



Is Publication Your Idol?

God has given you the gift of words, but does that gift come with the sure promise of traditional publication?

Most writers are laser-focused on getting a book contract or indie publishing their stories and ideas. While waiting for those dreams to be realized, we write and we build our audience. What if there were ways to get our words and ideas to people faster, or in addition to, publication?

Conception Perception

Think about a couple who are unable to conceive. They would make wonderful parents, they have all the resources they need—so why won't God grant them their hearts' desire?

Because he has a better way. A different path. One that will reach farther than they could ask or think—an incredible ripple effect. That path could mean:

- Adoption (in-country or abroad)
- Ministering to and nurturing those around them
- Pouring into a people group or population of God's choosing

Publication Situation

If you are a writer, like the potential parents, is God obligated to fulfill your dream in the way you envision? What if he has a better way? A different path? One that will reach farther than you could ask or think?

He might call you to self-publish, setting aside the validation you were seeking in order to bring His message to a particular group more quickly than traditional publication.

We'll focus on ways to:

- Reach new readers, non-readers, audiences or global populations authors might not normally come into contact with
- Multiply income streams
- Have fun

Ask yourself: Who is my audience? Who *could* my audience be?



Card Decks

With drag and drop interfaces, print-on-demand card decks give writers an opportunity to take their content to a whole different level. Just a few ideas:

Fiction

- Character images with details of their backstory on the reverse
- Quotes from the book, with a setting image on the back
- Coloring cards
- Playing cards with your characters as 'suits', and your setting or cover image on back
- Create a game

Non-fiction

- Book quotes
- Tips, major points
- Affirmations
- Devotionals/Thought for the day
- 'Top-ten' lists

Case Study: Susan Neal

Susan is an author and nutrition coach who has come up with a Christian yoga routine. Besides her videos, she offers card decks with the yoga instructions so users have an easier time during their workouts. <http://christianyoga.com/yoga-books-decks>

Resources:

<http://realfastresults.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Episode-81-Amy-Harrop.pdf>

<http://www.makeplayingcards.com/>

<https://amyharrop.com/pages/cdpub-z/> (course on card deck publishing)



Facebook Messenger Bots

Facebook Messenger has 1.1 billion users, and growing. Open rates for messages are near 100%—something unheard of with email. Many people balk at giving up their email, even for an enticing free item. Bots work within Facebook, so no email is needed. Users feel like they are interacting with you, which means they develop familiarity and trust.

What do you do?

You will need to write a few short scripts, but hey, you're a writer. One author asks readers whether they want book recommendations based on plot or place. He then leads readers through a series of questions and shares why this particular book might work well for them, based on their selection of answers you supply. You can even include an audio clip of yourself.

Don't have books out yet? Use your script to let readers know about your characters, plot, storyworld (for fiction), or tidbits about your non-fiction topic.

Case Study: Mark Dawson, Thriller Author

Mark uses Messenger bots to help interested readers choose which of his books to read first. To try an example bot, go to www.facebook.com/markdawsonauthor and send him a message. (You can cancel at any time, by typing 'STOP.')

Dawson discusses his success in the podcast linked below.

Resources

Podcast about bots: <https://selfpublishingformula.com/episode-102/>

One free platform you can use: <https://manychat.com/>



Facebook Groups & Pages

With Facebook's new algorithm that dials down organic reach, authors are challenged to find ways to engage their potential audiences, so that *someone* will see their posts. How can authors connect with readers, without having to spend money on Facebook ads?

Case Study: Sharon Jaynes

Sharon is an author and speaker, who created a Facebook page that connects with one of her non-fiction topics. On her 'Praying Wives Club' page, she posts a short prayer each day. With nearly 100K subscribers, her messages get shared constantly, bringing in new members. If visitors click on her page, they see that they can receive 5 free downloads for signing up (all of which contain links to her books). See what she did there? No Facebook ads anywhere!

What could you spread through daily messages?

- truths
- affirmations
- book quotes
- Setting tidbits
- Weapon details, etc.

Case Study: Ninie Hammon

A Facebook group currently avoids some of the new algorithm changes, so if you already have (or are building) an audience, encouraging them to join a group is a great way to share more intimately and increase engagement. Suspense author, Ninie Hammon, has done a great job with this. Her '9e's Kitchen Table' group converses about her books, even when she's not online. They happily post reviews and promote her new books, and she sometimes asks them to help her brainstorm or name characters.

Resources

Sharon's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePrayingWivesClub/>

Sharon's website: <http://sharonjaynes.com/>

Ninie's Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/175737816126352/>

Ninie's website: <http://www.niniehammon.com/>



Facebook Live Video

While Facebook has dialed down a lot of reach, Facebook is in intense competition with YouTube, and for now, Facebook gives preference to video. Doing short Facebook Live videos is a great way to share your stories with readers, and help them see you as a real person they'd like to follow.

Case Study: Cecelia Mecca

Cecelia is a writer of medieval romance. She always does a 'Medieval Monday' each Monday at 3pm. She always hosts a giveaway, and tells what's new or coming up. This week, she's doing a

'first lines' feature, where she reads the first line of two different books from her genre and listeners guess which book it is. One listener wins four books. She mentions her newsletter, and highlights a new feature: a column from a character who works at an inn featured in her books, who tells the latest gossip.

Case Study: Samantha Evans

Samantha Evans posts a short video once a week, which is a devotional for her followers.

No special equipment is needed--just a smartphone or your desktop can record video. Everyone likes videos, and seeing a Facebook live video often makes users stop for at least a few minutes. It's fun to see people engage with you live, and some might even share it with their friends, exposing you to more potential readers.

What do you talk about? Just be yourself. You'll feel awkward at first, but let people get to know you. What are you interested in? What causes are you passionate about? Talk about your characters or storyworld. Top ten tips for surviving the zombie apocalypse. For nonfiction: who are you? How did you become an authority on your topic? Expound on one of your chapters.

Facebook live is free, so take advantage of it!

Resources

<https://www.facebook.com/CeceliaMecca/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1838920949768815/>

<https://www.facebook.com/help/1636872026560015>

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/facebook-live-guide>

Also check out how-to videos on YouTube.



Animated Images

When posting on social media, videos definitely arrest a reader's eye. But the time and know-how to film and edit videos can be daunting. Thankfully, no matter how non-techie you are, you can create animated images.

All you have to do is download an app and use an image to add an animated layer. Consider using your book cover image, or an image of your character or storyworld. You can add rain, fireworks, smoke, or confetti, and many more. There are so many to choose from, it's mind-boggling.

Resources

Werble <https://www.werbleapp.com/>

<http://funny.pho.to/animated-picture-coming-alive/>

Lumyer <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lumyer/id949876643>



Coloring Books

Unless you live under a rock, you've noticed that coloring books have been selling like hotcakes in recent years. You, too, can take advantage of that trend by turning images into coloring book pages.

All you have to do is upload an image to an online site that converts photos into line drawings. If you have the skills, you can also do this in Photoshop.

Coloring pages could be the perfect reader magnet for folks signing up for your mailing list. Or, if you have enough, you could collect them into a book to sell online or via public appearances. Fiction writers would naturally gravitate toward character images, or weapons, maps, costumes, and vehicles. Nonfiction writers can use this too, depending on the topic. A book on insects or fighter jets, for example.

You can turn your own images into line art, or search for copyright free clipart.

Case Study: Shelley Ring

Shelley combined her original 'Psalms for Moms' with beautiful coloring pages for an unbeatable combination. Check them out here:

Love Never Fails: Psalms for Moms, Vol. 1 <https://amzn.to/2wGjsLO>

Love Never Fails: Psalms for Moms, Vol. 2 <https://amzn.to/2lfsu7O>

Resources

Photoshop (video tutorial)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=K43-zhQZiM

Without Photoshop <http://www.snapstouch.com/>



Board Games

If print-on-demand card decks surprised you, how about POD board games? Yes, it's a thing. Many people love board games, and due to their nature, you could have readers spending hours in the world or on the topic you write about.

Of course, this would take some thought and planning on your part, but particularly for sci-fi and fantasy writers who might have a table at a Comicon or other venue, they could be unusually good sellers.

Sit down with your critique group and plan for ways to take your topic, plot, or storyworld and make it a game. If you know someone in the video or card-gaming community, they could be especially helpful. Look at other board games for inspiration.

Board games cost nothing to get started. POD games have a cost to the buyer, though you may want to have a demo one on hand. Fiction writers, of course, will want their game to showcase their characters and world. Nonfiction writers, depending on the topic, could create a game that encourages discussion on a topic, or educates the gamers bit by bit.

On an even easier level, you can also create printable games. These are a great giveaway at a book table, or as a reader magnet. They are also a fun, interactive activity for school or other group visits.

Resources

Print on demand board games: <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/>

Custom board games:

<http://www.boardgamesmaker.com/customized/custom-board-games.html>

Printable board games:

http://boardgames.lovetoknow.com/Create_Your_Own_Printable_Board_Game

Nonfiction example:

https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/mango-republic?dept_uri=games&dept_name=All%20Games

Fiction example:

https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/artifact-hunter?dept_uri=games&dept_name=All%20Games



Augmented Reality

Writers now have the capability of inserting ‘triggers’ in books, written materials, and even bookmarks that come alive when viewed through an app. Your characters can tell their own stories.

Users/readers use an app to hover over images that trigger a pop-up image or audio or video. Imagine character bookmarks, where your hero or heroine tells why someone should read his or her story. Business cards that ‘speak’. Imagine a reader hovering over a symbol in your book that brings up a map, or a diagram of the weapon used.

For non-fiction, AR can be used to pop up a brief video or audio of the author giving further details, or a client affirming that the author’s tips made a difference.

Case Study: 19 Crimes Wine

Come face-to-face with infamous convicts as you hear their side of the story. Each wine bottle label shows a convict charged with a different crime. Using the app, the label comes to life, and the convict speaks about his (or her) experience.

Case Study: Walking Dead Wines

Watch Sheriff Rick fight off the ‘walkers’ in the wine aisle. A different bottle shows a horde of zombies. Put both bottles together and the characters fight each other.

The process is fairly simple: upload both a ‘trigger’ image, and the image or audio or video that will be viewed with the app. It’s free to use.

Resources

<https://www.livingwinelabels.com/>

<http://19crimes.com/>

<https://www.thewalkingdeadwine.com/>

Create your own augmented reality:

<https://studio.aurasma.com/home>

<https://www.hpreveal.com/>



These tips are just the ‘tip’ of the iceberg. I’m hoping in the future to compile several dozen of these ideas, so stay tuned. If you would like to receive a free idea sheet with dozens of Reader Magnet ideas for fiction and nonfiction, just click this link. <http://bit.ly/freereadermagnetlist> (You will also be added to my list, and you are free to unsubscribe at any time.)

Debbie Maxwell Allen writes young adult fiction in the Rockies. She teaches workshops for writers on how to use Scrivener and Vellum software and works as a project manager for Good Catch Publishing. When not writing, she keeps tabs on her husband, five children, a dog and three cats. You can catch her blog of resources for writers at <http://writingwhilethericeboils.blogspot.com/>. She also offers developmental editing for writers. Contact Debbie at dallenco@gmail.com for a free, no-obligation 1000-word sample edit.