

Indie Publishing Lecture #5

Sell Your Book

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If you self-publish, you can't go head-to-head with traditional publishers by using their marketing tactics. Happily there are many sideways methods to jump sales. Today we'll cover some good ones for selling your book.

USE YOUR RESOURCES

ACFW — American Christian Fiction Writers is an online organization of more than 2000 writers at all stages as well as agents, editors, and publishers. They have an active loop on which much information is exchanged and you can ask questions. ACFW also has critique groups, contests, conferences, online classes, marketing opportunities, and other resources. Even if you write nonfiction you might find much of the information helpful. At time of writing this is \$75 to join and \$49 to renew annually. (www.acfw.com). HELPFUL TIP: get a separate email or know how to filter emails otherwise you will be snowed under by the loop.

CIPA — Christian Indie Publishing Association is a goldmine for the self-publisher with helpful resources including newsletters, checklists, courses, discounts, and partner links for other resources such as KDPRocket, audible book creation and marketing. At time of writing this is \$90/year. (www.cipa.podia.com).

Kindlepreneur — Dave Chesson is amazing. So much high-quality information and so many practical tools, and it's all free. Thank you, Dave! If you're looking for answers you might want to start here. (www.kindlepreneur.com).

ENDORSEMENTS

Endorsements are written by influential people like authors, pastors, celebrities, and professionals (eg teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, coaches, members of a professional association etc.).

Endorsements are a low-cost yet effective marketing tool for your book because they verify for the reader that your book is trustworthy and has a valuable message. You can use endorsements on your front and back book covers and inside your book. Sometimes the endorser will even write a foreword — if so make sure you banner that on your front book cover!

You can add endorsements to your book and online presence anytime, especially when using POD (print on demand) technology. However it's best to get endorsements before the book is published, which means asking at least two or three months beforehand so that the endorser has time to read, reflect, and write.

The best manuscript form to use is an ARC (advance reader copy) — your book and cover in nearly final form that is available in print, epub, mobi, and PDF formats.

Keep records on a spreadsheet of who you contact including website and contact info, when, and the result.

Brainstorm a list of as many people and professional organizations as you can think of. Ask your friends and family. Aim high as well as to people already in your circle.

Contact potential endorsers directly through email, phone, or snail mail. Prepare your pitch with a succinct explanation of your book and why you're contacting the person — you love their work, you think you're on the same page with issue X, etc. Ask them if they will read your book and consider

writing an endorsement. Set a deadline preferably a few weeks at least for them to have time to finish the job.

Once your book is published send the endorser a thank you note and ideally a print or electronic copy of your final book.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

To be eligible for consideration at a public library, before the book is published you must register for a PCN (preassigned control number) at <https://www.loc.gov/publish/pcn>. Once your manuscript is published you will need to send a book to the Library of Congress.

For registering at the Library of Congress you will also need to obtain CIP (cataloguing in publication) data. I have happily worked with Adrienne for many books at www.cipblock.com.

KEYWORDS AND CATEGORIES

You figured out keywords and categories earlier (*Handout #2: Niche Your Book for Amazon*). When listing your book on Amazon put in your seven keywords. Classify your book as “unclassifiable.”

Once your book is published write down the ASIN for the ebook and for the print book on your Amazon listing page in the Product Details section.

To add your ten categories for the ebook and ten categories for the print book, sign into your KDP account (<http://kdp.amazon.com>) and click the “Help” entry at the top of the page. Scroll down and hit the “Contact Us” button on the left. Select “Amazon product page and Expanded Distribution.” Select “Update Amazon Categories.”

On the message form request that your ebook and print book be put into the following categories. For both the ebook and print book Include the ASIN and all category trails. Send off the message, then verify in about a day or two that your book has been added to your desired categories.

AMAZON AUTHOR CENTRAL ACCOUNT

Once your book is published don't forget to create your Author Central account at <http://author.amazon.com>.

HIRE A CAMPAIGN MANAGER

It might be worth it to you to hire a company to run your marketing campaign. Ask your friends for recommendations or search online. CIPA's partner marketing company is Westar Media (<http://westarmedialogroup.com>).

BOOK PROMOTIONS

While it sounds counterintuitive, making your ebook free or low price for a short period of time can really rocket your sales, reviews, and rankings. You can read how to do promotions and get a list of good promotional sites to use from Dave Chesson (my hero) at <https://kindlepreneur.com/list-sites-promote-free-amazon-books>.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be an effective marketing tool. There is a lot of information online about setting up author pages and doing advertisements. Start by looking at articles on Dave Chesson's "Kindlepreneur" site: <https://kindlepreneur.com/?s=social+media>.

Be cautious about pushing personal, as opposed to author, contacts — Remember that Amazon needs to understand your "typical buyer" to profile how to present your book to those searching for your topic. Personal ties have only one point in common — you!

AMAZON REVIEWS

The more reviews you have on Amazon and other sites, the better. Especially if they are 4- or 5-stars.

After being stung by fraudulent customer reviews, Amazon now forbids that you pay someone to write a review, trade reviews with another author, or ask your family, friends, or social media contacts for reviews. So what's an author to do?

The following tactics don't guarantee reviews but are worth trying. Remember that no reviews is better than bad reviews, so before starting make sure that your book is likely to get good reviews.

Book Request Site

Consider paying to list your book on a site where people can request it and write a review if they wish. These sites include bloggers, retailers, librarians, and readers. Two sites:

- NetGalley (www.netgalley.com).
- Book Review Buzz (www.bookreviewbuzz.com)

GoodReads Book Giveaway

Once you've set up an author profile on GoodReads you can host a book giveaway. Only give away 1-2 books at a time — multiple giveaways gives you more exposure. The winner may or may not write a review but oh well you've gotten your name out there.

Scraping

A tedious method where you find Amazon reviewers who might be interested in your book, locate their contact information (if present) from the Amazon profile, then write to them.

Go to www.amazon.com/review/top-reviewers to get started.

TRADE REVIEWS

Trade reviews add credibility to your book. They are also used by retailers such as booksellers and librarians to decide whether to carry your book. Most trade review sites require payment to review your book, and there is no guarantee of a positive review. If you want to include the review in your Amazon listing, post it through your Author Central account.

You can find commercial reviewers online or check out *The Book Reviewer Yellow Pages* by David Wogahn (<https://bookrevieweryellowpages.com>).

BLOG REVIEW SITES AND BLOG TOURS

There are many book bloggers eager to review your book for their readers. You may even want to consider hiring a blog tour organizer to coordinate a virtual blog tour.

Remember when pursuing marketing to keep good records on a spreadsheet of who you apply to (name and website), when, and what the result is.

Find lists of blog review sites. These sites may overlap bloggers so make sure you keep good records and don't duplicate emails to the same site:

- <https://bookrevieweryellowpages.com>
- <https://bookbloggerlist.com>
- www.theindieview.com
- For YA books: <https://yabookblogdirectory.blogspot.com>

You are asking for honest reviews so before starting make sure your book is good — no reviews are better than bad reviews.

PODCASTS*

If you can speak on your topic and don't mind doing so virtually you might want to be a guest on different podcasts.

An easy way to find podcasting shows to apply to is through a subscription (try www.RadioGuestList.com, www.PodcastGuests.com, and www.Podmatch.com). You can also find podcasts through internet searches, social media, networking, and recommendations.

Keep records on a spreadsheet of who you contact including website and contact info, when, and the result.

In your query introduce yourself, show familiarity with the show, and offer three topics for discussion.

Get a good microphone for the interview. Offer a free gift for the listeners.

After your interview write a thank you note to the podcast interviewer.

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*information adapted from Susan Neal's *How to Book a Podcast Tour* available at Christian Independent Publishing Association (CIPA) website (www.cipa.podia.com).

UNCONVENTIONAL SALES

Brainstorm ways you can get your book into more hands.

Can you think of opportunities for batch sales? For example is there a company or professional association related to your topic that might want to give a gift at the end of the year to its big donors, a homeschooling company that might want to use your book in its curriculum (eg www.sonlight.com or www.calverthomeschool.com), or a church that might want to donate books to the community?

Do you feature interesting topics? For example, if your main character is a hairdresser, maybe you can talk local salons into keeping a stack of your books at the cash register. A local doctor, dentist, or veterinarian may keep some of your books in the waiting room. Can you find out who stocks the book racks in the supermarket? Can you put your book into the college bookstore or that little gift store down the street?

Would you consider donating copies of your book to prisons, hospitals, schools, or soldiers?

Can you do a seminar on writing at a high school, retirement center, or a community college — and bring your book with you?

Think outside the box and keep working at getting the word out.

BUNDLE YOUR BOOKS

If you've written more than one book, especially books on a related topic or a series, bundling at least two related books into a new product is a great way to add value and get more sales.

PERMAFREE EBOOK ON AMAZON

You may find new readers if you offer the first ebook of your series for free. Amazon resists making an ebook permafree. However there is a way around:

- Do not go ahead with steps to make ebook permafree until your ebook is NOT on KDP Kindle Unlimited. KDP Kindle Unlimited expands marketing opportunities but also requires an exclusive listing on Amazon. If your ebook is already on KDP Kindle Unlimited you will have to cancel the autorenewal then wait for the end of your 90 day commitment
- Upload your FREE ebook to other ebook stores such as:
 - Apple iBooks
(<https://itunesconnect.apple.com/WebObjects/iTunesConnect.woa/wa/apply>)
 - Barnes & Noble Nook (<https://press.barnesandnoble.com>).
 - Kobo (www.kobo.com).

- Scribd (www.scribd.com).
 - Smashwords (www.smashwords.com).
- If you don't want to register your ebook manually you can find a distributor such as:
 - Smashwords (www.smashwords.com).
 - INscribe Digital (www.inscribedigital.com).
 - BookBaby (www.bookbaby.com).
 - Draft 2 Digital (www.draft2digital.com).
 - Once your free ebook is listed and available on other sites, go to your Amazon listing and look under “Product details.” There is a link that says, “Would you like to tell us about a lower price?” Select “Online” and give the website of a competing site.
 - Only tell Amazon once.
 - Wait for results.
 - If results are not forthcoming, you may want to enlist some friendly helpers. Space out the notifications.

THE BEST MARKETING TOOL

The best marketing tool is another book. While marketing takes time don't forget to work at least a little every day on what you love the most — writing!