

Marketing Fiction, Romance, Mystery & Poetry

By Peggy Gaffney

The key to be effective in marketing your book is to start early and stay on schedule. Most works of fiction, romance, mystery and poetry are not whipped out overnight. It takes years to write a novel and get it through all the editing steps, find an agent, and get it bought by a publisher till it is finally available in the bookstore. Through all this time, if you want your book to do well, you must wear two hats; author and marketer.

Non-fiction authors know well that they must develop a niche following. But, this applies to fiction authors as well. While still in the writing stage, you should identify your primary and secondary audiences. Some will be easy to identify since you may have used some of them in your research to develop your themes or characters, but others might not be so obvious.

For instance, if you are writing a story of a person who has a nervous breakdown while going through a divorce, you should start building a database of sites and mailing lists that deal with each of these problems. Why? Because this is an obvious market. You should also be checking the news on these topics. "Google alerts" is an excellent free online tool that allows you to list topics that are of interest to you and be notified when something appears online about these topic. The other thing that you should be doing as you develop these contacts is finding out who the mover and shakers are in these fields. They are potential contacts for endorsements. You should be working on these steps 12 to 24 months prior to your book's publication date.

Once you are able to set an official publication date, you should begin lining up your publicity campaign. Now this includes interviews on the subjects covered in your book. Remember, they don't want you to go on-air and talk about your book. Even though yours is a work of fiction, you are expected to discuss the problems that are addressed in your book. In using the above example, compile statistics on divorce. Be able to cite specific signs of a person losing their grip on reality. Have the facts at your fingertips and let the interviewer push your book.

As soon as your book is in manuscript form, have a list of potential endorsers who should receive copies as well as your favorite media review people. They should be receiving copies at least three months in advance of the official publication date.

Once the book comes out, your marketing hat will settle firmly on your head and you will work at keeping your book in the public's attention with book talks, online interviews, launching parties, as well as short articles on your topics posted to newsletters and blogs with a reference to your book at the end of the article.

In the "golden days", many of these responsibilities fell to the publisher and their publicity department. However, for even the largest publisher in modern times, the amount of publicity is almost nil except for their top money making authors, and it's not much for them. The responsibility fall directly on the author's shoulder now, so as you

write in your “ivory tower”, stick your head out the window or better yet focus your eye on the internet set up a large calendar and starts planning your marketing strategy. You may be writing fiction, but will a careful plan of action; you can make your success a fact.