

# TOP BOOK MARKETING TIPS OF 2008

A collection of popular articles from  
the **Book Marketing Maven** blog and  
*The Savvy Book Marketer* newsletter

by Dana Lynn Smith

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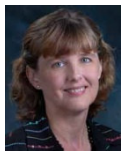
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Dana Lynn Smith, the Book Marketing Maven, specializes in developing nonfiction book marketing plans. For more book marketing tips and techniques, visit the Book Marketing Maven blog at [www.BookMarketingMaven.com](http://www.BookMarketingMaven.com) and subscribe to *The Savvy Book Marketer* ezine.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## Develop and Leverage Relationships to Sell Books

Relationships with other people and organizations that cater to your target market can be incredibly valuable in promoting your book. Here are some steps to developing and leveraging relationships:

### 1. Identify the places that your prospects turn for information about your topic.

Search the internet to compile a list of the top websites, blogs, ezines, magazines, newsletters, online forums, books, ebooks, clubs and association that cater to your target market or cover your topic. For example, if your book is about fly fishing, search on terms such as “fly fishing blogs” and “fly fishing magazines.” Placing the search term in quotes may yield better results.

You can determine the popularity of an online site by looking at its Alexa rank, relative to the other similar sites on your list. Download the Alexa toolbar by clicking the link in the lower right corner of at [www.Alexa.com](http://www.Alexa.com). Or, try this new search engine, which combines both Google and Yahoo results and lists each site’s Alexa rank: <http://www.viewzi.com>.

Blog directories such as Technorati at <http://www.technorati.com> and Google Blog Search at <http://blogsearch.google.com> are great for locating blogs on a specific topic. Also, check out Samepoint at <http://samepoint.com> – this new aggregator tracks conversations in blogs and social media sites.

To find forums and discussion groups, search these sites:

<http://www.groups.yahoo.com>

<http://groups.google.com>

Search Amazon and Google for books and ebooks on related topics that appeal to your target markets, but don't compete directly with your book. Then, locate the author's website.

### 2. Research each site, organization, and publication

Study each site to get a good understanding of what they do and how it relates to your book. Look for possible promotional opportunities (do they review products, sell affiliate products, accept content from others, allow comments, etc.) and gather contact information.

### **3. Contact the owner or manager of each resource and seek to develop a mutually beneficial relationship.**

Prioritize your list, and identify the prospects that seem to be the most important and have the most potential. Do NOT write a generic "would you like to trade links" email. Instead, craft a thoughtful, customized message complimenting the prospect about their site, publication, or organization, and suggesting some specific ways that you might work together to your mutual benefit. Some possibilities include contributing content to each other's sites, doing joint tele-seminars, selling through affiliate programs, cross-linking, and promoting in ezines.

### **4. Follow up and follow through**

If you get no response from your initial email, try again in a week or two or try sending an old-fashioned letter, making a phone call, or contacting the person through a social networking site such as Facebook.

When you get a favorable response from a prospect, follow through promptly to deliver whatever you've agreed to. Keep in touch with your new partners on a regular basis to build relationships, and look for additional ways you might work together.

### **5. Join the conversation**

Read the top blogs on your list and look for opportunities to comment on posts using your promotional signature (name, book title, and URL). For the online forums, read the group rules and lurk for a while to get a feel for the group and the level of expertise. Then look for opportunities to respond to posts in a helpful way, using your promotional signature. Be subtle about promoting your book, follow the group's rules, and don't spam.

## The Power of Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a form of online word of mouth marketing in which a message or link gets passed along by others. Here's a recent example illustrating the convergence of blogs, ezines, and social networking to create viral marketing.

Recently, I posted an article on my blog about how to get the most benefit from subscribing to publishing and book marketing ezines. I linked from that article to a web page listing my favorite ezines for authors, including my own ezine. I also created a permanent link to the "Ezines for Authors" page from the "Author Resources" section on my site.

Then, I posted the following message on Twitter, which gets automatically fed to my "status update" box on Facebook:

Check out this list of my favorite publishing and book marketing ezines, and learn from the pros! <http://snipr.com/ezinesforauthors>

Next, I sent an email to the publishers of these ezines, letting them know about the blog posting and my promotion via Twitter and Facebook. Most of these folks wrote back immediately to say how thrilled they were to be included on my list of top ezines for authors.

Several of the ezine publishers, including Carolyn Howard-Johnson, Penny Sansevieri, Lynne Klippel, did Twitter posts about being included on the list or wrote about it in their own ezines.

This promotion was a win-win for everyone:

- I provided a service to my blog readers by introducing them to some great ezines.
- I promoted several of my colleagues and their ezines.
- I introduced myself via email to several top experts in my field who did not already know me, and connected with others who did.
- I got introduced to the readers of those experts who linked to my list.
- I got a spike in traffic to my blog, new Twitter followers, and new subscribers to my own ezine.

How could you use viral marketing to connect with experts/influencers in your field and encourage them to pass along your message to their own readers?

## Sell Your Book to Libraries

America's 123,000 libraries purchase nearly \$1.8 billion worth of books annually, according to statistics from the American Library Association and the Book Industry Study Group. Here are some ways to capture your share of this lucrative market:

- Get your book reviewed in a library journal. For links to the submission guidelines for major library journals, go to: <http://snipr.com/9c32y>
- Send direct mail to libraries, either on your own or through cooperative mailings. Address mail to the "Collection Development Librarian" for your genre. Be sure to include a sell sheet with pertinent details and indicate which wholesalers and distributors carry your book.
- The Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) offers co-operative mailings at <http://snipr.com/9c7zz>. You can purchase library lists from the American Library Association at <http://snipr.com/9c33t>
- Exhibit at library tradeshow. Several organizations offer co-operative exhibit programs:

IPBA, <http://snipr.com/9c3en>

Combined Book Exhibit, <http://www.combinedbook.com/>

Association Book Exhibit, <http://www.bookexhibit.com/>

- Advertise in a library journal. Individual ads are expensive, but IBPA offers co-op ads in *Library Journal* and other major publications. <http://snipr.com/9c3eu>
- Work with a library distributor such as Quality Books at <http://www.quality-books.com/ideal.htm> or Unique Books at <http://www.uniquebooksinc.com>.

## Who Should You Be Marketing Your Book To?

Your book marketing plan should include strategies for reaching several different target audiences:

- **Readers** -- people who buy the book to read. This is the most obvious category and it includes your primary audience (the "ideal customer" that the book was specifically written for) as well as secondary audiences who have an interest in your topic.
- **Purchasers** -- people who buy the book for someone else. For example, people buy books as gifts, parents purchase books for children, and women buy men's health books. Who would be likely to purchase your book for someone else, and how can you reach those folks?
- **Influencers** -- people who communicate with your target customers and can let them know about your book. In online book marketing, the influencers may be the most important category of all. Think about how much you can multiply your book marketing efforts when other people spread the word to their own readers and customers.

Other authors, coaches, and bloggers who cater to your target customers can mention you, your website, and/or your book in several ways, including blog posts, links, Twittering, ezine articles, and media sharing tools like Digg.

Traditional and online media are also important influencers. You can reach them through traditional publicity efforts as well as online press releases and article distribution.

How can you expand your book marketing reach by promoting to all of these target audiences?

## Use a Virtual Book Tour to Promote Your Book

I'm pleased to have author Carol Denbow share her advice for using virtual book tours to promote books.

Welcome Carol. I understand this is the final day for your virtual tour for your latest book, *A Book Inside: How to Write, Publish, and Sell Your Story*. So, what exactly is a “virtual book tour?”

CAROL: Virtual book tours, or virtual author tours, are basically when an author makes guest appearances on various Websites, blogs, or forums, typically, related to their book topic, story line, or writing in general.

An interview with the author is posted on the day of the tour stop and viewers can make comments or ask questions through the postings comment box, giving the author or host an opportunity to respond. Virtual tours can be set up for a week, two, or a month, whatever you're comfortable doing.

DANA: What are the benefits to virtual touring?

CAROL: Through the Internet, authors can reach literally thousands of people without ever leaving their home or even getting out of their pj's. It's much more cost effective than travel.

DANA: How do you find blogs or Websites to participate?

CAROL: First, look at your own related resources—those you may have networked within the past. If they know you and your work, they'll be more receptive to the idea. Search the Internet for topic related Websites and blogs. For example; if your book is about fishing, search for sites related to that—business, sites business related, and so on. Just ask politely and try to point out the benefits the hosting Website may receive for their efforts, such as more new visitors to their site and more exposure.

Also, plan early—a month or more. When you contact Websites you need to allow time for them to prepare, as well as yourself. If you ask them to accept a tour date on short notice, they most likely decline.

DANA: How does an author promote their virtual tour?



CAROL: The World Wide Web is loaded with free promotional tools. Once again, look first to Websites you have networked within the past. Ask them to post a blurb about your tour. Create a “media” page on your own Website to list your tour dates and host Websites (with active links of course).

Post your tour dates, or a link to your media page, on forums, book Websites, in your newsletter (if you have one), and especially on Book Tour online (<http://www.booktour.com>). Use the search engines to find related Websites. The higher the search result placement, the better the chance the Website will produce a good potential audience for you.

DANA: Great advice! So, tell us about your books and where can we find them.

CAROL: In the past three months I self-published *A Book Inside: How to Write, Publish, and Sell Your Story* and I also published *Stress Relief for the Working Stiff: How to Reverse the Embalming Effect* through Publish America. My first book, *Are You Ready to Be Your Own Boss?* was released in 2006.

All of my books are available through Amazon.com as well as through my Website at <http://www.booksbydenbow.weebly.com>.

Right now, if readers purchase one of my books through my Website, I will donate one copy to Friends of The Libraries in support of re-building libraries affected by the Katrina disaster and the Cedar Rapids Iowa flood disaster as well as donating 10 percent of the proceeds from the sale to Breast Cancer awareness.

I also have a great blog for new and seasoned writers at <http://abookinside.blogspot.com>.

DANA: Carol, thanks for the great information about virtual book tours, and I hope your tour has been a good experience for you.

CAROL: Yes it has, and thank you for hosting my final virtual appearance.

**Editor's note: Carol's new ebook, *How to Organize a Virtual Book Tour*, is now available at <http://abookinside.blogspot.com>.**

## Make the Most of Book Marketing Blogs and Ezines

As you cruise the internet, you'll find a wealth of valuable free information and numerous offers to sign up for ezines and blog feeds. Here are some tips for making the most of the lists you subscribe to.

**1. Take action.** When you see a great tip in an ezine or blog, make a note on your To Do List or your marketing plan of a way to implement it in your business. I often paste great articles into Word documents to save for future reference.

**2. Learn from others.** Study subscription sign up forms, welcome messages you receive after signing up, promotional emails, and the ezines and blog posts you receive for ideas on how to effectively promote and execute your own promotions. Save the best ideas for future reference.

**3. Use a dedicated email address or folder.** If you sign up for a lot of lists and feeds, use a dedicated email address from a free service such as Yahoo or Gmail, so these communications don't clutter up your main business inbox. Or, configure your Outlook to deliver these emails to a special folder, using the "rules and alerts" feature.

**4. Weed out your subscriptions periodically.** After signing up for numerous lists over the past couple of years, I was drowning in email. I recently whittled my subscriptions down to 15 ezines that offer the most value to me personally.

Many of the ezines that didn't make the cut offer great information, but I had to prioritize. In deciding which lists to remain on, I considered the frequency of mailings and the time required to read the ezines, in addition to the relevancy of the content. Be careful not to overwhelm your own subscribers with too much information or too many messages.

## Use Online Networking to Build Your Author Platform

Networking with other authors or experts in your field is a great way to gain visibility. As you meet others who provide products and services to your audience, you can introduce them to your blog and ezine readers. Often, those folks will return the favor.

Here's a great tip from my colleague Yvonne Perry:

"I enjoy reading newsletters, so I have subscribed to several. In them, I find people and services that interest me, and I take the time to email or call the person to say hello. Many times, I'll add their announcement to my newsletter or offer to interview them for my podcast. This gives them an opportunity to get their names or products in front of people on my subscriber list. In return, I have content-rich material to offer my readers and listeners."

*Yvonne Perry is the owner of Writers in the Sky Creative Writing Services, offering writing and editing for books, eBooks, Web text, bios, articles, and media releases. Visit <http://www.writersinthesky.com> to sign up for her ezine and get a free eBook, Tips for Freelance Writing.*

## Using Domain Names in Book Promotion

Before you settle on the final title for your book, make sure the domain name (or an easy variation of it) is available. It's a good idea to also register your publishing company name, a topical name (such as [www.BookMarketing.com](http://www.BookMarketing.com)) and your own name.

You may have to be creative to register your author name; try using a middle name or initials, adding another word such as "author," or using an alternate extension such as .net instead of .com. If you have multiple websites, you can create a personal website using your author domain name and link from that site to your other sites.

When choosing a domain name, watch out for potential pitfalls such as words that look or sound bad when strung together. In your marketing materials, capitalize the first letter of each word in your domain name to make it more readable.

If your blog or website has a long, ugly URL, "forward" or "point" your domain name to that URL. For example my personal domain, [www.DanaLynnSmith.com](http://www.DanaLynnSmith.com) points directly to my site located at [http://bookmarketingmaven.typepad.com/dana\\_lynn\\_smith/](http://bookmarketingmaven.typepad.com/dana_lynn_smith/)

I use Go Daddy at <http://snipr.com/9cdg7> for my domains because of the low price (about \$10 a year) and free and easy domain forwarding service. One free email address is included with each domain and you get POP3 access through email programs such as Outlook. The sign up process is a bit cumbersome, because they try to sell you other products during the process, but their domain management tools are easy to use.

## Keep Broadcast Emails Simple

With so many people suffering from email overload today, it's important to think carefully about the frequency and format of your broadcast emails.

Many online marketing gurus advise communicating with your list frequently, so people don't forget you. But personally, sending me too much email (especially too much promotional stuff) is the quickest way to motivate me to click the "unsubscribe" button.

Ezines can be sent out weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. If you send a weekly ezine, keep it short and easily digestible, and don't send additional promotional emails every week. Marcia Yudkin does a terrific job of this with her weekly Marketing Minute ezine (<http://www.yudkin.com/markmin.htm>). Just one topic is covered in a few short paragraphs, but I always feel like I've learned something.

I receive several ezines that contain a lot of great information, but they are so long that I usually skip over them in my in-box, thinking I just don't have time to read them right now. Sometimes I get back to these ezines later, but often I end up deleting them unread.

For my own monthly ezine, *The Savvy Book Marketer*, I include a greeting, a short feature story and several brief news or resource blurbs. I always have more story ideas than I have space in the ezine, so I use that extra content on my blog.

Be especially careful about sending out too many promotional emails to your list. I've unsubscribed from a number of lists because I got 2 or 3 promotional emails a week from them. Sometimes less really is more!

## Promote Your Book with Flickr

Photo sharing site [www.Flickr.com](http://www.Flickr.com) is a great place to post your book cover, author photo and other promotional images. If you upgrade from a free account to a "pro" account, you can also upload video. This site, ranked #32 by Alexa, can provide quality links back to your own site.

If you have a number of images, you can use your Flickr page as a photo album to link to. Remember, you're not limited to photographs – you can include illustrations or charts from your book, so long as they are saved as JPEGs, non-animated GIFs, PNGs, or TIFFs.

Because it's designed for photo sharing, Flickr allows you to add friends to your account, participate in groups, comment on photos, order prints, and more, although those features may be more suited to personal use.

Here's how to get started with Flickr:

- Flickr is owned by Yahoo, and you'll need to use a Yahoo email and password to create an account there. If you don't have a free Yahoo account, it takes just a few seconds to sign up.
- After you have logged in, create a Flickr screen name, which will be visible on the site. Use your author name, brand name (mine is Book Marketing Maven) or a topical name (such as Book Marketer). Capital letters and spaces are allowed.
- Upload a "buddy icon" (aka your standard author photo) to your profile page.
- Create a custom URL, which will be used to link to your Flickr page. I recommend using your Flickr screen name or brand name. No spaces are allowed and this cannot be changed later, so think carefully.
- Build out your profile page with your name, bio, and website address. I included links to my Twitter and Facebook pages in my bio. There's also space to add some personal details. Allowed HTML codes are listed at the bottom of the page.
- To make changes to your profile later, click on the "edit your profile" link on the upper right corner of your profile page.

- Click on your screen name at the very top of the page to view your account and privacy settings. The default setting makes your email address visible to everyone, so you might want to change that.
- Upload your images. Be sure to enter a title and a keyword rich description for each image. I put this description under my photo: Dana Lynn Smith, the Book Marketing Maven, specializes in developing book marketing plans for nonfiction books. [www.BookMarketingMaven.com](http://www.BookMarketingMaven.com)

## Using Video to Promote Your Book

Search engines love video, and authors can take advantage of this hot trend by using video-sharing sites such as YouTube to draw traffic to their websites. Posting video on your own website and blog also helps visitors connect to you in a more personal way.

Video clips of 30 to 120 seconds are perfect for introducing your book and establishing your credibility as an author. Give a brief summary of your book, discuss why you wrote the book, or share tips from the book. To create free micro-videos, just 12 seconds long, check out <http://12seconds.tv/>.

Authors can also use video on blogs, create a video blog where all of the posts are in video format, and place video links in online media rooms and media releases.

The Flip Video Ultra is an easy-to-use tool for creating videos, and it comes in several cool colors. Buy it on Amazon at <http://snipr.com/9c98r>.

The Ultra's smaller cousin, the Flip Mino is available at <http://snipr.com/9c9a3>.

For advice on how to get started with video, get tips from Joan Stewart, The Publicity Hound, and Mike Stewart, The Internet Video Guy, at <http://joanandmikestewart.com/>. Click the MP3 link to hear a 70-minute teleseminar on creating and using video, and then check out their editing software and tutorials.

## Use Timely News Hooks to Publicize Your Book

As you celebrate the holidays, think about ways to tie your book to special days throughout the year. Authors can create a “news hook” for their articles, press releases, and talk show pitches by incorporating:

- Mainstream holidays such as Mother’s Day and Independence Day
- Special days, weeks, and months such as Human Rights Day and Freedom From Fear of Speaking Week
- Anniversaries of events such as the first artificial heart transplant or the television premiere of M\*A\*S\*H
- Birthdays of famous people such as Babe Ruth or Bill Gates
- Current events such as the Olympics or the presidential election

For inspiration, visit Daily Holidays on the Net at <http://www.holidays.net/dailys.htm> or use these resources:

- John Kremer’s Special Events Data File at <http://www.celebratetoday.com/sp.html> costs \$30 and lists 18,550 special days, weeks, months, anniversaries, and birthdays.
- John Kremer’s book, *Celebrate Today!* at <http://snipr.com/9c0nn> features 3,400 special dates, including many oddball entries such as Be Nice to New Jersey Week. It also includes information on how to create and promote your own holiday.
- *On This Date* by Sandy Whiteley at <http://snipr.com/9c0oc> lists 2,000 items including celebrity birthdays, important dates from history, religious and national holidays, and special days, weeks, and months. It includes contact information for event sponsors and an index by name and subject.
- *Chase's Calendar of Events 2009* at <http://snipr.com/9c0sf> is a 750-page reference with 12,500 entries, including many of historical and international interest. It’s pricey at \$74.95, but you might find a copy at your library.

## Promote Your Book With Every Email

Are you taking full advantage of the valuable real estate at the end of each email to promote your book and yourself? Many authors include a link to their website or Amazon page in their standard email signature, along with contact information such as address and telephone number, but there are many other possibilities:

- Insert your book cover image
- Include your tagline or book's sales handle
- Promote your newsletter
- Link to all of your websites
- Advertise your availability as a speaker
- Offer a free ebook or other premium
- Link to your Facebook profile or YouTube video
- Mention awards your book recently received

Don't limit your promotional sigs to business correspondence. Consider using all or part of your signature on your personal emails as well. Your friends, relatives, and associates may pass your information on to someone that they think will find it of interest. Or maybe they will buy a copy of your book for all their friends!

Check the rules at any forums or discussion groups you participate in, to find out how many lines they allow in signatures. Then take the most important elements of your email signature and format them to fit the allowed space. Also create single-line sigs for things like blog posts and book reviews.

## Display Materials for Authors

When you're doing a book signing, exhibiting at a book fair, or selling books in the back of the room at your speaking events, signs and display materials catch the attention of passersby and create a more professional image.

Many large office supply stores carry acrylic sign holders, display stands, brochure racks, and other materials. I've found the best selection at Office Depot. If you need to print a sign larger than standard letter size, check with a local copy shop like Kinko's.

For a really polished look, check out the retractable poster from Post-up Stand at <http://snipr.com/9c3jq>. The poster retracts into in a small case, perfect for travel, and the 11.75" x 21" size is just \$58.