

The Brave New World of Indie Publishing

Indie Publishing 301 – Marketing Your Indie Books

(1 Hour Class – Class Outline)

So, Your Indie Book is Done and Uploaded – Now What? MARKETING

- What is Marketing, Really?
 - Put simply, Marketing is all about getting your Books and Potential Readers to CROSS PATHS.
 - There's a Marketing Word I've heard tossed about in the last few years. It's DISCOVERABILITY.
- What will it take to get your book Discovered by Readers?
 - That's what Marketing is all about.
 - This last hour will really just be an Intro to Marketing (could easily have a workshop by itself).
- I'll spend Half the time talking Concepts, then Share some Specific Marketing Tools you'll need, before we close.

Let's Start with My Best Marketing Advice - Write a Great Book!

The Better the book, the easier to Market

- This also means, what is NOT being said is ALSO just as true – “A Mediocre Book is very Hard to Market.”
 - The worse it is, the harder it is to Market.
 - No amount of Marketing effort—no matter how much money is spent, or whether the best new strategies are employed—can make up for a boring book.
- If a reader isn't...
 - Drawn to your book by an excellent cover

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- Sucked into your story by a compelling back-cover blurb
- Captivated by a gripping read in the first 10 pages...
- ...No Amount of Marketing effort will help it succeed.
- Which means, you should:
 - Pay attention to all the other workshops and CE classes that focus on improving your ability to write a great book.
 - Make writing a great book your aim, NOT marketing.
 - Adopt the 80/20 Rule
 - 80% Writing, 20% Everything Else (including Marketing and Social Media).
- Further Proof of This – Think about what you do AS A READER:
 - When you get hold of a book you can't put down once you start.
 - You actually look for opportunities to keep reading.
 - When you reach the end you are totally satisfied and actually sad that it's over.
 - WHAT IS YOUR REACTION?
 - I'll tell you what it is – It's Marketing!
 - You look to see what other books this author has written
 - You tell friends who love to read how much you liked the book
 - Hopefully, you take 3 minutes to leave a Great Review on Amazon (or wherever you bought it).
 - Sadly, think of your reaction to a Boring Book:
 - You struggle to stay interested
 - Wade through lots of Blah-blah-blah
 - Find yourself skipping a lot of paragraphs (maybe even some pages)
 - Only keep reading because you paid for it.
 - But at some point, you decide, "Life's too precious to spend it on a boring book."
 - What is the chance you'll buy another book from this author, or tell anyone else about it (other than to complain)? ZERO, right?

Make Sure the End Result is Totally Up to Par

- MUST look like it came from a Trad Pub house
 - Already covered the need to hire an Editing Pro
 - Suggest getting input and feedback from Beta readers (who will honestly tell you what they think) of the book's content.
 - Listen to their input, do everything you can to insure there are ZERO DEFECTS in your manuscript.
- Why learning the craft is still so critical for an indie (maybe more so).
 - For an indie (who usually has little to no money for marketing), it will be the quality of the writing (the book itself) that will be the number 1 reason the book sells well and the author grows a readership.

Customer Reviews – The Bread and Butter of Indie Success

- Online Customer Reviews are perhaps the most important ingredient to indie success.
 - A great book will create STRONG MOTIVATION for someone to leave a great review.
 - Suggest you make ONE OF YOUR FIRST BACK PAGES an appeal for them to leave a review (and a link). I DO.

Publicity vs Marketing (What's the Difference?)

- Both are about getting the word out about your book. The difference?
 - Publicity involves things you do for free (only cost is your time).
 - Like Blog interviews, radio interviews, etc.
 - Since I am fulltime, I generally just say yes to almost anything (unless it's a blog that doesn't appear to have any followers).
 - Marketing Costs Money – Need to get Comfortable with this Concept.

IT TAKES MONEY TO MAKE MONEY

- If you don't get comfortable SPENDING MONEY, you can never succeed at Indie Publishing and/or Marketing.
- But when you understand how Marketing Works, you'll see Money as a Tool, (like a Hammer and Saw is to a Carpenter).
- That's Because of ROI.

- **ROI – Return on Investment – An Essential Marketing Ingredient**
 - The BIG QUESTION – “How much should you spend on Marketing?”
 - The Answer has EVERYTHING TO DO with Return On Investment (ROI).
 - ROI is, basically, how much money will you make for every dollar you spend promoting your book?
 - The rule of thumb is...if you make at least \$2 for every \$1 you spend, it's a worthwhile marketing effort.
 - If you make \$3, it's EXTREMELY worthwhile.
 - WHY? Because...IF you are making \$2-3 off of every \$1 you spend, it's really not an Expense, is it?
 - It's an Investment.
 - So, you keep trying things, spending smallish amounts, all the while measuring ROI.
 - When you find something with SOLID ROI, you can safely “Invest” LOTS of money in that direction.

Some Other Must Have Indie Marketing Tools

- The need for an **Author website** and **Mailing List**
 - Author Website - Serves as your showroom, your primary “facility.”
 - Don't skimp here, pay to have it done right.

- Will often be the first impression people have of you (See Examples of mine, cost \$2,500).
- Can be done for less, but Spend what you Must
- Gives you a PERMANENT PRESENCE on the internet.
 - The only place where you have total control of the content (FB, Twitter, Goodreads, etc, own the content, not you).
 - Will want the link to show up on all your published work (book cover, social media (link back to it), stationary, biz cards, etc.
 - Make sure it is optimized for Mobile devices (50% use phones and tablets more than desktop and laptops).
 - When hiring a Webmaster, give him links to sites you really like, as is.
- Build a Mailing List
 - Places like Constant Contact, Mail Chimp, Mailerlite, etc.
 - People who read/like your books are usually willing to sign up (get inside info, special deals, first alerts to new works coming out).
 - Only way to guarantee people will see what you post/write (FB now goes to less than 3% of your “Likes,” a little higher for FB Friends).
 - Not good to build inflated list of freeloaders (by using contests that don’t require any loyalty or interest in your work...my testimony).
 - Mine is about 2,300 right now. Some authors actually spend a lot to grow lists (one example, MD has over 10,000 now).
 - That means when you launch a book, instantly have 10,000 buyers (instant bestseller status).
- How much time to devote to other social media (like FB, Twitter, Goodreads, etc.).
 - WARNING – A Time Trap (can easily waste hours and hours of writing time here).
 - Some is needed, especially for Indies

- Suggest 80/20 ratio (80 – writing; 20 – social media and marketing). 60/40 at the least.
- Developing A Street Team to Help Launch/Promote your book
 - People who will read and review your book around your launch date
 - May take time to grow something like this. Will necessarily involve giving free copies of your book to people in exchange for helping to promote it.
 - Fans make up most Street Teams.
 - If people already love your book, they generally don't mind telling others about it.
 - I developed a list over time of people who contacted me saying how much they loved my books (mailing list).
 - Another name for these kinds of people is "Influencers." People with the capacity to influence others through things like: blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Goodreads, etc.
 - You contact them when you're almost finished with your final edits, invite them to preview the book for free.
 - Usually a good idea to have at least your front cover done in your back cover blurb (to help pique their interest).
 - ARCs (Advanced Reader Copies).
 - This is what you will send your Street Team.
 - Because you have to bear the cost for this, I always start off by asking for people to receive an e-book format edition (Kindle – Mobi, or Nook and all others – ePub format).
 - Book Funnel is a great new service that doesn't cost very much (\$20/year to start). They provide a safe website and downloadable links to your e-books, all in one place.
 - Some people want, or will only review print copies. You have to decide if their help is worth the \$5-8 expense per person to send them a print copy.
- Facebook: Profile vs Author Page

- Profile = Friends / Author Page = Likes
 - Must have Profile to setup Author Page (I have and use both).
 - Note: 95-98% of people who “Like” your page will not see your posts (unless you pay for them).
 - Will need the Profile Page to take advantage of all the Reader groups on FB (can’t access with Author Page).
- Christian Indie Authors a MUST FB group for indies (but also talking about promo/marketing groups).
- The NEED to NOT make your posts primarily “Buy My Books.” Another place for an 80/20 or 60/40 ratio.
 - Funny Stories, interesting video links, funny memes
 - Use the Share button liberally (can be a creative way to plug your books in a Backdoor manner).

BIG MARKETING QUESTION - Going with Amazon-only or “Going Wide”

- Defining Terms
 - Amazon Only = (Exactly as it sounds – for eBooks Only)
 - Going Wide = Amazon, B&N, iTunes, Google Play, etc.
- Why would anyone choose Amazon-only?
 - Everyone readily admits Amazon is the “elephant in the room,” getting the overwhelming majority of book sales 2 SLIDES
 - Amazon has created a number of incentive programs to make it financially worthwhile for authors to sell exclusively through them (KDP Select).
 - Such as KU (Kindle Unlimited) – people pays \$9.99/month for unlimited use of Kindle books enrolled in the program. Kindle pays authors \$/page for every page read by KU folks.
 - (Many months my KU Income is ALMOST ½ of what I make).

- And Kindle Countdown Deals – 1 week every 90 days can run a special and get 70% of each book no matter the price (even 99 cents). Normally, pays 35% for books under \$2.99.
- 5 Day Free Promo – Will let you give copies away for Free, once every 90 days.
- I tried “Going Wide” the first few months, then did KDP Select. Made 2x as much money on Amazon (why I stay).
- Why would anyone choose “Going Wide”?
 - For principal’s sake - resent a big company like Amazon dominating everyone else.
 - To reach customers who buy elsewhere (Nook, iTunes, Smashwords, etc.)

(RUNNING OUT OF TIME? GO TO CLOSING NOW)

CLOSING PERSPECTIVE ON MARKETING

- 2 Final Pieces of Advice – 1 From Winnie The Pooh, 1 from Scripture
- Pooh shares some advice to Combat Fearful, anxious thoughts.
 - “What if you try all this and nothing works?”
 - Pooh would say, “What if some of it does?”
- The Book of Ecclesiastes actually shares some TIMELESS INSIGHTS about Marketing.

“Send your grain across the seas, and in time, profits will flow back to you. But divide your investments among many places, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead.” (Eccl 11:1-2)

“Plant your seed in the morning and keep busy all afternoon, for you don’t know if profit will come from one activity or another—or maybe both.” (Eccl 11:6)

- In Essence?
 - Work Hard at it and Keep Working Hard at it.
 - Evaluate then Try Lots of Different Things
 - Pay Attention to What Works (Measure Results)
 - Stay Flexible as Time Goes By
 - (The Marketplace is Seasonal, not Fixed).
 - Be prepared to Adapt to New Things, let go of Old ones.
- Keep Praying, Asking God for Wisdom, Trust in Him to Guide Your Steps

“Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart, and Lean Not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” (Prov. 3:5-6)

Addendum – SPECIFIC INDIE MARKETING IDEAS

- Specific Marketing Ideas for Indies
 - Email promos (like BookBub, Robins Reads and ENT) vs. FB Ads
 - There are 2 basic services indies use now: Newsletter/Email Services and Advertising (like FB).
 - Newsletter/Email folks:
 - Work on high-volume specials (book must be significantly discounted like 99 cents or Free).
 - These Companies have a large block of readers who have signed up to receive daily emails of discounted books (based upon their genre interest).
 - You pay them for the privilege to have your book featured in that email FOR THE PROMO DAY (Just one day).
 - For the better companies, you should expect to see a huge spike in sales that day (maybe for 2-3 days after).

- Always leave your book on special price for 2-3 days after promo (to catch stragglers).
- Downside to these?
 - Can only use them every 3 months (6 months for BookBub).
 - Sometimes have picky rules you must follow to be approved.
 - Therefore, not a dependable Marketing source.
- Another option is Facebook Ads.
 - Some Indies have become very wealthy using Facebook ads alone.
 - Caution: not for the faint of heart. This approach only works if you're willing to invest money up front.
 - You are paying Facebook a certain amount each day for your ad to reach a certain amount of people on Facebook (the more you pay, the more people you reach).
 - What makes this work is the ability to target your audience (you tell FB the kind of people you want to reach, and they will only put ads in the newsfeed of those kinds of people).
 - Example: **Readers who love _____** (insert bestselling authors whose books are the closest to yours).
- Downside to FB Ads? Very hard to learn (almost the opposite of user friendly).
 - Spent \$600 to take a course on how to use by Mark Dawson (an author who has mastered it).
 - Would never have figured out how to use these ads apart from this course (way too complex for me).
- Creating a series, using Perma-free
 - This is a very effective strategy used by many successful indie authors.

- For this to work, you need to have a series of books available (3-4 books).
 - You make the first book free, permanently, and promote it widely.
 - In the back of the book, you put chapter 1 of the next book, and a direct link for them to buy it on Amazon.
 - The reader reads the first book for free, then happily pays to read the 2nd one, then the 3rd, and so on.
 - The books need to be very well written, because it's the quality of the books themselves that makes this work (if the books are not well written, readers will not buy Books 2, 3 and 4).
- The Boxed Set idea:
 - Another version of using a set to generate sales.
 - You put all 3-4 books in a boxed set that you offer for a significant discount (than what each book would cost separately).
 - For example, 4 books for \$5.99 (or \$6.99).
 - Or a number of authors (5-7) each put a book together in a set that they offer for VERY discounted price (99 cents), and make it available on Kindle Unlimited (all about reaching new readers).
 - WARNING – Amazon recently changed HOW this works (Books can only be in the Set or on its own).
 - Back Pages – How to make them work.
 - Again, assuming the book is written well enough for readers to be sad when it's over...
 - The Back Pages become a great source of marketing your other books.
 - Create a page encouraging readers to leave a customer review (provide a link to the store, like Amazon).
 - Create a page encouraging readers to sign up for your newsletter, sharing all the benefits of doing so, with a link to your newsletter webpage.

- If a series, as mentioned, include chapter 1 of the next book (and a link to order it on Amazon, or Nook, etc.).