

Using your book in your business

Book sales

Many books and websites out there will give you the technique to ‘sell a million copies of your book’; I’m sure you won’t be surprised to hear that such a technique doesn’t exist. Like anything in business, no sure-fire method will guarantee sales (and if such a method did exist, the people who came up with it sure wouldn’t be selling it!). These promises are designed to sell books and other products for the people promoting them.

Self-publishing a book to help promote you and your business is very different from most other areas of publishing because it doesn’t rely on book sales to be a success.

You must have realistic expectations about how many copies you might sell. People often have misconceptions because they only

hear about best-selling books selling many thousands of copies, but nobody ever hears about the author who sold 17. The best-selling book I've ever worked on sold over 180,000 copies, but unfortunately that's the exception. The minimum viable print run for a commercial publisher is usually between 1500 and 2500 copies, depending on the book, but for self-publishers even these quantities can be difficult.

I regularly work with authors who sell 100 or 200 copies of their books and consider this a great success, because some of those book sales turned into thousands of dollars worth of work for their business. Authors self-publishing in this area very rarely make a profit solely on sales, but that's fine. They know this at the start of the project. Your book is a marketing tool, a business card, a mark of your expertise, and it sets you apart from your competitors – that's how you make money with it.

Marketing and publicity

A book is a great way to get publicity for yourself and your business. Let's say you have a marketing and publicity budget of \$10,000. That could buy you a medium-sized ad in a magazine or newspaper. Or, you could use it to invest in the self-publishing of your book, and the book might get you and your business a full-page article in the same magazine, *plus* reviews and articles in ten other magazines, *and* give you all of the other benefits we're going to look at in this chapter. So, seen from a marketing and publicity perspective, a book can provide an extremely good return on investment (though you must also factor in the time invested to write the book and see it through editing and production).

Contacts

Having a book published is a great way to get in touch with people who you never really had a reason to connect with before. These can be potential or past clients, people in your industry who you'd like to get to know, people in other industries who you might like to partner with, or leaders in your field who you'd just like to let know you exist. Having a book published makes it very simple: you send them a copy! Send each copy out with a personalised cover letter, explaining you've just published this book and you thought they might be interested in it. I've regularly seen this simple approach lead to great opportunities for authors.

Lead generation

I recently spoke to an author who had carefully tracked the sales that had come to his business as a direct result of leads generated from his book. In less than six months his book had generated over \$50,000 in sales!

Your book is a great way to attract the right clients to your business. When people ring up your company and make enquiries, offer to send them a copy of your book (that's what I plan to do with this book!). Your book will contain all the information your potential clients need to find a service provider. No doubt you're excellent at what you do, and in your book you've told people what to look for. From your book people will gain an idea of what you do and how you do it, and they will also gain some insight into your personality and how you work. From this, they will decide whether you are the right person for them or not. The people who have read your book and then contacted you are much more likely to become

clients, and those who decide not to contact you were probably never right for you anyway.

Give your book away

You can use your book as a giveaway for potential clients. This is very powerful and something many authors do. You can do this in all sorts of ways:

- When somebody contacts your business with an enquiry, send them a copy of the book.
- Use it as an incentive for people to buy from you, or to purchase a larger amount.
- Send a copy to past clients you haven't spoken to in a while, just to remind them you are there.

Sample chapters

Many authors give away a free sample of their book on their website, which is a great use of the book. Not only will it attract people to your site, it will also generate book sales, as many people will want to buy the whole book after reading the sample.

Speaking engagements

I had an author recently who secured a speaking engagement at a major institute just days after sending them a copy of his book. Publishing a book will do this. Even in these days of the internet, blogs, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, being a published author still carries a great deal of cachet and credibility.

Stand Out

Another accountant I worked with a number of years ago said that after he published his first book he noticed that his appointments on average started getting a little shorter. It took him a while to figure out why. He'd written a book about taxation, and it was displayed in the foyer of his office so clients could see it when they came in. He realised that ever since the book had been displayed clients were accepting his advice just a little more quickly and as a result his appointments were getting just a bit shorter. The extra credibility the book had given him meant his clients held him in higher regard and accepted his advice more quickly and easily. He has since written four more books.

Articles and blogs

Having a book published gives you the authority to write about your industry, and this can lead to articles and blogs.

You can write a few articles based on the content of your book and send them around to relevant outlets for possible publication. Having had a book published increases your chances of being accepted. (Have a look at the bios of articles you read; you'll quite often see that the author of the article has also written a book on the same topic.)

The book itself can also be a source of articles. You can pull out, say, 1000 words, and then tweak this extract a little to turn it into a standalone article. This can usually be done simply by adding a new introduction and conclusion, and removing any material that would be out of context in an article. Or, you can simply offer extracts of the book for publication – this is quite common.

Keep in mind that media outlets are always hungry for content. Now that you have a book you will be of great interest to them, and you now also have the authority to comment on your industry.

Book reviews

One of the first things you should do when you receive stock of your book from the printer is send out review copies. You should be prepared for this a few weeks before the books arrive, so that you can get onto it as soon as they come in.

You can do a basic media mail-out yourself, or you can pay a publicist as part of a media campaign. Enlisting a publicist can cost anywhere from \$500 to \$5000, or even more. If you put in a bit of effort, you should be able to do a reasonable job of it yourself; however, if media exposure is an essential part of the plan for your book, paying a publicist will be money well spent.

If you're going the DIY approach, you need to prepare two key components:

- a media release
- a media list.

A media release is basically a one-page summary of your book, to be included with the book when you send it out. A lot of information is available about how to write a good media release so I won't go into too much detail, but here's a few tips:

- Make it only one page. Journos are very busy people and don't want to look through a 15-page media kit.
- Write your release like an article, so the journalist can just publish it as is.
- Make sure you include all the key info about your book, such as the price, where it can be purchased, when it was released and the ISBN. Also include your contact details, including phone numbers (mobile and landline) and your email address, and offer yourself for interview.

Stand Out

- Tailor your media release for each outlet. For example, if you've written a book about sharemarket investing, your media release for *Shares* magazine might focus on the technical aspects of what you do, while your media release for *The Age* might focus on how everyday investors can get the most out of the sharemarket. Make sure each release still accurately reflects the content of your book.
- Try to make it topical. So, with a sharemarket book, study how the market has performed recently and tie this into your media release. This gives journalists an angle for a story.
- Include a few quotes from you about your subject. These give the journalists something they can easily pull out of the media release if they wish.

You can purchase media lists, but if you're willing to spend some time surfing the net and on the phone you can put together a decent media list yourself. You should be able to find 100 media outlets to send your book to without too much trouble. That might sound like a lot, but if you consider newspapers, magazines, blogs, websites, television and radio, it's actually quite easy. You can sometimes send two copies just to one newspaper: if you've written a book about healthy eating for kids, you can send one copy to the book editor and one to the health editor.

You can prepare a media list almost entirely from the internet these days. Here are some outlets for you to look into:

- Newspapers. Send a copy to the books editor and to the editor relevant to your topic. So, the real estate editor if you've written a property book, the food editor if you've written a cook book and the fiction editor if you've written a book about honest politicians.

Stand Out

- Magazines that cover your area, including industry mags.
- Websites and blogs that cover your industry. You can offer to write guest blogs.
- Radio and television. Do your homework and find radio and television programs that cover your subject. Don't forget about local radio.
- Local newspapers: tailor a media release specifically for your local paper, concentrating on how you and your business contribute to the local community.

Here are some tips for preparing your media list:

- Wherever possible, get the name of a contact person you can send to. This is very important, firstly because it increases the chances of the book reaching the right person, and secondly because following up will be much easier.
- You should be able to find most contact details online. For any that you can't, give the company a call.
- Send the book to an assistant editor rather than the editor. The assistant is usually the person who opens and sorts through the mail, and presents anything of interest to the editor.
- If you're trying to get your book picked up by a radio program, send the book to the producers of the program, not the on-air presenter.
- If you've made a decent effort and still can't find a contact name, use the title of the person you'd like to receive the book; for example, if you're trying to get onto the Richard Stubbs program on 774, address the book to 'The Producer: Richard Stubbs program'.

Stand Out

Before you send your books out to the media, here are a few things to have handy:

- A low-resolution and high-resolution JPG of your cover, which contacts will likely ask for if they write a review. Print publications will want the hi-res; online outlets will usually want the low-res.
- A PDF copy of the media release, to email to them in case they've lost it.
- Some article ideas that you can pitch if you get into a discussion with a journalist.
- Some interesting facts and figures about yourself and your business that you can use in a discussion with a journalist.

After you've sent out your books, you need to follow up. This can be done by phone or email. The first thing is to confirm that the person did in fact receive the book. It's not uncommon for the books to end up sitting on an assistant's desk, or to be in a pile of 50 books in the corner, or – especially in large organisations such as newspapers – to have simply disappeared into a vortex, never to be seen again. If the contact hasn't received the book, offer to send another one. If they have, the next step is to ask them if they're interested in doing anything with it.

It will be up to you to judge each exchange; if the person on the other end of the phone or email is quite emphatically not interested, it's usually best to accept this and move onto the next one. You don't win any friends being pushy. But you might receive a response along the lines of 'We're looking at it' or 'Yes, we liked it and we might use it if we do a story on that topic'. If you feel comfortable doing so, ask them if you can provide any more information, or if

they would like to interview you, or perhaps offer some article ideas that relate to your book.

As a business card

A book makes a great business card. Make sure you always have a few in your car, and always take some to meetings, industry events, seminars, or ... anywhere! When everybody else is swapping business cards, hand out a few copies of your book! Don't be afraid to give away copies. Consider it a marketing expense. I recently had an author who printed 2500 copies of his book and was giving away 2000 of these. This was his third book, and he knew the value of complimentary copies. His book was about property, and I recently saw him on the cover (yes, the cover) of two property investment magazines.

Qualify clients

A book is a great way to qualify your clients. A strong business is not built just on attracting a large number of clients but also on attracting a large number of the *right* clients.

Giving a copy of your book to potential clients is a great way to introduce them to what you do and how you do it, and therefore increase the chances that you'll attract the right clients. Potential clients will gain a good feel for you and your business, and this will help them decide if you're right for them. Your book can also include practical information such as time lines and prices, which will further filter clients. For example, in writing this book I've done my best to reflect the way I do business. I give my clients the

Stand Out

best information I can. I don't try to 'sell' them on self-publishing, just inform them. I present people with the relevant information and let them decide for themselves. Many people who come to me have already made the decision and just want information.

You can even include a page at the back of the book, encouraging clients to contact you. (Don't make this seem too much like an ad. People don't want to be sold to in a book. If your book is great and the client believes you can meet their needs, they will contact you.)

Stand out in your industry

If I could sum up the benefits of writing a book for your business, it would be that it will make you stand out. All of the other benefits you receive will flow from this simple fact. Chances are most others in your industry have not written a book, and possibly nobody has.

Writing a book gives you authority. It presents you as an expert. It also reflects well on you personally. Writing a book takes time, effort and commitment, and these are qualities potential clients will appreciate.

Don't go the 'hard sell'

You don't need to have a hard-sell approach in your book. The best way to sell yourself and your business is to write an excellent book that will meet the needs of your clients, and to produce it professionally. This will give clients the information they need and will reflect well on your business. It will establish you as an expert and leader in your field. It will set you apart from the competition. You don't need to do any more selling than that.

I've seen authors who have gone the hard sell in their books; they've mentioned their business or their website at every chance, and included ads (plural) at the back. I've never seen this make any difference, and it may well turn people off. Do you really think readers who are looking for your service and have been impressed by your book are *not* going to contact you? And, as we looked at earlier, this helps qualify your clients. The ones who don't contact you after reading your book have decided you can't help them and so most likely wouldn't have come to you anyway!

Don't worry about giving 'too much' info away

Authors who are writing a book for their business are often concerned about giving away 'too much' information in their book. They're concerned about giving away trade secrets, or that if they give away too much detail people then won't need their services.

I can understand this concern, but worrying about this is unnecessary. With the obvious exception of giving away proprietary information that is important to your business, I believe the best way to go is to give your readers as much information as you can. They'll appreciate this, and they will still most definitely need your services. I haven't held back anything in this book, but reading it hasn't turned you into a publisher, editor or designer. You by now should have an excellent idea of what's involved in self-publishing your book, have some valuable information to help you make decisions, and have a good indication of how much you might pay and how long it might take. *But*, you still have to find people to help you with your book. That hasn't changed; now, however, you have the information you need to do that. Giving you as much information

Stand Out

as I can hasn't reduced your need to get help with your book at all, and the same will be true for your readers.

So, with the exception of your company's secret sauce, give away as much information as you can. Your readers will value your information and be much more likely to come to you than if you scrimp on the useful stuff in an effort to make them sign up with you to get the info they really need.

