

You can point out several innovative and effective ways for authors to create online buzz.

Why Authors Hate Social Networking and How to Get Them to Promote Books Online Anyway

by Stacey J. Miller

PUBLISHERS, FACED WITH SHRINKING book promotion budgets, are more excited than ever about telling authors to promote their own books online. And by online book promotion, publishers often mean social networking.

The reason publishers are particularly excited about online book promotion is that they think they don't have to get involved in it. They can simply suggest that authors engage in social networking, and then step back and wait to see the results. It looks good for the publishers' budgets; it's easy on their resources; and it will keep authors busy.

Authors, on the other hand, may have mixed feelings about online book promotion. It's hard to say "no" when your publisher tells you social networking can be good for book sales. But being active on Facebook, Twitter, and the like can be a huge time sink and present some vaguely disturbing possibilities.

Authors usually realize that once they have opened the gates to social networking, it can be hard to close them again. And they tend to ask themselves whether they really want to spend hours each week communicating with (and fending off let's-get-together requests from) long-ago play-group friends, buddies from the old neighborhood, relatives with vaguely familiar surnames, or colleagues from forgettable jobs.

Becoming active on any of the social networks is like leaving your door cracked open in the summertime. It's tempting to enjoy the fresh air and a pleasant breeze, but you could be letting the creepy-crawlies in too. Authors know this. That's why so many of them instinctively and wholeheartedly resist social networking.

Practical Options

But just because the former playground bully lies in wait on the social networks, hoping for redemption, authors need not

avoid online book promotion opportunities altogether. You can point out several innovative and effective ways for them to create online buzz for books.

Here are four starters:

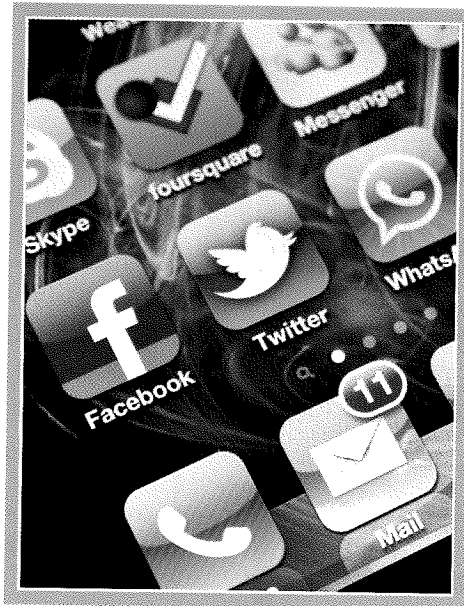
Launch a contest. A giveaway is easy to host, and all an author has to do is provide winners with book copies. There are Web sites that will help spread the word about contests. Sites such as online-sweepstakes.com enjoy high search engine rankings, so simply having your own giveaway listed on them provides increased online visibility. Also, each giveaway winner is a source of word-of-mouth promotion, and everyone who signs up to win but doesn't is a potential book buyer.

Connect with bloggers. Authors should find out who blogs on subjects relevant to their books if they don't already know. Form a relationship with them by leaving comments on their blogs. Once you've done so, it's simple to ask the bloggers you've identified as friendly and potentially receptive to review a book. Most of them will be glad for the opportunity, and every online

mention of a book is another search engine optimization gem.

Draft articles. Writers can usually provide information from, or related to, a book (yes, even a novel) in the form of articles. Since many blogs and Web sites accept simultaneous submissions, the process of getting these articles published online should proceed quickly. Advise your authors to submit articles to relevant newspapers and magazines too, and remind them that most periodicals also have Web sites where articles might run.

Comment on news stories. Many news sites invite readers to submit feedback, and these posts are published instantly. Suggest that authors set up Google Alerts to find news stories

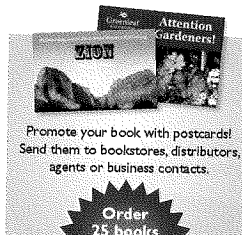


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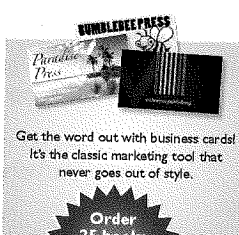
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related to their topics; that they then write mini-op-ed pieces in response to each story they find; and that they make sure their posts include the titles of their books.

The good news is that online book promotion campaigns require far less startup time—and can even be far more effective, in the long run—than traditional book promotion campaigns. So concentrate on attractive current opportunities for online book promotion with authors who won't be forced or "guilted" into social networking, and keep your eyes open; more attractive opportunities are cropping up every day as technology evolves.

Stacey J. Miller is an online book promotion specialist and founder of S. J. Miller Communications. To learn more, visit her at bookpr.com (connecting with her on Facebook or Twitter is, she notes, strictly optional).

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