

# Create a Book Marketing Plan That Sells Books



by Dana Lynn Smith

## **Why a Book Marketing Plan is Critical to Success**

Some authors write and publish books for their own self-fulfillment, and that's great. But if you want to make money or get a wide readership through your publishing venture, it needs to be treated like a business. That includes having a written book marketing plan.

If you publish independently, then you are completely responsible for generating book sales, and you'll need a marketing plan to guide you along the way.

If you're seeking a traditional publisher, a marketing plan is an essential part of the book proposal. Agents and publishers want to know who the target market is, what the competition is like, what kind of credentials and platform the author has, and how well the author will promote the book. Remember, even if you have a publisher, you will still be expected to promote the book and you'll need your own marketing plan for that.

Ideally, some elements of the marketing plan should be developed before the book is even written. Here are some crucial things to do before writing your book:

1. Think about whether there is a market willing and able to buy the type of book that you are writing. And you'll need to understand who your target market is, in order to tailor the book to that audience.
2. Nonfiction authors should study the competition. How can you make your book better or different from existing books on your topic?

3. Start thinking about how you will be able to reach your target audiences and promote the book.
4. Start building an online following through social networks and blogging. This is really important because it takes time to develop a following.
5. Design the book title and cover with marketing in mind, thinking about what would appeal to your audience and persuade them to buy.

New authors are often surprised to learn how much effort goes into promoting a book. And many authors need to learn new skills in order to be successful in selling books, which is why resources like book marketing blogs, newsletters, podcasts, guidebooks and training programs are so important.

There are many ways to promote a book, but each book is different, and we all have limited time and budgets. So it's important to put together a plan and prioritize your book promotion tasks.

A written plan will give you a blueprint for promoting your book and keep you focused on what's important. It will also guide you in how best to spend your time and money. You won't waste time wondering what to do next, or jumping from one thing to another. Just take a look at your plan and get to work on whatever needs to be done today.

Also, it's important that your plan is customized for you, your book and your target audience. Some promotional tactics work better for fiction or nonfiction, and of course we all have different talents and time constraints to work with, so there's really no such thing as a one-size-fits-all marketing plan.

## **What Marketing Really Means**

In business school, they say that marketing has four key elements: product, place, price and promotion. Let's look at each one of those:

1. As an author, your book is your product. Ideally the book should be designed to meet a need for a specific audience, and of course it should be as high quality as possible – well written, well edited, and well designed. You'll also need to decide what formats to publish in – ebook, printed book and/or audiobook.
2. Place refers where your book is available for purchase. That could include online bookstores, retail stores, your own website, or live events where you are speaking.
3. Price is also an important marketing element. When you charge too little, it's hard to make money, but when you charge too much, your sales will suffer. It's helpful to study how top-selling competing books are priced. For example, self-published fiction ebooks sell best when they are priced at \$4.99 or less. The most popular price points for novels are 99 cents to \$2.99.
4. And the fourth marketing element is promotion – which includes all of the activities that you do to let your target audiences know about your book and persuade them to buy it. Book promotion is the real heart of your marketing plan. But keep in mind that you will often hear the terms "marketing" and "promotion" used interchangeably.

## **12 Steps to Creating Your Book Marketing Plan**

So now you have an overview of why a marketing plan is so important to your success and what marketing means. Regardless of where you are in your publishing journey, now is the time to start developing or updating your marketing plan.

Below are 12 specific steps that you can take to create your own customized marketing plan, designed to sell more books.

## **1. Define your mission.**

Authors write and publish books for different reasons, whether it's sharing their story, inspiring or entertaining others, earning money, and/or promoting their business or cause.

So consider your mission so you can develop a publishing and marketing plan that's custom tailored to your book and your own personal goals.

## **2. Identify your target audiences.**

This is one of the most important parts of your marketing plan. Define the primary audience (the ideal reader the book was written for) and other secondary audiences for your book, their characteristics, and where to reach them. Most books have multiple target audiences, but no book is for "everyone". It's really important to zero in on the right audiences, and ideally you want to do that before you even write the book, so you can tailor your book to your audience.

## **3. Select formats and distribution channels for your book.**

If you have self-published, you'll need decide how and where the book will be sold. Make these decisions keeping in mind your target audiences and your own goals.

First you'll need to decide what book formats you want to offer, such ebooks, printed books, and audio books. Think about which formats your target audience is most likely to want, and remember that you can start with one format and then expand to others.

Books can be sold online and offline, through retailers and wholesalers, and directly to consumers. This could include online bookstores, your own website, retail stores, or live events that you

participate in. It's fine to start out with just one distribution channel and add others later.

#### **4. Set the price, payment and discount policies.**

Here are some things to think about:

- What is the optimal price for various formats of the book? Take a look at successful competing books to get an idea, but keep in mind that self-published books are usually priced lower than traditionally published books.
- If you will sell directly to consumers, how will you accept and process payments and deliver the book?
- What discount should you offer to re-sellers? Most bookstores and other re-sellers expect to buy at a 40% to 50% discount from the selling price.

#### **5. Define the features and benefits of your book.**

For fiction, write an intriguing synopsis of the story. For nonfiction, describe the benefits that your readers will gain and what they will learn from your book.

#### **6. Study other books that compete with your book for readers.**

For nonfiction, think about how is your book different or better than others on the same topic. For novels, think about how your book would appeal to fans of top selling books in your sub-genre. Also make note of how competing authors are promoting their own books – you can get some great ideas that way.

#### **7. Write effective sales copy.**

Considering what you have listed in the previous steps, write a compelling book description that will motivate your target audiences to buy this book. This is really important. Write and re-write your sales

copy until it sizzles! Again, you can look at top selling books that are similar to yours to find inspiration.

## **8. Write an engaging author bio.**

Potential buyers of nonfiction books want to know why they should listen to you – what are your qualifications for teaching them about this topic? Author bios are also important for fiction and children's book authors – they give the reader a sense of who you are. Be sure to make your bio engaging, not dry and boring like a resume.

## **9. Set your budget.**

Many book promotion tactics are free, but you will still need some funds for things like website fees or graphic artists. You may also need a training budget for buying books or programs to educate yourself about publishing and marketing.

## **10. Choose your book promotion tactics.**

This is the real heart of your marketing plan. There are dozens of ways to promote a book, ranging from social networking and reviews, to publicity, virtual tours, article writing and speaking. But we all have a limited amount of time and money to spend on marketing, and we each have different skill sets.

An important part of your marketing plan is deciding which book promotion tactics have the highest potential return on investment for your particular book. Some promotions are more effective for promoting novels, while other things work better for nonfiction or children's books. Also consider your own skills and preferences.

## **11. Develop a timeline.**

Once you have put together a list of promotional activities to pursue, you will need to prioritize and assign dates to implement them. Some things, like social networking, you may do on a daily basis, while other activities can be scheduled for specific days, weeks or months

in the year. Remember to give priority to things that you feel will have the highest success rate in generating sales – it's easy to get bogged down trying to do too many things.

## **12. Measure your success.**

A book marketing plan is a living document and it's important to measure your progress. You'll need to know what's working and what's not working so well, in order to refine your marketing plan for the future. And don't forget to celebrate your successes!

## **Take Action Now to Sell More Books**

There you have it: a 12-step plan to developing a customized marketing plan for your book. So here's what you need to do now:

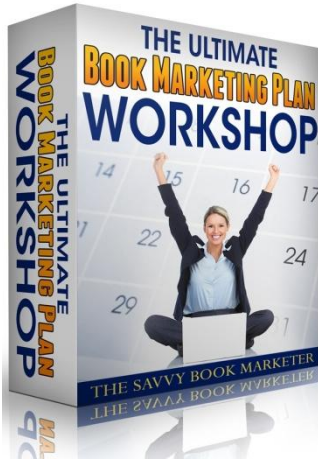
If you don't already have a written marketing plan, open a document on your computer, list these 12 steps, and start planning how to implement them. You can even copy and paste text from this report right into your document to help you get started.

If you do have a marketing plan, consider what's working well for you and what you might change based on this 12-step plan. Update your plan and start implementing those changes.

Book marketing is an ongoing effort, but it's easier and more effective if you have a plan to guide you. So get your plan down in writing and keep taking steps toward your goals each day!



## Learn More



To learn more about how to develop your own customized book marketing plan, take advantage of the [Ultimate Book Marketing Plan Workshop](http://bit.ly/BookMarketingPlans).

This unique program will guide you step-by-step in defining, reaching and selling to your target audiences.

The **Ultimate Book Marketing Plan Workshop**, available at <http://bit.ly/BookMarketingPlans>, includes five **video** training sessions, **audio** recordings and slides for each session, fill-in-the-blank **worksheets**, **checklists** and planning **tools**.

I've also developed more condensed one-hour book marketing strategy programs geared specifically to fiction, nonfiction and children's authors. Each of these includes a comprehensive book marketing resource guide:

[Sell More Novels](#)

[Sell More Children's Books](#)

[Sell More Nonfiction Books](#)

## About The Savvy Book Marketer

Dana Lynn Smith, The Savvy Book Marketer, helps authors and indie publishers learn how to sell more books through her how-to guides, training programs, blog, and newsletter. She has 19 years of publishing industry experience and a degree in marketing.

Connect with Dana on these networks:



Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BookMarketer>

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/SavvyBookMarketer](http://www.facebook.com/SavvyBookMarketer)

Facebook Profile: [www.facebook.com/DanaLynnSmith](http://www.facebook.com/DanaLynnSmith)

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Google Plus: <http://gplus.is/DanaLynnSmith>

Goodreads: <http://www.goodreads.com/SavvyBookMarketing>

## Book Marketing Resources

These in-depth book marketing guides and training programs teach you the skills you need to sell more books.

- How to Sell More Books on Amazon
- How to Get Your Book Reviewed
- Virtual Book Tour Magic
- Selling Your Book to Libraries
- Ebook Publishing Success
- Make Money with Teleseminars and Webinars
- Facebook Guide for Authors
- Twitter Guide for Authors
- Pinterest Guide for Authors

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