



MARKETING 101

Your AUTHOR PLATFORM is everywhere you ARE and where you communicate with your readers – e.g. social media, website, live events

Your AUTHOR BRAND is how you are perceived by others – your personality, your writing, your colours / images, how you make people feel when they view your website, when they read your books. Ideally, it's a natural, organic extension of who you are (authentic).

Your brand will develop over time, as will your platform. Consistency is key!

Starting out, a tagline can be helpful – e.g. “sensual romance with a wicked twist”.

Authors today need to embrace marketing, no matter whether they're traditionally published, hybrid published or exclusively self-published.

Be Patient, Experiment, Track

What works for others might not work for you
Put your basic marketing structure in place (cover, description, mailing list, website, social media, advertising) but focus on production (ideally writing series well).

“Marketing is sharing
what you **love**
with
people who want to
hear about it.”

~ *Shar Barratt*



Things are changing constantly and what worked six months ago, won't necessarily work now. But it's important to keep track of what you do, how long it takes you, what it costs and the impact on your sales. An excel spreadsheet works fine. For my author clients, I keep track each month of their facebook, twitter etc followers, mailing list sign ups, ARC team signups and note what promotions happened at that time so you can see where the growth comes from and where your time is best spent. Sign up for Amazon affiliates and use tracking IDs as a great way to track performance of your facebook and twitter posts, and your website pages.

Study the market

Know what your ideal reader wants, what tropes, what covers, what book descriptions they like. *And how? By taking notice online.* If you don't have your own fans, follow authors to whom you'd align yourself and watch how they interact with their fans and how the fans respond. Keep an eye on your sub genre, what trends are surfacing? Subscribe to Bookbub newsletters to get a feel for what's selling – study their blurbs because it's a PhD in writing compelling copy.

Also sign up to their bookbub partners author newsletter—it's full of great advice.

www.Bookbub.com <https://partners.bookbub.com/>



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Remember! Marketing is BAKED IN to your (book)cake ... and you need to get the foundation three layers RIGHT before the other layers can work properly.

People say put your business hat on when you're marketing and your creative hat on when you're writing. Personally I think it's the same hat. Marketing IS fundamentally about being creative and connecting with your audience. It's not writing your book in a bubble and then going around to everyone you can find and hit them over the head with "buy my book" social media posts and ads!

Marketing is baked in

As you write your book, you're already doing marketing tasks – you're (hopefully) understanding your target audience and what they like to read, the language you use, the heat level, the pace, the tropes you use – all these things are marketing. The Holy Trinity of Book Marketing is to get these three elements right – pretty much all the authors I see wondering why they're not selling, are falling in down in one of these three areas:

Content – We are in the entertainment business and we're delivering a product that entertains (if a fiction writer) it's too cross genre, it's boring, writing craft issues, not meeting sub genre expectations, telling a story that no body actually wants to read.

Cover – same as content – it doesn't match reader expectations, genre conventions, it's too abstract, doesn't **fit in a genre, visual shorthand is unreadable.**

Blurb or Book Description – boring! Too long, too short, too much of a plot synopsis. You sell the sizzle, not the steak. Entire goal of your blurb is to get the reader to down the sample or press buy. That's it.

Shar's 1-2-3 Marketing Waltz:

Your COVER gets their attention

Your BLURB seals the deal

Your CONTENT creates a fan & sells the next book

Pricing & Launch How you price and launch goes back to your individual goals as a self-publisher, your publishing speed, your genre and your available time, investment, and energy!

If launching, give a series at least 3 books before you pull the plug. Be flexible. Experiment.



So where can you advertise your book?

Facebook Ads

Bookbub CPC Ads

Amazon Ads



“...remember, **you** are responsible for your author career. No one else cares as much about your book as you do.

If you **empower** yourself with knowledge around marketing and put it into action, you will always be able to sell your own books and make an income from writing.”

~ Joanna Penn

Paid Newsletter Advertising Lists:

BOOKBUB – you should be signed up as a reader – is the Holy Grail with FEATURED DEALS and is a career changer. They are the biggest by a magnitude but very picky when it comes to selecting books (*another reason you need great cover) Next comes: ENT (\$35), RobinReads (\$30 – \$80): becoming more difficult to book, FreeBooksy (\$50 – \$100): the best site for free books outside of BookBub

Lots of second tier advertising lists with varying levels of success depending on genre. (great list here: <http://nicholaserik.com/promo-sites/>)

Spend your time and money getting the first layers of the cake right: content, cover, blurb. Advertising money, time and energy is wasted if your cover and/or blurb aren't on point.

When starting your focus should be on VISIBILITY which then:

- Builds your newsletter (email) list
- Gets reviews (handout includes reviews detail)
- Getting your book in competitors' also-boughts
- Consider free or 99c for first in series to build visibility
- Sacrifice income today for visibility

Write a series! Readers love connected books

Once you've got some books out, cycle through discounting/advertising while you keep a close eye on whether people are reading the rest in the series.

Your advertising dollars are better spent when you've got more than one book out. Focus on production!

KEY MARKETING TOOLS: If you do nothing else, have a website and your own reader mailing list set up. You can work on the rest of your platform later!



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SPA GIRLS BLURB WRITING RECIPE

Step 1

Roll up your sleeves and go look at other blurbs of top selling books in your genre. Which ones make YOU want to read the book? Why? What words, tone, emotions, character descriptions are they using?

Step 2

Practice your scales ... er blurb writing

The good news is it's the shortest piece of writing you'll do for this book. The bad news is it'll be probably the hardest piece of writing you do for this book. And you won't get it right on the first, third or tenth time you try. Yes, you're exhausted and OVER IT, but writing a compelling blurb is 110% necessary to get your book read. So practice. Every word has to count. And when you're sick to the back teeth of it, get writer friends' input, advice, shoulder-to-cry-on.

Step 3

Have a map—here's a general romance formula :

Compelling tagline (I like this in bold—yes, you can use html on Amazon descriptions. See our Resources page and there's a link to cool site there that helps you format in html then you copy and paste into KDP.

First para (2—3 sentences) Hero or heroine's situation—depending on the subgenre trend

Second para (2—3 sentences) Other main character's situation (hero / heroine)

Story question / threat / mystery

LOTS OF WHITE SPACE. Make it easy to read on mobile devices.

You sell the sizzle, not the steak. Entire goal of your blurb is to get the reader to down the sample or press buy. That's it.

Step 4

Celebrate. Or if it's all too hard, consider getting professional help—at least to start you on the right track for the future. Bryan Cohen's Best Page Forward is a widely recommended service. I also recommend two books: Libbie Hawker's *Gotta Read It!: Five Simple Steps to a Fiction Pitch that Sells*; Bryan Cohen's *How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis: A Step-by-Step System for Enticing New Readers, Selling More Fiction, and Making Your Books Sound Good*



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SOCIAL MEDIA

So what is Social Media? It's simply connecting one-to-one with people. It's developing an authentic, emotional connection with a person who is going to like you, buy from you, and share your stuff with their friends. That's it. It builds your personal brand and connects you with readers. This will eventually lead to sales.

As your popularity and fame grows, so will your social media following grow organically. But QUALITY always trumps quantity. Those genuine connections, the 50 facebook likes that you've gradually built up over time are FAR more valuable than the 1,000 you paid some dude 5 bucks for on Fiverr. Don't get sucked into vanity metrics.

Genuine, authentic social media and your personal brand building is a LONG GAME, not a quick fix. All the search engines and platforms reward authenticity and punish gaming the system. Save your money – there are no shortcuts.

Feeling overwhelmed?

Pick one platform (or maybe two) and focus on there. For most adult fiction writers, this will usually be facebook as that's where the readers are.

Follow one or two example authors and see what they're doing.

Become comfortable (and happy) with your first platform before you add in others. In the meantime, register your penname on the other sites but you don't need to be active.

Consider using automation apps such as Hootsuite to help, but remember it's SOCIAL media not sales media!

Do it in set blocks of time—e.g. Sunday arvo "social" time for prescheduling next weeks' posts.

Know what you're trying to achieve and make a plan (eg editorial calendar, prescheduling posts, quarterly giveaways etc.)



Marketing is an **investment**, both in time and in money

When starting out, your **focus** should be on getting a great quality entertainment product produced and packaged *right*

The more books you have, the better the return you get from advertising and promotion



GETTING REVIEWS

Ways to get reviews

- Ask for them at the end of your book (politely)
- Remind your mailing list subscribers, ask on social media, other authors may help via their arc team
- Sell a lot of books – reviews are a result of sales, not a cause of sales
- Join Booksprout – an online paid site that matches your free book to readers who review
- Sign up to a legitimate review service – one that you pay to offer your book to reviewers such as Hidden Gems, ReadingDeals.com
- Set up your own review/arc team (ARC = advanced reader copy) from your fans subscribers.

10 vitally important things to remember!

- 1) Reviews are by readers for other readers NOT for the author – do not take them personally and if you find them affecting your productivity or mood, don't read them – or get a friend to read them for you and only give you the good one
- 2) Goodreads is owned by Amazon and is FOR READERS not for authors to promote; tread carefully and follow the goodreads etiquette
- 3) There is a difference between BUYING reviews and utilising a legitimate review service. Don't go to fiverr and buy reviews. In fact I'd extend that further and say don't go to fiverr and buy anything.
- 4) Amazon has "review bot" that occasionally will mean legitimate non-connected reviews get deleted. Expect your review numbers to change and try not to obsess or panic
- 5) No friends or family. People connected with the author (especially using same IP addy) will have their reviews deleted and likely the ability to leave reviews on anything blocked
- 6) Amazon rule: authors in same genre should not be leaving reviews on "competitors" regardless if positive or negative. I don't leave reviews on any books, any more.
- 7) Absolutely do not join in any "author review circles" or groups that swap reviews on each others books. No surer way than to have your reviews stripped and possibly your amazon account too
- 8) Aim to get 5 – 10 reviews then relax; after 50 don't worry – they're minor part of the marketing puzzle, not the whole part.
- 9) Do not incentivise reviews – ie offer gift to readers who review you. Amazon allows for book to be offered to reviewers without any obligation to post review – that's IT.
- 10) Reviews don't cause success, they are a symptom of it. Whilst they can sway an on-the-fence buyer, they don't automatically lead to sales. No matter how many hundreds of great reviews the latest Stephen King book has, I won't read it – horror's not my thing.