

Self-Publishing 101

Part 4: Marketing: Finding your audience

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A four-part series

- Part 1: Overview of the process and a discussion of goals.
- Part 2: Editing: Creating your best book.
- Part 3: Formatting and distribution.
- Part 4: Marketing: Finding your audience.

Marketing: When to start?

- Before you finish the book IF it's non-fiction AND you have a platform.
- One book only? Be sure it's really finished, then tell your tribe.
- Serious hobbyist? Do a little for each book if you want, but don't stress until you have 3-4 books. Then start spending your income on ads.
- Career writer? Write 3-4 books before you launch the first one, then give it all you got. Burn savings to buy ads.
- Conventional wisdom says you need 5-6 books to really get rolling.

David Gaughran: How to get started

- <https://www.amazon.com/Lets-Get-Digital-Self-Publish-Publishing-ebook/dp/B005DC68NI>
1. Hit 50 sales asap. Hard to do!
 2. Get 10-20 reviews stat. Even harder!
 3. Make sure you have newsletter signup link at the end of your book.
 4. Drop the price & book newsletter promotions (more below.)
 5. Repeat on some schedule (more below.)

The basic strategy

- ***Set a budget and stick to it!***
- Reduce the price of Book 1 to FREE or 99 cents.
- Promote that book with all you've got.
- Hope people like it enough to buy books 2, 3, etc. Some people will buy book 1 at full price after the sale ends.
- Those purchases should pay back the ad plus profit.
- The activity boosts your book's rank, making it easier to find.
- This is why you need more than one book to start marketing!

Newsletters 1

- A must for all serious indie authors.
- It's a big topic. Take a course, read a book or two. Do this in the evening instead of watching TV, take a couple of weeks between books...
- MailChimp, MailerLite. They both have a learning curve.
- 1st time is hard, 2nd not so terrible, 3rd is almost easy, 4th is breezy.
- Free for <1000 subscribers, upgrade to paid when you get bigger.

Newsletters 2

- Run promotions to build your subscriber list.
- Ryan Zee BookSweeps: 50 authors together, each one gives away a book in exchange for newsletter signups. Net 1000+ for \$60. Worth it!
- Facebook ads (more below): give something away in exchange for email addresses. Amazon gift cards, tote bags, free books...
- NEVER EVER share, trade, or sell addresses. NO SPAM EVER.
- Make it easy for people to unsubscribe. You want real readers, not just a big number of whoevers.

Newsletters 3

- What to write? Brief notes about promotions, new releases, your writing life, something funny, something free.
- Think about what your readers would like to read about. Keep it short, keep it relevant.
- How often? Some say 1/week (keep it short). I do one a month. Could do quarterly, only when a new release is coming out.
- <https://janefriedman.com/email-newsletters-for-authors/>

Reader magnets

- Free things to entice readers to sign up for your newsletter.
- Novels – I give away my historical romance, which I'll never publish. Mark Dawson gives away the first in each of his several series.
- Novellas – everybody loves novellas these days! 15,000 – 50,000 words. People love prequels or side stories featuring a secondary character.
- Short stories – excellent magnets, don't earn much otherwise. Great palate cleansers between books (writing, I mean.)

Reviews

- Absolutely necessary. Social proof that your book is worth reading.
- The first 50 are hard to get; the next 100 much easier!
- Paid reviews: Kirkus (\$425), Midwest Book Review (\$50.) Worth doing once, if you're sure it will be a good review. Quotable, reputable. Gives you credibility.
- ARC readers: Give them a free copy in exchange for a review. Have them say, "I received a free book in exchange for this review" inside the review. They must post their reviews on Goodreads and/or Amazon and send you the link.
- Book review blogs: <https://blog.reedsy.com/book-review-blogs/>
- Give away a ton of free books. Each 100 read => 1 review.

Discounting your book

- Kindle Unlimited allows you 5 days of either free or 99c per 3 month cycle. Use them!
- If you're wide, you can change prices by hand.
- The idea is to get people to take a chance and read your book. Some will buy the rest of your books, a few will write a review. Some will subscribe to your newsletter. This is how we build our careers.
- Permafrees: a book that is always free everywhere. It's your loss leader.
- <https://www.indiesunlimited.com/2015/03/24/how-to-make-a-book-perma-free-on-amazon/>

Book promotion services

- BookBub, FussyLibrarian, FreeBooksy, BookGorilla, etc.
- <https://blog.reedsy.com/book-promotion-services/>
- Newsletters that list discounted or free books. Subscribers are whale readers!
- Some are hard to get (BookBub.) Some are easy (FussyLibrarian.) Most require at least 10 reviews.
- Most cost \$25-65. (BookBub \$450+) Most schedule 1+ month out.
- Most indie authors do lots of these. They're cheap, they're easy, and they work.

The marketing rhythm

- If you're in KU (recommended for beginners) you get 5 promotion days every 3 months. That establishes your rhythm.
- Choose your promotion days at the start of the cycle.
- Book a few promos (what your budget will stand) one month in advance.
- Don't forget to tell your newsletter peeps!
- Rinse and repeat.
- Evaluate results: round up to account for KENP payouts.

Amazon & Facebook ads

- No need for advance scheduling. They start when they get approved.
- Some say FB is best to build brand awareness – e.g. get newsletter subscribers - and Amazon is best for selling books. You need both.
- Both have a learning curve. Read books & blog posts, take a course.
- It's easy to keep from spending too much while you learn, so experiment!
- Amazon: <https://janefriedman.com/using-amazon-kdp-ads-sell-ebook-amazon/>
- Facebook: <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/facebook-ads-one-authors-experience/>

Amazon ads 1

- These show up in two sets of places:
 - Product display ads appear under Buy buttons and on Kindle covers
 - Sponsored product ads appear in the scrolling row under the Also Boughts.
- Sponsored product ads are apparently the most effective, for both sales and page reads.
- Spend a little quality time exploring book pages on Amazon. Look at the Sponsored product ads scrolling under your role model authors' books.

Amazon ads 2

- You should take a course, but just to get you started...
- The graphic is your book cover, super tiny.
- The copy is 14 chars and they are STRICT about grammar & punctuation. No dashes, no odd capital letters... It's ad copy, so be punchy!
- Bryan Cohen is great AMS guru. Also Mark Dawson, expensive set of video courses (\$750.) Start with the free stuff until your books are earning enough to justify that kind of expense.

Facebook ads 1

- Also a big topic. Facebook has a large suite of good tutorials. use them.
- Mark Dawson is the main guru. He has free videos; start with those.
- Watch the video through, then watch again while you do your own ad.
- Pro: easy to schedule, reach a well-defined target audience, easy to control costs.
- Con: you need a snazzy image (1200 x 628) or video.

Facebook ads 2

- Not usually recommended to sell individual books. Better, Amazon ads.
- FB ads are good to reach lots of new people to entice them to sign up for your newsletter. Give something away. Advertise your reader magnets.
- Also good for higher priced items like boxed sets. You can justly say, Save 40%, or whatever your discount is.
- Once you get a suite of graphics, you can re-use them (like for box sets.)

Marketing: Blogs & social media

- You MUST have a website w/contact info & book information.
- Blog only if you like it. I post once a week and push the blog out everywhere (Amazon author page, Goodreads, Twitter, Facebook.)
- Create a polished, professional, Amazon Author Page. Bio & photos.
 - Bio isn't your life history. Your goal is to make your readers like you in 100 wds or less.
- Hang out where your readers are. 15 mins AM & PM is plenty. 80% social, 20% marketing. Have fun. Be real, be friendly, be polite. Company manners!
- Set up a profile everywhere and check in & update now and then:
 - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, BookBub, LibraryThing...

Last words

- **Do not** stress about marketing unless (a) you're paying your mortgage from your book sales and (b) you have at least 4 books out there.
- **Do** experiment on your way to that point. Don't spend much and don't stress!! It harms your creative energy.
- Always remember that the best thing you can do for your writing career is write and publish another excellent book.
- Write on!