

10 TOOLS
for
FINDING
AUTHOR
SUCCESS



*Discovering and Uncovering the
Marketing Power Within Your Manuscript*

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Authors the world over are facing the unique dilemma of not only having to produce well-crafted writing, but to also effectively market, publicize and promote their work. The following is a brief overview of the ten most important tools for author success. For more on all of these elements and much more, check out ***Finding Author Success: Discovering and Uncovering the Power Within Your Manuscript.***

Introduction

At the age of forty and after a lucrative twenty-year career in advertising, marketing and public relations, I decided that it was time for a change. That career had served me well but I'd grown tired of the back-biting, negative aspects of it so of all things, I decided to become a chef. I went to culinary school, worked physically harder than I ever had in my life and loved every moment of it. After graduating, I was a salad girl, then a line cook, a sous chef and finally an executive chef and through it all I parlayed what I knew of the advertising biz to market both myself and whichever restaurant or banquet facility I worked for. Over ten years I found terrific pleasure in that career – hot, grueling and tiring as it was – until one day a few herniated discs chose to end it. This five-foot-nothing woman with back problems could hardly lift those three gallon stock pots any longer and I chose to return to my original secret love, writing.

Back in culinary school, I learned a few vital things that work in just about any career a person could find themselves. I learned to always use the correct tool for the job, and if I didn't have it, to create something that would work. No four inch cookie cutter? The top of a cleaned, empty tomato soup can works just fine. I always had with me a cool spoon I found in my grandmother's kitchen drawer. It had a very pointy tip and was perfect for drizzling just the right amount of sauce for my plating. I learned to always carry a ruler in my knife bag because inevitably, I'd need to measure something perfectly, and I discovered that layering flavors and textures created the best recipes. But the most important lesson I ever learned came from Chef Chuck Baux, my favorite chef instructor at school. As we all stood like deer in the headlights and terrified to begin our first assignment in a professional kitchen, he simply raised an eyebrow and looked at us over his specs. "It's only a meatball," he said. "Some ground beef, eggs, cheese, bread crumbs and spices. Roll it and cook it. Not brain surgery, only a meatball."

These days I'm an author and an author success coach. I layer old and new concepts with unique and proven ideas for platform building, promotion and publicity. The goal is to create the best possible solutions for author success, no matter how the author is published. Books don't just sell themselves in this crazy time within the publishing industry. Author support from publishers has greatly diminished and it's time for you to step up to the plate. Anything is possible – but only if one looks for the possibilities.

I want you to think about that meatball as you approach this book and begin to create your own effective author success strategies. It may seem daunting and scary but really, it's not brain surgery. It's only a meatball. Get all your tools and ingredients together and begin the journey into planning your successful career as an author.

TEN TOOLS FOR AUTHOR SUCCESS: A QUICK REFERENCE HANDBOOK

The following is a brief overview of the ten most important tools for author success.

TOOL 1 – Have a Plan

Your plan is the detail of how you will achieve your goals.

What are your goals? If this is your first book, what are your publisher's expectations? How do you propose to let the world know you have a book coming out and how do you intend to approach your market? In other words, what's your plan?

In order to create a competitive plan, you need competitive strategies. You can start by looking to your publisher. Ask them what they expect from your book. Which of their books, genres and authors are most successful and why?

Now, knowing what expectations your publisher has, you can multiply that and set a sales goal you'll be proud of. Within your goals should be the following categories:

- *Pre-launch exposure* - How many pre-orders or prospective buyers do you want on a waiting list for your book? This will determine how active your pre-launch marketing and publicity will need to be.
- *First three months sales* - Research the market, know standard sales numbers for your genre and how you're published, and make it BIGGER. A book's success or failure is based on its first quarter sales, don't sell yourself short. Set high goals and push for them.
- *Responses to your platform and social network elements* - You'll have many platforms from which to shout about your book. Decide now how active you want the response rate to be on those platforms. This way you'll have viewing and response goals to reach. Of course, responses can only be made to a statement and you are the only one to make the statement, so knowing how active you want your prospective readers to be pretty much determines how proactive you are going to need to be within your platform elements.
- *Demand for the next book* - Effective platforms and promotional efforts can create demand for more books from an author. Is this something you want? If so, add it to your goals list.
- *5 year sales goals* - Look at your whole life, where do you want to be in five years? Does writing A LOT fit into that image? Do you want to use revenue earned from your books to improve your life? The sad truth is that most authors simply can't live on what they earn as writers, but with a plan, strategies and goals that are clear, you can create an income to substantially add to your dreams and lifestyle. It doesn't just happen. It must be set as a goal and made part of the plan.
- *Number of successful books in 10 years* - Seriously think about this. Some writers see themselves as the author of one or two books, the creator of a mega success that rocks the world and then they can retire. There is a difference between fantasy, goals and strategic plans. Building a career demands you identify that career. If you want a booming writing career over 10 years, you may need to plan seven to ten books, several articles and short pieces published in collections, compilations or publications, speaking engagements, possibly writing in several

genres or even adding non-fiction to your mix. This is a “going wide” strategy rather than a “going deep” strategy which limits the writer to a single genre or non-fiction subject. There are several industry theories on both approaches to building an author career, but the most important opinion is yours. You’ll be living the career and doing the work.

Remember, you’re not just an author; you’re an author building a career. Once your goals are set, it’s easy to take the following tools and put a plan in play.

TOOL 2 – Find Your Hooks

Your hooks are what makes you and your book special.

We’ve all taken a stroll through those huge book stores and gotten that shiver of terror. Even if you’re already published and about to launch your second or tenth book, that fear trickles in and without warning you start to wonder. Who is going to buy my book when they’re bombarded with all these other books? Yes, your writing is wonderful and your story kicks butt, but one twirl around and you see thousands of other author’s offerings and can’t help but feel the pressure. Bricks and mortar book store or online, it’s the same.

Relax. The solution to the question is so simple it might shock you. The most important things you need to know to make your book stand out are not in marketing classrooms or genre statistics. They’re not in publicity strategies or media hype. The most important elements to make you and your book stand apart are right inside your manuscript.

Your all important “hooks” are in your characters, your plot and your style. In other words, you have already created all the solutions you need to market, promote and publicize your book when you wrote the book.

What makes your book so special is what made your publisher sit up and take notice. Why ignore that for technical, expensive or professionally bought strategies when it’s already mapped out for you? For example:

Location - Where does your book take place? Can you build, develop and implement entire promotions around that location?

- *Character* - Is there something special about your characters? Are they werewolves? Historic sailors? Contemporary businessmen? Members of the club or organization that drives the story? Is there something special about your main character? Do they have a silly saying they repeat? Wear two different size shoes? Love cats? Enjoy root beer floats? Go deep, identify what makes your characters special and consider how that element might create a powerful “hook” that resonates with a prospective book buyer.

- *Association* - If your main character is a gardener, are gardening clubs a good target? If he/she loves animals, are animal rescue groups a good readership target? Does your character connect with any large group of any profession or interest? Are these possible fans? Always consider association, it can open big doors for target marketing.

- *Plot* - Is your book an adventure about whales or space travel or the end of time? Is your book a romance that involves people from different backgrounds? Is

it a fantasy about supernatural characters struggling to remain hidden in the human world? Here are the facts about finding your “hooks” – they can be in any and every part of your book, they’re implanted inside your story and they are ready to be effective.

The power of identifying all your possible hooks is that you can then find more target markets for your book. Automatically, readers of a specific genre will take a look and possibly buy the book. The trick to success is to go further and dig deeper to reach even more buyers.

TOOL 3 – Build Your Platforms

Your platforms are what you stand on to tell people what you do and what you’ve accomplished.

Platforms are plural. If a politician stands on only one platform, he reaches only one set of ears. The same goes for an author. Your job is to reach as many sets of ears as possible, to reach them quickly, efficiently and with as little difficulty as possible.

What are your platforms?

Author Website (or blog) – This website (or blog) is specifically designed to promote you, the author. It will feature you, your books, your future projects and plans. It will offer insight to your future books and tell viewers what you’re up to. This site will have a specific area for a Media Room where you’ll list announcements about your various speaking and book events, upcoming interviews and links to videos or audio interviews you’ve already given. The Media Room will show all the press releases, have a downloadable bio and photo of the author, and contact information for the media. Even if your book is only e-published, you will use this website in a big way, creating as many avenues to promote all your work as you can, and connect with as many online readers as possible. E-published or traditionally published, your author website address should appear on your Twitter and Facebook profiles, email signatures, everywhere you can post it. This web presence is about all the author’s work, published articles, short stories, all the books no matter genre and what the author’s plans are for future books and all the news about his/her work.

Book Website – This website is very different. A Book Website is specifically designed to promote, market and expose a specific book or genre of books. For example, if you write romance, all of your romance (and sub-genre romance) books would have a showcase on your Romance Book Website. BUT, if you also write non-fiction about aviation, that would require a completely different book website. Why? Simple – these are two very different readers and a prospective book buyer will not explore a romance website for a book about landing gear, anymore than a reader wanting romance cares to explore a website about pilot qualifications. These two book websites should treat their specific audience differently and never cross reference to each other. **IMPORTANT:** an announcement about a book signing for your romance series would certainly be announced on your Author Website AND your Romance Book Website, but NOT on the Aviation Website. Also, an announcement about your speaking engagement to an aviation organization will appear on your Author Website AND your Aviation Book Website, but NOT on your Romance Website. Always respect and focus on the primary viewer of that particular website.

Author Expertise Blog – This can be as simple as an ongoing exploration of the research you did to write your book or are doing to write your next book. It can explore politics in your story and even talk about choices you made for the story. You can talk about character exploration and development, how you plot your books and where your ideas come from. You can use this blog to announce information about your promotions, and you can (and should) participate with other authors and guest blog on their blogs, announce their events on your blog and/or do interviews and reviews of your author friend's books. It's always wise to embed your author blog into your Author Platform website.

Character Blog – Not necessary but it's so much fun! This is a playful way of exploring your character/reader relationship dynamic. If your character is a curmudgeon and you develop a blog by him where he states his point of view and banters with the readers when they respond, you've made inroads into building loyalty and interest in the book. Obviously this doesn't work so well for non-fiction, unless you get very creative and invent a fictitious expert to state his feelings on the book. You'd be surprised how many readers respond to this approach and get involved with comments. If you're only e-published, this Character blog approach is very effective. Remember, an e-published book must reach e-readers, screen readers, and those fascinated with all things techie. Have fun with this, create impact and take your cues from the responses you get.

Twitter – Yes, you must Twitter. Create an account and build your followers carefully from a pool of possible book buyers, future fans, fellow authors, publishers, editors and agents. You will be amazed how much you can learn about the industry in your Twitter stream. Be active but be careful. Don't let it take you over. A good rule of thumb is to use Twitter at least twice a day for about 10-15 minutes each time. Interact, eavesdrop and comment on other follower's tweets, promote your blog and website updates, and always respond when someone talks to you. Efficient and effective tweeting is a learned skill and you'll soon discover that when done right, followers think you're there all the time and full of fun and valuable information even though you only tweet during a few breaks a day. I suggest you use a Twitter application as it helps you organize several streams of targets to follow, but you can do it any way that works best for you.

Facebook – There are several ways to use Facebook and I strongly suggest you Facebook every day. Not only are there different people on Facebook than Twitter, but they communicate differently. Without the Twitter limitation of 140 characters to make a point, Facebook creates several venues of communications. Everything from your current status and direct messaging, tagging and inviting friends to join events or joining groups targeted to your book are all there. Facebook every day with something interactive in your status. Build friends by reaching out and asking for friends but be careful what kind of friends you make. If you want to talk about the subject of your book which is about murder investigation techniques, you should have very few baker friends or friends who love scrap booking. Be sensible and be targeted with all your efforts. A downfall at Facebook can be the numerous social games and game forums. Choose how you want to spend your Facebook time, be practical and efficient because as writers and authors, we really need to protect our writing time. Do NOT mix your personal Facebook activities with your book Facebook activities. In other words, keep those accounts separate.

Email – Email lists: we have them, several of them in fact. We build them almost daily but what we seldom do is categorize them to make them easy to use. Create a group list for people you know who would love your book, love to read your blog updates, love to know what's happening with your book or love to hear about your next project. It's likely that if you explore the massive contact list you already have, you can find many people to fall under this group category. Create the group and voila, you've made one more contact to take one more person to your blog or your Book Website Media Page or invite to your book launch party. You've created one more venue for helping your author friends promote their books when you announce you've done a blog tour interview for them, and you've opened an opportunity for the receivers of your emails to pass them further to their friends and followers interested in your genre. Email. Right there under our nose. I'm sure if you think about it, you can find several ways to create email lists and use them to streamline promotional and marketing strategies.

Online Groups/Organizations – You can find them on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Groups, anywhere! These groups can work as support for your writing efforts, or serve as association groups to promote your book. It takes a bit to find them and decide how they'll work for you, but this is worth the effort. Be a joiner but don't overdo it. Remember, participate only in the groups that not only are interesting to you, but serve your efforts as well. If you do join, really make an effort to participate. Get into the discussions, especially if this is an interest group that pertains to your book plot or non-fiction subject. Never imagine that simply joining anything – a group, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo private groups and/or organizations – means automatic sales. It simply means that you've opened your possible audience. You're doing it in a protected environment and many groups will slap your wrist if all you do is promote, promote, promote. You need to seriously participate in the groups, give and get support and that's what turns into book sales.

Live Networking – With all the online and internet hubbub, we often forget our real life, living, breathing network. Your family, work friends, church. Your dentist, vet, eye doctor. The health club, the woman who cuts your hair or the massage therapist you use. Don't forget about where your kids go to school, where you shop for groceries and where you get your lottery tickets. These are breathing people who know you already. These are people who like you. Most people know few authors and are thrilled to know one. They become excited walking, talking advertisements for your book. Don't leave this vital network out of your loop, whether you write fiction or non-fiction, are traditionally published or e-published, remember to toot your horn to everyone you know. Remember though, not everyone will support you in the way you think they will. Some will buy your book, some won't. Some will shout your success to the world, others will find faults. Whatever their reactions and reasons are, respect them and never force yourself on people. If they want to help you, they will. And if they don't - well - there's not much you can do about it except to forget it and move on to those who do support you.

TOOL 4 – Understand Your Market

Understanding your market is research.

What other authors write in your genres? Where can one buy their book? Are you e-published? Who else is e-published and successful? What are some of the best

promotions or marketing efforts you've seen for a book? Do book videos work for your genre? Do you understand how the most successful authors manage their careers?

I'm sure you can come up with a hundred more questions about your market as well. It's vital to ask the questions, explore what other authors are doing, what works and doesn't work and how far "wide" or "deep" they go with their marketing strategies.

Don't just look at the publishing industry either. Look around. Everything you buy is being marketed and promoted. What kind of promotions make an impact for you? Can that approach work for your book?

Next, where is your market? If you're e-publishing, your buyer is on the computer. Exploration for ways to reach them goes further than simply using your platforms, you have to reach them at their platforms. When you read an interesting blog, respond to it. Comment. Become known to the author and they will frequent your blog too. (If one of your hooks is dog lovers, you need to connect with dog lovers online. They have blogs. You can respond because you like dogs. After all, there's a dog lover in your book.) Use all the promotional options open for authors; blog tours, interviews, book reviews.

If you're both traditionally published and e-published, never forget to find your prospective buyer through your hooks. If you don't know who will want your book, how can you talk to them?

TOOL 5 – PUBLICITY

Publicity is using the media to create relevant exposure for your book.

Take a serious look at your book, especially your hooks - those unique elements that not only make your book stand apart, but identify additional readers for your book beyond genre followers. What in your book or connected to your hook might lend itself to publicity or a charity? Connecting with a charity does several wonderful things. It shows you're a caring author, it supports something you care about, and it connects with your story.

Don't just randomly choose a charity. If your book has nothing to do with cancer research and none of the characters are cancer survivors, it's not really productive to connect your book with that charity. If the charity is near and dear to your heart, by all means support it, but don't connect it to your book, it will look and feel random.

If, on the other hand your story or non-fiction subject does directly connect with a charity, move ahead. Create fundraising events. Donate a portion of your book profits to the charity and make sure they know. Be sure to have the charity logo displayed with an announcement that a portion of your profits support Cancer Research, or The Kidney Foundation, or the ASPCA or whichever charity works.

It's a kind of giving back that is good for the author's soul and good for the book buyer's soul. And, as long as you are doing well, the charity will notify its supporters that you are doing this. It just may result in more sales.

Be honest about this, no fake or half efforts. Charitable organizations all over the world are desperate for financial help. It's a chance for the author to be a hero.

All of this takes place in the world of the media. Press releases and press contacts are a huge part of your publicity, and the charity will benefit from this press as well. Remember the Media Room in your Author Platform website? This is the kind of

information that goes in there. If a newspaper does a story about your charity fundraising event, you post that story. If you are interviewed and/or a podcast is created, you post it in your Media Room. News doesn't just happen, you have to make it happen.

TOOL 6 – YOUR IMAGE

Your image is what you present to the world.

No Facebook or Twitter avatars your mother would be embarrassed to see. No pictures of your dog or cat cleaning itself. No photos of you drunk at a club, whooping it up. You're an author, be aware of your image. This doesn't require a professional photo session with an expensive photographer, just a nice picture of you, clean and neat. We don't need to see you working hard at the computer or appearing overly serious. You can show your personality, smile, enjoy the moment. Just remember, literary agents, publishers, other authors and your prospective book buyers are looking at that avatar. Are you really proud of it?

If you prefer not to use a photo of yourself, your book cover is a good option. No book cover yet? Use an image that represents your book until you have one. And one final suggestion, please don't change your avatar picture more than once a year. It's how your friends and followers recognize you. Don't confuse us.

TOOL 7 – MARKETING

Marketing is building awareness that your book exists.

An author's marketing tools are:

- Your Polished Image
- Your Platforms Activity
- Your Social Networking

Sounds a little like everything, doesn't it? But everything thus far was put together just to build awareness of you and your book. If you don't blog regularly, use social media effectively and on a regular basis, keep your websites updated and Media Room neat and full with every element readily downloadable for the media to use, you've dropped the ball. Only with all these things in play and working like a perfectly oiled machine, can you know that you've done your job and created awareness for your coming book. If you haven't, all your promotional efforts will fall on deaf ears. Sad but true.

TOOL 8 – PROMOTION

Promotion is the activity around which you sell your book.

It's finally time to promote that book about which you've been writing, talking, blogging, Facebooking and Tweeting about. Time to promote the book to all those prospective readers you've been reaching out to. Remember all those goals listed under Tool #1? Now you can make them happen.

The question is how to promote? Again, it's all inside your manuscript. Create promotions and events that are so tightly related to your subject focus, story and characters you can hear it squeak. If the murder in your mystery takes place in a

museum, hold your book launch events and speaking engagements in museums or museum gift stores. Find the hook”and twist it tightly to make it your promotional key. Is your main character a coffee expert? Have your events in coffee shops, use coffee shop discount coupons as bookmarks, campaign to have a coffee drink at the coffee shop named after your book. Does your story involve a corrupt lawyer poaching wild animals in Africa? Hold your events at the zoo and have tee shirts that say “So Zoo Me!”

E-published? Again, there are perfect venues for your promotions. The zoo has a website. So does the museum and the coffee shop. They might be thrilled to let you show your book on that website, perhaps sell your book with a link on that website, especially if you’re donating a portion of your profits to support the zoo or museum or a charity near and dear to the coffee shop’s heart.

Get creative. Seek every opportunity and promote! And by the way, don’t forget the simplest and most effective way to promote: just tell people! Tell all those friends on Facebook and Twitter that your book is now available and where they can buy it. Let all your associates in those online and live groups know that the book is out, and remember to get the news out to your email groups too.

TOOL 9 – RESOURCES REQUIRED

Understandably, few authors can afford everything they want in the line of services. Some expenses are vital, like the cost of a good editor and cover designer if you’re self published. Choose carefully for other services. If you can’t build your own websites and can’t afford to hire someone to build them for you, think about trading a service. Be careful not to juggle too many things at once, a writer can’t write if all his time is spent chatting on Twitter or bartering with friends. Use careful time management, if not, it will cost you in the long run, possibly a career, because no one cares about an author who never finishes a book.

When looking at services from professionals, beware of the “free” services that pop into your email inbox. We both know nothing is ever free and if it is, it’s usually worthless. Another thing we all know is that there are no shortcuts, so don’t leap to pay someone to make you a top ten best seller in four short weeks. It won’t happen.

Be careful of the promotional item sellers. You may not need tee shirts or printed coffee mugs or ink pens with your book’s name on them. Think before you order.

Be picky, have a plan and don’t let some sparkly, crazy silliness come along and take you away from your plan. If tee shirts were on your original plan for a good reason, because they work with your book’s hook and make sense, then order them.

Always be reasonable. Does the tee short have to be 100% organic cotton? Does the book video have to be produced by a Hollywood director? Does your book promotion really require real actors in period costume to appear at your launch party? Only you can decide.

Create a budget and **STICK TO IT**, even if that budget is zero.

TOOL 10 – FOLLOW UP

Consistency builds a career. Don't drop a ball anywhere – not in your platforms, not in your social marketing or blogging or group associations. Don't simply drop off the planet for a while, you will pay when it comes time to rebuild your lost following.

If you are an expert at something as part of your platforms, be the expert, always and everywhere. Expect people to ask questions and plan to answer them. Be gracious.

Constantly look for new growth avenues, new opportunities to make yourself and your book(s) visible. New places and audiences to sell your book to.

And finally, keep your Book Business Plan alive, well, growing and breathing! If you take care of it, it will take care of you and your career.

About The Author

Deborah Riley-Magnus is an author and an Author Success Coach. She has a twenty-seven year professional background in marketing, advertising and public relations as a writer for print, television and radio. She writes fiction in several genres as well as non-fiction. She's lived on both the east and west coast of the United States and has traveled the country widely. Having lived, worked and written in Los Angeles for many years, she recently returned to her hometown of Pittsburgh.