

How to Market Your Book to Build Your Business—Before, During and Long After the Publication Date

By Patricia Coate

Most consultants and professionals who write business and “how to” books today make a decision to do so not to become best-selling authors and sell millions of books, but rather to overcome one or all of the following business challenges:

- They currently lack the necessary reputation and credibility in the marketplace to get their foot in the door with prospects they want as clients, to break into new geographic or industry markets, or to achieve immediate traction and early success with a new product or service.
- They have difficulty differentiating themselves from other providers in their specialty and they cannot command the high fees that others are able to charge.
- Their consulting or professional service business has been stuck in the same gear for years and they need to take it to the next level to meet their medium and long-term financial and professional goals.
- They are frustrated by the misinformation in the marketplace about their specialty and they want to set the record straight and get known for being a thoughtleader.
- They are annoyed that other, often less knowledgeable, professionals get the attention of the media and

meeting planners thereby beating them out of opportunities for keynote speeches, workshops, and other income-producing activities.

Of course, no one would be disappointed to achieve best-selling status, but the odds of accomplishing this are very slim. According to industry statistics, there are 300,000 business and strategy books already in print—and more being written every day. Of the 1.2 million fiction and nonfiction books tracked by Nielson Bookscan only two percent have sold more than 5,000 copies. Publishers Weekly in July 17, 2006, reported that the average book in America sells about 500 copies.

So, instead of seeking mass appeal, authors of business how-to and strategy books hope to gain the attention of very targeted audiences, setting a goal to sell thousands of books over a long period of time as they use their books to gain attention of the right customers and educate others who can become customers.

Marketing Moved onto Authors' Plate

In order to reach their goals, business and strategy book authors are challenged today more than ever before to create a game plan and manage their own marketing and promotion activities. Not only must authors create the book idea and



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write the book, they now must also be willing to promote their books extensively on their website, to their communities of clients, prospects and colleagues and at industry events.

As Berrett-Koehler's president Steve Piersanti recently told a group of B-K authors, “Most book marketing today is done by the authors, not by the publishers. Publishers have managed to stay afloat in this worsening marketplace only by shifting more and more marketing

responsibility to authors to cut costs and prop up sales. Nearly all book proposals that we receive have an extensive section on the author's platform and what the author will do to market the book."

Start Early and Don't Stop

The good news about writing a business or strategy book is that a book can begin to solve one's frustrations as soon as it is published (and often even before it is published). What's more, if the author continues to promote the book to targeted customers on a consistent basis, a book will have an impact on one's business outcome for years after the publication date. The key is to start early, before the book is published, do a major push at the time of publication, and continue to promote the book years after it's in the marketplace.

The other important marketing lesson business authors learn is not to rely solely on traditional book marketing and promotion techniques but rather to develop a targeted campaign using thoughtleadership activities that will be more time-efficient and cost-effective in reaching one's target audiences. Traditional marketing activities that don't work well for business and strategy books include book signings at book stores, press releases sent to mass media outlets or general book reviewers, pitches to radio/TV producers on non-business programs, and other mainstream activities.

Choose from Business-Building Book Promotion Activities

Following is a list of some of the proactive book promotion activities that emersongroup has found work for our clients who have written books—including those who already have a book in the marketplace, those who are about to launch a new book and those who are contemplating writing a book.

- Publish excerpts and by-lined articles based on the content of the book in business and trade journals and on targeted websites on an ongoing basis to reach the targeted market. This can be started long before the book is published and will help get the target market "ready" for when the book is out.
- Write a regular column in a select publication to advance your ideas from the book always alluding to the book or upcoming book.
- Issue regular, ongoing news releases commenting on current events in your field and drawing from the book's ideas. These releases are distributed via customized press lists and news services, and are linked to the author's website.
- Launch an email campaign to author's e-list, including e-newsletter announcements and regular excerpts from the book as well as stand-alone announcements.

- Launch a blog on relevant topics to build community.
- Secure print interviews with business and trade press based on the upcoming or published book's content.
- Promote books for sale on author's own website.
- Secure radio/TV appearances on business talk shows based on the book's content and how it relates to current events.
- Land speaking engagements before target market audiences and "influencers."
- Offer giveaways to select prospects, clients and influencers.

The good news is this: a business book's relevance—and success for the author—can actually be sustained for many, many years if the promotion campaign is more than a one-time program following its publication date, if it starts early and never ends, and if it incorporates activities and practices that are quite different from a traditional book publicity campaign.