

Marketing & PR basics

Discoverability.

Even the most successful traditionally published writers obsess about it. You've written the best book you can, one you are hugely proud of. But how does anyone know it exists? Whether you're going DIY or are planning on engaging with specialist freelancers and agencies, the earlier you start the planning process, the better.

Initially, it could just be thinking about your existing network and who would be likely to review and endorse your publication. Who will help you promote and spread the word to others when the book is ready to buy? A successful marketing campaign will almost certainly involve setting up the right social media platforms for you in the run up to publication. You'll want to create as many assets for these as you can, whether they are blogs or quotes or video content. You may want to create a website or think how people will most easily find you and your book once they start searching. Picture it as a process of creating a toolbox to support the amplification of your book pre and post publication. You never know when the accumulative affect will start translating into a visible spike in sales.

If you are going to be handling your own PR, your timeline should mirror a professional's although you'll have more flexibility after the book has released. If you are going to to engage with a dedicated PR specialist, they would ideally come on board 6 months prior to your publication date. They will begin working with you by honing the pitch, formulating a PR plan pre and post publication, and agreeing on suitable targets in the media and for future events. After publication, your PR team will typically stay working with you on the book for two weeks proactively, and one month reactively.

The key to both marketing and PR is to wholeheartedly embrace it. It is highly unlikely that there will be one silver bullet that propels your book towards the bestseller lists. Much more likely is seeing the accumulative effect of increasing, ongoing awareness and endorsement. Don't forget about discoverability. And that can happen at any time.

Social Media

Social media is a great way to engage with your potential readership and gives you chance to provide creative content that will help market your book. There are several different social media platforms to choose from:

Twitter

Twitter is a platform which allows you to "tweet" 140 characters. This works well for snappy posts, posting links and pictures, and is a place where you can be reactionary to news and other tweets. General advice is to post 80% interesting and engaging tweets that will appeal to your target audience, maybe about topics covered in your book, and then 20% marketing. A feed full of "buy my book" tweets may be off-putting to your potential readers.

Facebook

You can now create a professional page (an author page) on Facebook, which you can keep separate to your personal account. Facebook is a great place to post longer content, not quite as long as a blog post, but more informative posts on your book and thoughts.

Instagram

Instagram is a visual social media platform - you can share images, which could be perfect if you are publishing a photography book or a book on a visual subject. It is also a great way to share pictures of your cover, the book and your book if you spot it on the shelf of a bookshop!

Pinterest

Pinterest is another visual image sharing platform, where you can upload images and also pin images. You can create boards, so can separate images by different topic or genre. Lots of people use Pinterest to create inspiration boards.

Youtube

Youtube is a site dedicated to videos, so if you have the skills to film and edit videos, this can be a great option. It is also a good place to post a book trailer if this is something you are looking to do.

Blogging

Blogging is a great way to create engaging content that will also lead readers to your book. There are several different sites on which you can create a blog, and you can post as regularly as you like. The great thing about blogging is that you can share audiences with other bloggers once you have become part of the wider blogging community, with collaborations working well. If you are unsure about having your own blog and are worried about posting regularly, then there are often opportunities to guest blog.

Author Website

An author website can be a great tool for showcasing your books and can be an easy way for your readers to find you. There are many different sites that will let you create a website using ready-made templates which are very useful. Unless the book is going to part of a series, or has a wider context (a book written for a particular cause or organisation) then it is best for the website to be author focused so that you can post information about all your books on one site. If you are publishing under an imprint, then it is best for the imprint to feature in the domain name.

Although there is often overlap, each platform will give you a different audience with which you need to engage differently with. Content that works well on Facebook might not translate so well on Twitter and vice versa. Although it is good to have a presence on multiple platforms, make sure you are not too stretched. It is better to have one or two that work really well, than ten that you don't have the time to build and grow.