

Creating Your Author Web Site and Media Kit

- **An author should create a web presence for his or her book, whether this is a part of an existing web site with a new domain name, or a special web site for the book. You hope to create a following to highlight you and your work, including the book, and this is the place to set the stage.**

There are three things you want to make sure you do with your web site:

1. From the home page of your web site, you want users to be able to sign up for something free so they become part of your database, and so you can stay in touch with them as you offer new products or services. You want your readers to get more info when they come to your site and to feel free to ask questions or make comments. Many authors find this reader contact so valuable that it forms the basis for new books or future editions.
2. Journalists also use the web extensively for doing research for articles or news pieces, so you must have a media kit readily available. If you have substantial content to show you are an expert, your web site can lead to enhanced publicity.
3. Readers should be able to buy your book directly from your site, or there should be a link to Amazon.com or another eCommerce site.

Regardless of how many or few pages your web site includes and how well you create a reader community, every author's web site should include:

1. About the book (with book table of contents, excerpts, and exercises and resources, if any)
2. Media kit (including press releases and audio, video or print media clips)
3. Hi and lo res JPGs of the front cover of the book and the author's headshot
4. Author bio
5. Endorsements and reviews
6. Author events
7. Mailing list sign up
8. "Buy the book" button (for eCommerce on your site or link to the Amazon.com page with your book)
9. Contact the author information

Media Kit

One of the most vital items an author must have online (and optionally in hard copy) is a media kit. It contains all the information in one place that a media representative will need when preparing an interview or writing a story. A full media kit will include at least:

- An author bio
- Author photo(s)
- Book cover photo
- Fact sheet on book including the title, author, publication date, ISBN, number of pages, retail availability, testimonials
- Press release(s)
- The three major message points in your book
- At least ten questions the author is prepared to answer in an interview (with the answers)

- Clippings from previous media interviews, articles, audio, video

Plan to make this media kit available before publication. The media won't wait until you've had a chance to put this together, so if it isn't completed beforehand, they will go to the next story.

Author Bios

One of the important components of your media kit and your back cover is your author bio. There is usually also an "About the Author" section at the back of your book.

On the back cover, you probably have only a few sentences to convey your most significant messages, letting the audience know why you are someone they should listen to and why they should buy your book.

In the bio for your media kit and inside the book, you want to clearly state something about your background and your accomplishments that is relevant for this book and its readers (about 100 to 500 words).

There are two common mistakes in writing an author bio for a Web site or a media kit. The first is saying too much, and the second is saying too little.

Some authors go on for several pages, telling everything they've done since high school. Not only will this bore the reader, it says you are trying too hard to be an impressive person. Talk about awards and achievements only if they are relevant to your book.

Some authors are timid and don't say enough about what they've done. It's difficult for them to brag about their accomplishments or even remember what their accomplishments are. If this is you, seek some help in writing the bio. With a polished bio, almost anyone can have star quality.

Author Photos

Having a professionally done headshot is essential for the author who will be doing any speaking engagements or media interviews. Usually, the more attractive, polished and presentable the author, the higher the likelihood of media attention and interviews.

It's useful to make available several different headshots and other photos for journalists. Be sure the photographer supplies you with a high-resolution JPG file of all photos (at least 300 DPI) that will be adequate for all print uses.

Press Releases

An author should continually think about how his or her book relates to the news of the day, and she should release her own news stories accordingly. A press release should be short—a page or two at most, with a provocative headline that grabs the reader's attention.

Enticing statistics in the opening of a press release immediately communicate the magnitude of the problem or challenge the topics your book addresses. Writing should be short, pithy, and tight.

In press releases, include a quote from the author, and testimonials about the author when possible.

Always include a brief author bio and all the relevant book information and ordering information, such as the ISBN, publication date, publisher, web site and contact information.

Take care to optimize the key words in your press release. Any words that the media might search on to find your subject should be repeated as often as possible in the release.

Here are three highly recommended services to help you write and distribute press releases to the major news agencies:

1. PR Web (www.prweb.com) is the least expensive way to get your press release into broad distribution at about \$80 per release.
2. PR Newswire (www.prnewswire.com) is the granddaddy of news release services. One of their services, ProfNet, allows experts in all fields to register their availability to journalists.
3. BookFlash (www.bookflash.com) provides online media kits, press release writing, and press release distribution services for very reasonable fees. You choose the number of organizations, and BookFlash sends your release to all of them. They charge by the contact.

Blogs

Many authors are creating blogs instead of or in addition to web sites. Blogs are immediate because they're created weekly, daily or even several times during the day, and some have a wide following. Regular readers can subscribe and be alerted to updates whenever they appear. Blogs can be customized, just like web sites, to pick up the look and feel of the author's brand.

If you choose to use a blog instead of a web site, make sure your blog has a place to attach free articles and your media kit.

One of the advantages of a blog is that Google searches pick up blog information much faster than they pick up web site updates and changes.

Two places to go to set up free blogs are www.typepad.com and www.wordpress.com.

Podcasts

Podcasts are short, free audios that can be downloaded and listened to on your computer or MP3 player. You could interview someone or have someone interview you—or you could just pontificate on a subject that might interest your readers. Podcasts can be created using a hand-held digital recording device, or they can be recorded over the phone or through the computer.

A simple way to create teleclasses is to use the telephone conferencing and recording services of Free Conference Call (www.freeconferencecall.com). They will record the call and make it available to you via an MP3 file format.

You can also record audios and make them available to others using Audio Acrobat (www.audioacrobat.com). To edit your audio, use Audacity (www.audacity.com).

The resulting MP3 file can be posted to your Web site or added to iTunes to be downloaded by subscribers. Past radio interviews can be repurposed as podcasts as well.

Social Networking

Some of the newer forms of book promotion are on social networking sites such as My Space, FaceBook or Squidoo (www.Squidoo.com/authorsonsquidoo). Use these pages to draw attention to you as the author and to the book. You build a “lens” which is

a one-topic web page that informs and links others to blogs or sites on this topic as well as giving your opinion there.

Growing Your Mailing List

One of the primary ways you can increase book sales is to build a database of people who want to hear from you and then regularly communicate with them.

To do this, you need a mechanism where they can sign up to be on your emailing list and then a consistent stay in touch mechanism like an eNewsletter or ezine. It is important to decide with what frequency will you be communicating and then stick with a schedule – will it be weekly, every other week, or once a month?

You can use technology to help you do this, with something like www.ConstantContact.com which is a service which helps you collect and organize your database, and also assists you in creating professional eNewsletters and other communications.

Another great way to stay in touch is by setting up autoresponder communications that sends emails at regular intervals after a purchase or other interaction with your web site. One service that will help you here is GetResponse.com.

In order to keep your mailing list clean and be sure you aren't considered spam by Internet Service Providers, it is important to make sure people “opt-in” to your emails. To make doubly sure, you might consider a double opt-in process, where users get an email when they register for something on your site that asks them to respond if they really want to be on your mailing lists.

eCommerce

eCommerce means you sell products and services directly from your web site. You set the price and you keep the profits.

To do this you will need a merchant account (online bank account) and an online payment gateway, and a shopping cart on your site.

The merchant account allows you to take credit card payments. One of the best is Practice Pay Solutions (www.practicepaysolutions.com) that includes both the merchant account and the online payment gateway. The monthly fee is about \$20 and then there are also per transaction fees.

An online payment gateway is secure bridge between your web site and the credit card payment

processing network.

In order to take orders, especially for multiple products, it is important to have a shopping cart to take the order and to calculate shipping charges, etc. Kick Start Cart (www.kickstartcart.com) is one of the most complete, and includes the ability to sell physical as well as electronic products, make affiliate sales and send out receipts, coupons and other materials via a built-in autoresponder, which sends out personalized messages.

Affiliate Sales

More and more Web sites are selling other people's products through affiliate sales. For instance, if you had a book on travel, you would visit the travel agency sites or the travel gear or apparel sites to find out whether selling your book on their site would be beneficial for both of you. They would add to their product offerings, and you would sell your book, giving them a small percentage.

You can do the same thing on your site by affiliating with other authors whose books are complementary to yours. To set up an affiliate program, you can use www.kickstartcart.com or another affiliate management system such as www.clickbank.com. You must determine what commission percentage you are willing to pay on sales from others' sites, but typically they are 30% to 40% (although they could be from 5% to 75%).

Amazon.com makes it easy to sell their products from your site with the Amazon affiliates program.

Web Site Metrics

Once you have a site, it will be important to judge its effectiveness by keeping track of how many visitors come to the site, what pages they visit and when and how they buy from you. One simple and free metrics program is Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics).

Titles in this eBasics series on Book Marketing

- How to Create a Book Marketing Plan on a Budget
- It's a Date: Setting Your Book's Publication Date
- How to Love the Internet: Creating Your Author Web Site and Media Kit
- Rave Reviews: How to Ask for Them and Get Them
- How to Build Your Author Platform and Attract a Great Publisher
- Feel the Love: How to Ask for a Testimonial
- And the Winner Is...: How to Enter and Win Book Awards Competitions
- Be Everywhere on a Budget: How to Create a Virtual Book Tour
- Why We Love Amazon: How to Make the Most of All Amazon Has to Offer
- You've Got a Best Seller!: Create Your Own Amazon Best Seller Campaign
- You're a Star!: How to Prepare for Best Radio Interview
- Book Expo America: Your Best Chance for Meeting Your Future Publisher Face-to-Face

Writing a Nonfiction Book and Publishing a Book are also covered in two other eBasics series.



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