

1 SHARING YOUR WRITING WITH THE WORLD - HOW TO MARKET YOUR WORK

BY ALI REYNOLDS

Get started:

1. Firstly, know that it is a full-time job to publicise and market your published work (and you thought writing it was the hard bit). Commit to it and see it as a stage in your writing career - your work is out in the world so you need to be out there too.

2. Hone in on your unique selling points. You need a marketing strategy so start by focusing on what makes your work so special; think about every aspect of your work and mine it for options - physical places, historical angles, social issues. Stop thinking like a writer; start thinking like a publicist.

3. Practise your pitch. You may well have fine-tuned your pitch when you secured representation from an agent or publisher but now you need to present it to a whole host of different audiences, via everything from public events to digital platforms. So, be confident and concise and get that pitch word perfect - they won't buy it unless it sounds compelling.

Think local and national:

4. Do some local leg-work; make sure everyone knows you are their 'local author'. It's easy to make business cards, flyers, postcards or even bookmarks online these days so get a small print run and distribute in all the local cafes, bookshops, libraries and social hubs.

5. Have a book launch. You've got your pitch down to a fine art, you've practised reading aloud and you're ready to celebrate. So, organise a launch to create a buzz about your work. Bookshops are often favoured as venues and if you have a good rapport with the staff then ask them. Otherwise, consider cafes, your local library or pub. Expect only half your invitees to come so keep it cosy; it's much better to have people crammed in at the back than to be presenting to an awkwardly empty town hall.

6. Press coverage. Don't expect them to approach you - be proactive and contact the local newspaper, radio station and regional organisations covering literature and the arts, such as www.literatureworks.org.uk. Give them your brilliant pitch and make their work easier by suggesting the angle or ideas you're perfect to talk or write about.

7. Book groups. Find your local book groups; put ads in local papers or city/region-based websites: 'Author with fab book would love to come and chat at your book group'. Look online too (how could you not?). You'll find the charity Reading Groups for Everyone <http://readinggroups.org> helpful.

8. Word of mouth: the elusive publicity dream. But never think this is shorthand for 'not doing anything'; although word of mouth may seem like an organic process it is often the result of carefully cultured strategic marketing. Your launch party, book group attendance and scattering of flyers will help but you need to keep the momentum going to ensure word of mouth extends beyond the local school catchment area.

9. This is arguably the 'age of the festival' - check annual festival dates and send emails to the organisers via their main websites. Many festivals will have an open mic feature in their programme in which you might be able to read. Of course by now your pitch will be so perfect that if you suggest your unique angle (your evocation of adopted twins or time travel fantasy for Key Stage 2 readers etc.) they may well slot you into their programme.

Think global:

10. Build your own virtual life. Websites are pretty straightforward for even the most ardent technophobes amongst us. Your website will showcase your work, it'll be your virtual bookshop, but it will also sell you. Wordpress sites are the norm and most sites can feature a blog too. You are a writer so use a blog to display your writing flair and your take on the world. Make it relevant of course, link your work to the blog content and use it to explore the issues or the ideas you write about but don't update the world on your holiday plans. If you're new to this then do your research - look up your favourite writers, they will all have a website and probably a blog, see how the professionals do it and follow suit. Do a blog tour; follow bloggers and find those that might be willing to let you be a 'guest blogger', you'll then reach all of their readers too.

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11. Master social media. Did you set up your twitter account before your publication date? Ideally you would have started long before your publication but, if not, there's no time like the present so set up an account. Find someone to give you a 'tweetorial' so that you know the basics and then watch and wait in the wings learning the craft. 'Follow' as many writers and writing organisations as you can, you'll soon 'get it' and understand Twitter's capacity to disseminate information and share ideas. Note that the most skilful writers on twitter don't self-promote, they talk about other writers or concentrate on having 'something to say'.

12. Join a writing community. Writers are your best allies: cross-promotion and shared knowledge is fundamental. Writers often use facebook not only as individuals but as groups; you're likely to find local writing groups which may be worth contacting. Genre fiction, such as historical fiction, crime or sci-fi/fantasy, all have organisations to join and active circuits of events and festivals so get on board. If you are knowledgeable about other writers and spread positivity about their work you'll quickly find they reciprocate.

13. Think laterally. If your novel is set in the English Civil War or it has a climate change theme, think about other organisations or publications that cover these issues. There are a whole plethora of societies out there, get googling and don't be afraid to make contact with them, perhaps you can write an article, a book review for a similar title, or interview another writer for them?

14. Think about the book trade. Remember those book groups? Remember that word of mouth magic? Kindly ask everyone you can to go online and leave a reader's review on Amazon. But don't stop there. Ask your readers to check out www.goodreads.com too and www.peoplesbookprize.com and leave reviews of your work.

Don't stop:

15. Keep writing! The more you write the more you'll have to market. Keep going, saying yes to everything and getting more words on every real and digital page.



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Ali Reynolds worked as an editor at Vintage, Random House, where she commissioned collections of short stories and novels. In 2005 she moved to Bristol to establish the Ali Reynolds Editorial and Literary Consultancy. She is a passionate advocate of the value of editorial guidance and support. She specialises in helping writers prepare their work for publication and understand today's publishing industry. She runs classes, scouts for literary agents and is chair of the judging panel for the 2013 Bristol Short Story Prize.

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