge as a springboard for publicity. The author of a historical romance novel set in New York's Hudson River Valley, for example, can write and

distribute a news release announcing the top romantic and historical attractions in that region or pitch a local newspaper or regional magazine on an article about the area's most romantic date destinations. Your goal is to be quoted as an expert source because this would require using your book title as one of your credentials.

4. Support your book with a good Web site designed by a professional. Your Web site has to be as good as your writing. It also has to contain information that convinces us that your books are worth buying and reading. It doesn't have to be slick, but it does need to be very well-written, attractive, useful, and enticing. We will assess your ability to tell a good story by your ability to communicate on your Web site, so the writing is crucial.

5. Get social. Focus on one or two social networking sites - Facebook now has more users than MySpace - and master the most effective and appropriate ways to use them to promote your book before spreading yourself too thin on several sites. Once you understand how the process works, expand to others and use new technology tools and resources such as those at TweetDeck and Ping.fm to streamline your information sharing across your networks.

6. Share the love. Help us connect with you by blogging about your writing process and experiences. Get excerpts up on your Web site and read portions to us via podcasts so we can get a feel for your writing and decide if the story is appealing. Give us enough online - on your Web site, blog, and through podcast download sites such as iTunes - to convince us we'd like your book.

There's no question that promoting fiction is harder than promoting nonfiction - but because of that, it's also more rewarding.

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