



The Smashwords Book Marketing Guide

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Smashwords Edition

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Other Smashwords Titles by [Mark Coker](#):

The Smashwords Style Guide (how to format and publish an ebook)
The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success (ebook publishing best practices)
The 10-Minute PR Checklist – How to Earn the Publicity You Deserve
Boob Tube (novel about Hollywood celebrity)

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Introduction – About the Smashwords Book Marketing Guide:

This guide provides authors and publishers practical advice on how to market their books. The ideas presented herein cost nothing to implement other than the investment of your time.

In the last three years, tens of thousands of authors and publishers have improved their book marketing with the Smashwords Book Marketing Guide.

Although the Smashwords Book Marketing Guide was originally written for the benefit of authors who publish and distribute their ebooks at Smashwords, the principles you'll learn here are universal.

Some of my tips require only a couple minutes of your time, yet will reap dividends for years to come. Other tips require a greater ongoing investment of your time and attention. Do the easy things first.

This guide begins with a short summary of how the Smashwords platform assists an author's marketing, and then continues on with over thirty book marketing tips any author can employ.

This guide is a living document, so I welcome your suggestions for new tips and techniques we can share with the Smashwords author community. Write me (Mark Coker) at first initial second initial at you know where dot com. I'll update the guide based on your feedback, and as we introduce new free marketing and distribution tools for authors.

Background on Smashwords:

Smashwords is a free ebook publishing platform and distributor serving ebook authors, publishers, literary agents, retailers and libraries. Since its founding in 2008, Smashwords has helped over 60,000 authors and publishers release and distribute over 200,000 ebooks. The Smashwords service distributes to most major ebook retailers, including Apple iBooks, Barnes & Noble, Sony, Kobo, Flipkart (largest online bookseller in India) and others. Smashwords offers various free tools for digital publishing, marketing, sampling, selling and distribution. These tools help you connect with your audience.

Setting Expectations:

Book marketing is a tough uphill battle. Even most authors published by large commercial print publishers complain they get little or no post-publication marketing support from their publishers. Most authors, whether they're traditionally published or self-published, must do their own marketing.

At Smashwords, we don't make promises we can't keep, so we cannot promise you your book will sell well, even if you follow all the tips in this guide. In fact, most books, both traditionally published and self-published, don't sell well. Whether your book is intended to inspire, inform or entertain, millions of other books and media forms are competing against you for your prospective reader's ever-shrinking pie of attention.

Ebooks represent the fastest growing segment of the book publishing industry. Ebook sales have been increasing over 100 percent per year the last few years, according to the latest industry

research, while traditional print book sales have stagnated or declined. If you're an author, you need to expose your work to the digital realm.

Despite the rapid growth of ebook sales, ebooks still represent a minority of overall book industry sales. But this is changing. For all of 2011, according to the Association of American Publishers, ebooks accounted for nearly 20% of the U.S. trade market, up from 8% in 2010, 3% in 2009 and 1% in 2008. In 2012, ebooks probably accounted for at least 30% of overall US book sales. Yet these industry statistics dramatically understate what happens when authors make their books available in ebook form. Some bestselling indie (self-published) authors at Smashwords are selling over 1,000 ebooks for every print book. Most Smashwords authors don't even bother to publish in print any more.

Bottom line, you're smart to get your book out there as an ebook.

How Smashwords Helps Authors and Publishers Market Their Books

Okay, in the previous paragraph, we leveled with you and told you how you're unlikely to sell a lot of ebooks in the near term. Now that we have that out of the way, let's review how Smashwords helps market your book today, without you lifting a finger:

1. Exposure at Smashwords.com, our retail operation - Simply by publishing your book on Smashwords, your book is discoverable by thousands of customers who pass through our virtual doors each day. Once a visitor starts browsing, we make it easy for them to serendipitously discover books and authors of possible interest with features such as category searches, bestseller lists, highest rated lists, "People who recently purchased this book also purchased these books," and "People who recently viewed this author also viewed these authors."

2. Distribution to Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Sony and others

Smashwords is the world's largest distributor of self-published ebooks. Ebook distribution is important, because if your book isn't widely available in all major retailers, then it's not discoverable. Once your book is accepted into the Smashwords Premium Catalog, Smashwords distributes it to the Apple iBookstore (51 countries), Barnes & Noble (US and U.K., with more countries on the way), Kobo (multiple countries), Sony, Flipkart (India's largest online bookseller), the Diesel eBook Store and Baker and Taylor (the Blio.com store and the Axis360 service for public libraries). More retail agreements are in the works (stay tuned!). Most Smashwords authors and publishers derive 80% or more of their sales through the Smashwords distribution network, as opposed to the Smashwords.com store. It's free and easy to earn inclusion in the Premium Catalog. Simply format your book to the requirements of the Smashwords Style Guide. Learn more at <http://smashwords.com/distribution>

3. Multiple ebook formats – When you upload a book to Smashwords, we convert it into nine different ebook formats. This makes your book accessible and readable to users of any e-reading device. Customers can purchase the book at Smashwords once, and enjoy it on any of their personal devices in any format. Some of the many devices include the iPad, iPhone, Kindle, Nook, Kobo Reader, Sony Reader, personal computers, smart phones, and future devices not even invented yet.

4. Author profile page - When you publish with Smashwords, we automatically create a personal web page for you with a unique web address. You can post your bio and picture, provide a listing of your published books on Smashwords, add links to outside web sites, integrate your external blog, or provide links to where readers can purchase print versions of your

book. Your profile page also lists reviews you have written of other Smashwords books and your Smashwords Interview (more on this later).

5. Book pages - For each book you publish with Smashwords, we create a web page dedicated to that book. You can upload a book cover, upload YouTube book trailers, and add a synopsis and descriptive tags to help readers find your book. Your book page is where prospective readers can access samples of your book in formats readable on any ebook reading device. Customers can post reviews of your book on your book page.

6. Sampling - Smashwords offers the most powerful and flexible sampling system you'll find anywhere. Sampling allows readers to try your book before they buy. As the author, you determine the sampling percentage, from word one forward. If, for example, you select 15% sampling, the first 15% of your book, starting at the beginning, is available for free download so prospective readers can try before they buy. At the end of the sample, we prompt them to purchase the full book.

7. Search Engine Visibility - Your profile page, book pages and online book samples are designed so search engines can easily discover and index them. Simply by publishing your book on Smashwords, you'll have dozens, sometimes hundreds of inbound links to your pages from the leading search engines, making it easier for prospective readers to discover you.

8. Coupons! - Smashwords offers a custom coupon generator that makes it easy for you to create coupon codes you can distribute to your fans on your email lists, web site, blog, or social networks. To generate a coupon, click to your Dashboard at <http://www.smashwords.com/dashboard>. Coupons are tremendously popular with our authors. Read on below for some ideas on how you can market with coupons.

9. Smashwords Interviews – This new exclusive author marketing tool, launched in August 2013, makes it easy to create, publish and promote a *self-interview*. The interview helps readers and prospective readers learn the story behind you, the author. It's a lot of fun. Our system will present a series of optional questions you can answer, or you can modify our questions or create your own. The resulting interview is heavily promoted across the Smashwords site. You'll find a link to the Smashwords Interviews feature under the Account tab at Smashwords. More on this feature in the tips below!

10. Book Reviews - Book reviews help sell books, so we make it easy for your customers to review your books. Whenever someone buys your book, we send them an automated reminder to review your book if they enjoyed it. We also work with third party reviewers to help them review your books.

11. Embeddable YouTube Videos - As an author, you can embed YouTube videos in both your profile page and your book pages. This is great for book trailers, or just you in front of the camera talking about your book. Video offers you a chance to engage the senses of the prospective reader and entice them to sample and purchase your book.

12. Book tagging - We realize even our extensive hardwired book categories can't accurately describe all books, so we allow you as the author or publisher to add additional tags, or keywords, to help describe your book and make it easier to connect with prospective readers. The book tags you enter help people discover you when they do a book search from the home page search box, or when they click on the tag cloud on the home page. Don't enter more than ten tags.

13. Tag Cloud - You've probably noticed the tag cloud on some pages. The tag cloud offers readers another way to discover books of interest to them. Simply by clicking on a keyword in the cloud, the reader is presented with all the books that match that tag.

14. Other books by this Author or Publisher - When you publish multiple books on Smashwords, you magnify the opportunity for readers to discover you and your works. If a reader is browsing one book page, they'll see a link that reads, "Also by this author:" or "Also by this publisher:".

15. Integration with Social Networking and Social Bookmarking Sites - You've probably heard the term, "social media," but may not be sure what it means. Put simply, social media is all about taking what we've always known as "word of mouth marketing" and unleashing it on to the Internet, where people can easily share information and interests. On each book page, you'll notice links to popular social media sites such as Twitter, Pinterest and Facebook. Simply by clicking on this link, you or your readers can share your book with friends. Each time someone clicks on one of these links, they're building a virtual pathway (a hyperlink) that leads back to your book page.

16. The Shopping Cart - We help you sell your book. We offer a simple to use shopping cart for your readers, and we make it easy for them to pay via PayPal or any of the most popular credit cards. And best of all, 85% of the net sales proceeds from your book go to the person who deserves it most: You, the author or publisher (70.5% for sales generated from affiliate marketers). After all, Smashwords was created by an author (me) to help my fellow authors.

17. Smashwords Affiliate Partners Program - The Smashwords Affiliate Marketing Program provides incentive to third party websites, blogs and affiliate marketers to link to and promote your books. Affiliates receive a commission in exchange for all book sales they help generate. As a Smashwords author or publisher, your books are automatically enrolled to benefit from this program.

18. Promotion on Smashwords Satellites – Smashwords Satellites are a collection of over 30 specialized micro-sites operated by Smashwords. Readers can browse Smashwords ebooks by category and topic. The Satellites offer experimental book discovery interfaces that make it easier for customers to discover and sample books of interest. As a Smashwords author, your book is automatically promoted on multiple Satellites. For a complete listing of Satellites, visit <http://www.smashwords.com/labs>

19. Site-wide Promotions - Several times per year, Smashwords offers special promotions. The most popular promotion is Read an Ebook Week, which usually occurs the second week of March. Another promotion is our annual July Summer/Winter Sale (because it's summer for our Northern hemisphere customers, and winter for those in the Southern hemisphere). With each of the promotions, you can enroll your books at different discount levels, and we promote your books within a special promotional catalog on the home page and at our mobile retail partners such as Aldiko.

20. Free learning resources – Knowledge is power. We go to great lengths to provide you the free educational learning materials you need to be as successful as possible. This Smashwords Book Marketing Guide is one such free resource. If you're new to ebook publishing, check out our glossary of ebook publishing terminology in our FAQ at <https://www.smashwords.com/about/supportfaq#glossary> In March, 2012, I published my most important ebook yet, The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success. It identifies the 28 best-practices

of the most commercially successful ebook authors at Smashwords. Once you finish reading this Smashwords Book Marketing Guide, read [The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success](#). Another popular free learning resource is the [Smashwords Style Guide](#). With nearly 250,000 downloads and counting, it's probably the world's most popular ebook formatting guide.

Adopting a Proactive Marketing Mindset

In the previous section, I shared what Smashwords will do for you, all for free, and all without you lifting a finger. After all those great features, you might wonder if it's okay for you to relax, wait for the royalty checks to pour in, and start plotting your next book. **Wrong!** Odds are, even with the marketing and distribution benefits listed above, if you do nothing else you're not going to sell many books. To reach more readers and take your sales to the next level, you must proactively market your book. Although there are hundreds of books out there that will tell you how to market your book, and many of them are quite good (and published on Smashwords too!), most aren't tuned specifically to help you market your book on an advanced digital publishing platform such as Smashwords. That's where this guide comes in. We're going to focus on the top things you can do today that will help you get the word out about your book. Do the easy stuff first, and then refer back to this guide from time to time for more ideas.

Platform Building Starts Yesterday - Build Your Platform and Online Social Network

If you're waiting until your book is finished to start marketing, you're already behind the curve. As an author, you should devote a portion of every day to get your name out there and to build relationships with prospective readers, partners and friends. This is "platform building." Your platform is simply your ability to reach readers, or reach people who can help you reach readers. All the ideas in this Smashwords Book Marketing Guide will help you build your personal platform. As an author, your readers will determine your success. If you can build a passionate fan base, they will market your book for you. If you don't begin your platform building until after you release your book, you'll face a more difficult challenge. The earlier you start your platform-building (preferably the moment you start dreaming of writing your first book), the easier and more successful your marketing will be. If you feel like you're starting late, don't fret. We all start somewhere, and by reading this guide you'll get a head start. Platform building isn't as difficult as you might think, and once you get started, you'll find it gets easier and easier as your platform grows.

Social Media is Scary to Some Writers – Don't Let it Intimidate You

Social media and online marketing intimidate a lot of authors. Many of us writers (and I include myself here!) are naturally introverted. For us introverts, social media is easier than meeting strangers at a party, but it still takes some getting used to. Good social media practices, like good marketing, are catalysts for book marketing success. If you don't engage in social media, and you don't market, you can still become a successful author by writing such great books that readers market you books for you through their word of mouth. So, don't feel you're going to fail as an author if you don't do marketing or social media. As a catalyst, though, good marketing, for which good social media is a tool, can make your book more successful. If you're new to social media, ease into it slowly. Don't feel pressured to spend hours every day (your time is better spent writing and editing).

Here are three social media tips to get you started:

1. Make it easy for readers to connect. Promote your social media addresses (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) in your book and on your blog or website so fans can connect with you. If you only start with two, start with Facebook and Twitter. These social media connections

allow readers to start forming a passive relationship with you. They're connecting with you because they love your books and want to hear your news.

2. Use social media as a tool for sharing your news, or to prompt further engagement with you (if you wish) such as in online discussions via Facebook.
3. Use the social media sites as a tool to further your professional development. By accessing social media, you can receive direct feedback and ideas from your readers. You can also tap into these social media tools to learn. This is my favorite use of social media. More on this below in my discussion about Twitter.

Hyperlinks Help Readers Discover Books

In the old days, one advantage of getting your book "traditionally" published was broad distribution into physical bookstores, where you hoped book buyers would stumble upon your book, read a few pages and purchase it. In the realm of digital books, distribution remains critically important, but I want you to expand your notion of digital distribution. If the front door at your local bookstore is the path to print book discovery, the path to ebook discovery is the hyperlink.

A hyperlink is the path your web browser takes to reach a certain destination. It's the web address for everything you find on the Internet. If you look in your web browser's address field, you'll see something like www.google.com, or <http://www.smashwords.com>. That's the web address. Hyperlinks create the signposts, paths, roads and bridges that help your readers discover your book, even if your book was not the original destination they had in mind.

Prospective readers may go to Google and do a search on "how to plant tulips," and if that's the book you've written they're more likely to find you if you created the paths to your book. Google's database contains billions of web addresses. Every time you or your fans publish a hyperlink on the Internet that points to your Smashwords author profile or your book page, that hyperlink makes your book more findable by the billions of people on the Internet. Many of the tips provided in this guide are focused on helping you leverage the tools of the Internet to build the digital paths that lead readers to your doorstep.

When you publish hyperlinks on your blog or website, you can link directly to your book pages at Smashwords or any other retail platform. Make it easy for your readers to read your work!

Some authors who already have personal web pages may wonder why they should work to build paths to their retail pages when they should be building paths to their own web pages. Great question! You should work to build paths to both pages, and to the extent you're successful building paths to your Smashwords pages or other retailer pages, you'll also assist your search engine optimization efforts for your personal standalone web site. Here's why: Search engines use hundreds of algorithms to determine which web pages they believe are most relevant to their users for a given search query. Of all the different criteria they use, one of the most important is their technique for measuring relevance. Put simply, the more sites that link to a web site, and the more sites that link to the site linking to your site, the more relevant your site becomes in the search engine's eyes. So if you have hundreds of sites linking to your Smashwords profile, and your Smashwords profile links to your personal web page or blog (and yes, we support this), then that link from Smashwords becomes a positive endorsement of your web site in the eyes of Google and the other search engines.

The Importance of Authors Helping Authors

Although your book is competing against millions of other books, your fellow authors are not your competition. They are your partners. You should treat them as partners. Join author

groups, both online and in the real world, and do everything you can to contribute to the success of your fellow authors. Share ideas. Share experiences of what worked for you and what didn't work. Do joint promotions with other authors so your fans can learn about them and their fans can learn about you. When you open doors for your fellow authors, they will open doors for you as well.

41 Free Marketing Tips

Tip #1: Update your email signature

Your email signature is one of the most powerful marketing tools at your disposal, yet few authors take advantage of it. Most of us send emails to dozens if not hundreds of people each week, and each of these people (often friends, family, business associates, fans) represent potential customers for our book. By updating (or creating) an email signature, you're providing email recipients a low-key, unobtrusive path to discover and purchase your book. Nearly every email program and service allows you to create a single email signature file, usually a simple text file, that then automatically appends to every email you write. For your email signature, add a direct hyperlink to both your Smashwords author page and maybe even your book pages, so it's easy for your readers to go straight to your book. To find the direct hyperlinks, go to the Smashwords home page and enter your name into the search box, which will bring up a listing of your books. Click on a book. Then cut and paste the URL of the web address of your browser into your signature. Next, click on your hyperlinked author name from your book page. That will take you to your author profile page, and from there you can cut and paste the exact address of that page into your signature.

Note that when you compose an email, your email program or service will automatically compose the email either in plain text or HTML. If it composes an email in plain text, you can list your hyperlinks in your signature as plain text, such as <http://hyperlink.com>, and most receiving email programs will automatically make the link clickable (this is what you want). A clickable link usually appears as blue and underlined. If your email program composes your emails in HTML, however, it's not enough to just list the hyperlink, because it won't be clickable by the recipient. To ensure it is clickable, you should make the link clickable in your signature file. If this sounds confusing, study the help files associated with your particular email software or email service, because no single software or service handles this issue the same. After you compose your signature, send a test email to yourself to see if your hyperlinks are clickable or not.

Here's what my signature could look like:

Mark Coker

Founder and CEO

Smashwords, Inc.

<http://www.smashwords.com/>

Co-author of Boob Tube, a satire on Hollywood celebrity

My Smashwords profile: <http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/mc>

Sample or purchase Boob Tube: <http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/3>

Tip #2: Post a Notice to Your Web Site or Blog

If you have a standalone web site or blog, as many authors do, be sure to post a notice that your book is now available at Smashwords. Make sure the links are live, or clickable, so the reader can just click and go. It's fine to post a generic link to www.smashwords.com, but also make sure you provide direct hyperlinks to your profile page and your book page, such as:

Find me on Smashwords at: [insert link to profile page]

Sample or purchase my ebook at Smashwords: [insert link to book page]

Important: To find the exact Internet address of your profile page, click on your My Smashwords link, and then you'll see your profile page address in the URL (the Internet address of your browser). You can also enter your name or book title into the search box on any page, and then when your book comes up, click on your author name, and then you'll see the exact address of the page in your browser's URL. My profile page address, for example, looks like this: <http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/mc>).

Tip #3: Contact your Friends, Family, Co-workers, Business Associates and Fans

After you publish your book on Smashwords, be sure to tell everyone you know, and politely ask them to share your email with their friends to spread the word. You don't need to be pushy or salesy, just send them a short email, such as:

Dear friends and family,

Just wanted to let you know that my book, [insert your book title], was published today as a multi-format ebook by Smashwords. As many of you know, the book [is about/covers/explores] [insert a short one sentence description of your book]. I hope you'll take time to check it out at Smashwords, where you can sample the first XX% of the book for free.

Here's the link to my author profile: [insert the direct link]

Here's the direct link to my book page, where you can sample or purchase the book: [insert direct link]

Won't you also take a moment to spread the word about my book to everyone you know?

Thank you so much for your support!

Sincerely,

Your first Name

[if you completed your signature, your signature appears here.]

Tip #4: Post a Notice to Your Social Networks

If you're a user of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or other online communities, tell your friends and associates that you just published your book at Smashwords, and provide a direct hyperlink to your book page. If you're not already participating in some of these networks, jump in and start.

Tip #5: Update Your Message Board Signatures

Most message board communities allow you to create a signature that appears at the bottom of every post. It's a subtle, non-intrusive, and non-salesy (is that a word?) method of telling people where they can learn more about you. One Smashwords author, simply by adding a single link that read "Read my writing at [she inserted the hyperlink to her profile page at Smashwords]," drove over 1,200 people to her profile page in the span of only about 5 weeks. I should point out that in her posts, she wasn't even talking about her ebooks! It was because she made herself a valuable member of the community that other community members took the initiative to learn more about her and her writing.

Tip #6: Reach readers with Twitter

If you're not already a member of Twitter, drop everything and go join right now. Twitter is a micro-blogging site. It's like blogging, but you're restricted to posts of only 140 characters. Many people when they first hear about Twitter think it's the stupidest, most egomaniacal thing anyone could do with their time (this is what I thought, before I saw the light). But they're wrong. Give Twitter a chance and you'll discover it's a great tool. After you open a free account (twitter.com), Twitter asks you a simple question, "what are you doing?" Answer the question, and you just tweeted. To send messages to other Twitter users, you can post, "@username, message....," like "@markcoker, I'm telling all my friends they should publish at Smashwords." Your friends, family and fans can follow all your utterances, which are called "tweets" in Twitter parlance. You can also follow other Twitter users by visiting their profile and clicking "Follow."

You can follow me at <http://twitter.com/markcoker>, where I typically tweet about developments at Smashwords and trends in the publishing industry.

Twitter lets you create a short profile, so it's important you do that so your followers know where to go to learn more about you. It allows you to insert a hyperlink to a web page, so you can either enter your profile page at Smashwords (see tip #2 above on how to find the right link) or you can enter the address for your personal web site or blog. Once you join Twitter, you can promote your Twitter address on your Smashwords profile by clicking to <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/edit>

After you add your Twitter address to your profile page, you'll receive additional promotion on Smashwords by gaining an automatic listing in our directory of Smashwords authors on Twitter. You'll find the directory here:

http://smashwords.com/twitterbuzz/smashwords_authors_on_twitter

Whenever you tweet about Smashwords on Twitter, your tweet will also be promoted on Smashwords Twitterbuzz, here: http://smashwords.com/twitterbuzz/smashwords_on_twitter

Like all social media, it's important to join and participate in the conversation. Make friends. Share ideas. Add value. Follow smart people and learn from them (I ***love*** Twitter for this). If you're only there to flog your book, people will tune you out fairly quickly.

There are typically four types of Twitterers at Twitter:

1. Sharers: Sharers find useful information, and then share it with their followers, usually in the form of hyperlinks to interesting articles. Often they will “retweet” other interesting tweets from people they follow. Retweets begin with the acronym “RT” or you can click the “retweet” link in Twitter. Twitterers re-tweet tweets from other Twitterers they think would be of interest to their fellow tweeps (twitterism for peeps, or people who follow them). Make sense?

2. Conversationalists: these are people who spend most of their time in conversation with their followers and friends via @”username” messages. If you tweet, for example, *@markcoker I think indie authors will inherit the publishing universe*, then I’ll probably see it because I check Twitter regularly to see what my tweeps are tweeting at me. When you add a person’s screenname to your tweet, preceded by @, you’re saying, “this tweet is for you,” or, “at you.”

3. Marketers: People who are trying to promote themselves or their product.

4. Followers: People who use Twitter mainly to follow Sharers. This is actually my favorite use of Twitter. The tweetstream of the people I follow is like an incredible real-time curated news feed of important trends and news in ebook publishing.

Most Twitterers are a blend of varying degrees of all four of the above. For example, I’m a Sharer, Marketer and Follower. Use Twitter however it best suits your needs and personality. There’s no single one right way to use Twitter.

I try to share Smashwords-specific information and ebook publishing news and trends of interest to Smashwords authors.

I minimize the number of people I follow, because if I follow too many people it creates so much noise it diminishes the value of Twitter to me. I follow some really smart people who teach me new information about book publishing every day. This is my favorite use of Twitter. Even if I never tweeted another tweet ever again, I’d still use Twitter simply to follow some of these smart people. Try to find smart people with common interests. Before you follow them, review their recent tweets and ask yourself if those are the types of tweets you want filling your twitterstream each day.

Some people “autofollow” anyone who follows them. I don’t recommend autofollowing. Be selective about whom you follow, because if you follow too many people you’ll soon find yourself drowning in too many tweets. I follow about 180 people, and for me that’s about right. Others follow thousands of people.

I rarely engage in conversation on Twitter, mainly because the folks who follow me are mostly interested in Smashwords and ebook publishing-specific tweets, not my private conversations about a friend’s weekend barbeque. I also don’t answer support inquiries over Twitter, because that’s what our “Comments/questions” form is for (and most questions are answered already in our [FAQ](#)). Conversations are also difficult for your followers to follow, so in the rare instances when I do participate in a conversation I try to make sure my tweets offer context so my followers can gain some benefit.

My Twitter strategy can be summed up as follows: Respect my followers’ time and try to provide them value in every tweet.

As you gain followers (people who have subscribed to receive your tweets by clicking “follow” below your username), you build your platform and your opportunities for marketing, connecting and learning increase.

There are various strategies for gaining followers, and many social marketing consultants do nothing but write articles or sell ebooks about how to increase your following. Read the articles, but maintain a healthy dose of skepticism. Many strategies are underhanded and will turn off people. For example, one strategy is what I call the “bait and switch.” These folks start following thousands of different people, in the hope that some percentage of people follow them back. If the people they’re following don’t follow them back within a few days, they “unfollow” them and then move on to follow more people. Or, even if the person does follow them back, the bait and switcher unfollows them anyway. Don’t play the bait and switch game, and don’t worry if the people you follow don’t follow you back. You’ll earn your followers over time. When I see someone following me who’s also following 20,000 other people, I view their follow as virtually worthless. How could such a person ever even notice my tweets?

A better strategy for gaining followers is to earn your followers. Here’s how: Tweet what interests you, because I’m going to assume what interests you is within the same orbit of what you write about, and so people interested in your books will be interested in those adjacent topics. For example, let’s say you write books about climate change. Your target audience for readers is the same as your audience for followers. You’re probably spending your day studying interesting news and trends in climate change. As you stumble across interesting articles, tweet about them and share a hyperlink. If you follow someone who tweets something you think will interest your followers, retweet it by clicking the retweet button. Your followers will appreciate receiving this useful, interesting information. They might retweet your tweet, which then puts your twitter name in front of all their followers. Follow other popular authors who write and tweet about the same topic. When you retweet something, you’re helping to promote the twitterer who tweeted the tweet. Most Twitter users track who’s retweeting their tweets. They might be grateful enough to tweet you back, or follow you if what you’re tweeting looks interesting.

Twitter etiquette tips:

Begging - NEVER NEVER tweet at people and ask them to follow you. You should earn your follows, not beg for them. Earn your follows by serving the followers you have. If you tweet and retweet worthwhile and insightful tweets, your followers will retweet your tweets and word will get out about you.

Spamming - Don’t spam your twitterstream with tweets only about your book. No one wants to be sold to all the time.

Quality, not quantity - Every time I tweet, I ask myself, “will this tweet inform or entertain my followers, and am I respecting their time?” It doesn’t matter if you have two followers or 2,000, you should respect the time and twitterstreams of your subscribers.

Avoid stream of consciousness tweeting – Some people tweet every few minutes. I avoid them like the plague because they’ll clog my twittersteam. I don’t care what someone ate for breakfast. I don’t want to hear what someone’s making for dinner.

Practice positivity – Some people adopt an attitude of, “I complain, therefore I am.” Remember, if you’re on Twitter or any other social network, you’re platform-building.

You're building a brand, because authors are brands. Don't be negative. It'll turn off your readers, partners and friends. People might fear you, but they won't like you. Avoid snark, because it's easily misunderstood, and can come across as negative.

Don't power trip – This is a corollary to *Practice Positivity*. If you've got hundreds or thousands of followers, don't let it go to your head. There are few things more unattractive than someone who uses their social media platform to bully, intimidate or complain. Stay your humble self and you'll be great!

I could go on and on about Twitter. If it all sounds confusing, don't worry. Just jump in, join the conversation, and you'll get the hang of it in no time. Many authors drive dozens if not hundreds of visitors to their websites and book pages each month via Twitter, so it's a powerful marketing tool you shouldn't ignore. But like all tools covered in this guide, you have to invest time over the long term to reap the biggest rewards.

Tip #7: Publish more than one book at Smashwords to create a multiplier effect

The more books you publish and distribute with Smashwords, the more discoverable you and your works become. All of your works are cross linked with one another, which means if a customer is viewing one of your book pages, at Smashwords or one of our retailers, they'll be presented with links to your other books. It's like casting multiple fishing lines in the sea, instead of just one. As Smashwords customers look at books by other authors and then look at your books, it creates a trail of bread crumbs that other Smashwords visitors can follow. They will visit one author's book page and discover links to your books that read, "People who recently viewed this book also viewed these books:"

Tip #8: Advertise your other books in each book you publish

The average Smashwords author publishes 3.2 books. If you have multiple books published at Smashwords, add a hyperlinks to your Smashwords author page, directly within each of the books you publish (see how I did it at the top of this book). A good place is either at the beginning of the book, after the copyright page, and at the end of the book, right when you've left the happy reader curious to read more of your work. Add a section at the end of your book that lists your other books. Something like this would be great:

Other books by Mark Coker
Smashwords Style Guide
The Smashwords Book Marketing Guide
The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success
The 10-Minute PR Checklist
Boob Tube

Tip #9: Make it easy for readers to connect with you

Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, at the end of your book, make sure you have a short "About the Author" section. If a reader just took the time to finish your book, they're probably curious to learn more about your background and inspiration. Tell your readers how they can connect with you online via email, or your web site, blog, Smashwords author page, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, etc. Make it easy for your reader to form a relationship with you, even if that relationship is as simple as following you on Twitter. By providing multiple options, you make it easier for the reader to connect with you via their favorite social media tool. Here's how I could do mine (connect with me if you like!):

Connect with Mark Coker

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/markcoker>
Facebook: <http://facebook.com/markcoker>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/markcoker>
Google+: <https://plus.google.com/104004113006827265832>
Huffington Post: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-coker/>
Blog: <http://blog.smashwords.com>
Smashwords author profile: <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/mc>

Tip #10: Issue a Press Release on a Free PR Wire Service

In this tip, I'll describe the benefits of a press release, show you how to write one, and then I'll provide you a simple checklist on how to promote your press release.

As some of my readers know, prior to starting Smashwords I worked for about 20 years in technology marketing and public relations. In 1993, I founded a PR agency called Dovetail Public Relations. At Dovetail, I represented dozens of technology companies, ranging from hot garage startups to large multi-billion dollar companies. During my time at Dovetail, I learned to appreciate press releases as a powerful marketing tool for packaging news information.

Here are three benefits of press releases:

1. The press release is a proven form of communication. Recipients of well written press releases, such as reporters and bloggers, know that it will contain all the information they need to evaluate the news value of your story and cover it. A good press release tells the reader what you're announcing, why they should care, and where they can learn more information if interested.
2. Press releases aren't just for the press any more. With the advent of Google and other online search engines, press releases are commonly read not just by traditional media (newspapers, magazines) and new media (bloggers), but by your target readers too.
3. Press releases help you build paths (hyperlinks) back to your author profile page, your book pages or to your website or blog. This means you're building paths to help Internet users discover you and your book. The more paths you build to pages, the more likely you are to rank highly in the search engines, which means your prospective readers are more likely to find you.

There are several free press release wire services you can use to get good exposure for your press release. One I've experimented with is [PRlog](http://www.prlog.org). For an industrial strength wire service, you might consider PRNewswire at <http://www.prnewswire.com/>. Try the free services first, because it can be difficult to sell enough books to justify the expense of something like PR Newswire, which will run you \$300 or more. If you decide to experiment with one of the paid services, run your press release only on your "local" circuit. Many of the paid services offer so-called "national" or "international" circuits to give your press release broader distribution, but my experience over the last 20 years has shown that these broader circuits are a waste of money. The local circuit gets you 80 percent of the benefit by posting your release into all the online databases.

What's a good press release topic? Newspapers want to cover news. The best news stories share information that inform or entertain readers. How about announcing you've published your book on Smashwords? That's news worth sharing, especially if your press release articulates why your book is important to people. Or announce a limited time promotion (and include the coupon code). Or, for the fictional book example above, you could publish a press release that

shares the top five tips for ridding your garden of pesky squirrels. Does the topic of your book tie in to a major news story? For example, let's say you wrote a book about flood repair. Let's say a hurricane hits the East coast of the US, and causes major flooding. Consider writing a press release to share useful remediation tips. It might have a headline such as "Flood Repair Expert Shares 10 Tips for Home Flood Recovery." A press release must include information of value to receive press coverage.

How do you write a press release? Press releases have a fairly strict format, which you should follow as closely as you can.

Headline: The headline words are typically either ALL CAPS or Initial Caps. Summarizes the high level message of what you're announcing. If your headline isn't compelling, no one will read your press release.

Subhead: The words are typically Initial Caps. Provides additional context about your announcement, and helps convey why the story is important. In my flood recovery example above, the subhead might read, "Helps Home Owners Save Money on Repairs, Prevent Permanent Damage, and Access Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance."

Dateline: Typically follows the format of City, State -- Date. The dateline precedes the body of your first paragraph of the press release:

First paragraph: Usually follows common phraseology, such as "XYZ today announced...." A good first paragraph should tell the reader what the announcement is about, why it's important, and who should care.

Second paragraph: More detail, or maybe a quote from you. Quotes should follow a strict format, such as "First sentence," said [your firstname lastname], author of [booktitle]. "Second sentence. Third sentence."

Third paragraph: Possibly more detail, if needed. If you're writing non-fiction, this is a good place to summarize or share valuable knowledge, or tell the reader what they'll learn from your book. If you're writing fiction, this is a good place to provide some juicy details about your story, and the challenges faced by your characters.

Boilerplate: This is where you put the author bio, and summarize where readers can purchase the book. Add hyperlinks to your Smashwords Author Profile Page, your book pages, your personal website, your blog, and which retailers are carrying your ebook. Include contact information such as your email address, but obfuscate it (see below).

Contact information: Even if you put your contact information in the boilerplate (and you should), the press release should also contain a separate section for contact information. Typically an email address is fine. But don't just put your address in there in plain text, because otherwise it'll get picked up by the spam spiders (these are automated robots that scan the Internet for email addresses, and then add those addresses to spam lists). Instead, obfuscate it, similar to how I do with my email address across the smashwords site, where I list the address as: "first initial second initial at smashwords dot com."

Here's an actual sample from a Smashwords author, including some fresh new edits I added for this Smashwords Book Marketing Guide to make it serve as an even better example. I also added parenthetical notes IN ALL CAPS to correspond with the sections above.

Free ebook Memoir, *That Day in September*, Commemorates Anniversary of 9/11
(HEADLINE)

Author Artie Van Why Witnessed Tragic Event from His Office Across the Street from Twin Towers (SUBHEAD)

(DATELINE) Lancaster, Pa. September 11, 2008 -- (YOUR FIRST PARAGRAPH FOLLOWS)Lancaster (NOTE IT'S SMART TO ASSOCIATE YOURSELF WITH YOUR HOME TOWN SO YOUR HOME TOWN MEDIA ARE MORE LIKELY TO COVER YOUR NEWS) author and resident, Artie Van Why, has published *That Day in September*, a book that chronicles Van Why's firsthand experiences on 9/11 and in the weeks and months that followed. On the morning the first plane struck the tower, Van Why was sitting in his office directly across the street from the twin towers.

For a limited time (Thursday, September 11 through Sunday, September 14) an electronic book version of *That Day In September*, normally priced at \$9.95, will be available to the public as a free download at Smashwords at <http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/154>. (NOTE DIRECT HYPERLINK TO HIS BOOK PAGE. WHILE IT'S NOT NECESSARY TO DO A LIMITED TIME PROMOTION LIKE THIS, IT'S NOT A BAD IDEA EITHER. LIMITED TIME PROMOTIONS BUILD URGENCY. WITH SMASHWORDS' COUPON GENERATOR (find it in your Dashboard), YOU CAN INSERT YOUR COUPON CODE DIRECTLY IN THE PRESS RELEASE)

While many stories have been told about September 11th in the past seven years, Van Why's effort to keep the memory of that day alive and to honor those who died offers a truly unique perspective and a moving commentary that begs to be read in one sitting. (THIS PARAGRAPH DID A GREAT OF TELLING THE READER WHY HIS BOOK IS A WORTHWHILE READ)

About Smashwords (THIS IS THE SMASHWORDS BOILERPLATE, WHICH YOU CAN INCLUDE)

Founded in 2008, Smashwords is the leading distributor of self-published ebooks. More than 60,000 authors, small presses and literary agents around the world publish over 200,000 ebooks through Smashwords. Smashwords makes ebook publishing fast, free and easy. Smashwords distributes to major online retailers such as the Apple iBookstore, Barnes & Noble, Sony, Kobo, Baker & Taylor Blio, Page Foundry and the Diesel eBook Store. Smashwords is based in Los Gatos, California, and can be reached on the web at <http://www.smashwords.com>. Visit the official Smashwords blog at <http://blog.smashwords.com/>

About Artie Van Why (THIS IS HIS PERSONAL BOILERPLATE. TYPICALLY, THE PARTY ISSUING THE PRESS RELEASE LISTS THEIR BOILERPLATE LAST)

Originally from Maryland, Artie Van Why lived in New York City for more than 25 years. After 9/11 he left his job of 13 years and began writing about his experience of that day, and the weeks and months following. His writings became the basis for the one man play of *That Day In September* which Artie performed in L.A. and Off Broadway in New York. It is on that play that his memoir *That Day In September* is based. Artie now lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Contact:
Artie Van Why
firstname at emailprovider.com

(this is the symbol for “end of release,” and it should be centered)

Where to Find More Press Release Samples

For more samples, you can visit the Smashwords press room at
<http://www.smashwords.com/press>.

Checklist: How to Promote a Press Release:

Most people mistakenly believe that simply by running a press release on a wire service, they'll get press coverage. This is not the case. Your best press coverage will come from your proactive promotion of your news. This means you need to reach out to reporters and bloggers and pitch your story to them.

Here's a quick checklist on how to promote your story:

1. Write a great press release. As I mention above, a great press release tells a compelling story. In the first couple sentences, it should articulate what you're announcing, who's it for, and why they should care. Back in my tech PR days where we'd often promote new technology products, we wanted the press release to answer, “what it is, what it does and why it's special” in the first sentence. If you can't answer why anyone should care, then you don't have a newsworthy story. Context is important. If you're missing any of these elements, the reporter won't have the context to understand what you're announcing and why it matters to their readers.

2. Develop your target list. Don't pitch your story to reporters who won't care. For example, a gardening reporter would never cover political news. They're going to care about seeds, plants, soil, bugs and critters, weather, gardening tools and gardening techniques. Let's say you live in the US and published a book titled, “How to Protect Your Garden from Squirrels without Killing the Little Buggers.” There are probably hundreds of gardening reporters at local and national newspapers across the country who benefit from your wisdom. Where do you find them and their contact information? Check out the print version of the [Bacon's Media Directories](#) where you can find the gardening reporters at major daily newspapers and magazines. Bacons lists all the reporters, their coverage area and their contact information. Your local library probably has it. You can also purchase it for around \$650, but you'd have to sell a lot of books to cover that \$650 so try to access it for free at your library. If your library doesn't have Bacon's, there's a good chance they have other media directories.

3. Email is best. Even if you have the reporter's phone number, email is always the best form of contact because you'll never risk interrupting them while they're on deadline (if you want to hear a monster roar, pitch a story over the phone to a reporter while they're on deadline – on second thought, don't try because it's not considerate!). The best time to send a newspaper reporter an email is in the morning because daily newspapers go on deadline starting in the afternoon.

4. No file attachments. Never send your press release as a file attachment. Reporters won't want to open it for fear it contains a virus. It also requires an extra click. Instead, always

compose your email in text, and copy the press release into the body of the email as plain text.

5. Personalize the pitch. Each reporter should receive a personalized pitch. Research the reporter before you contact them. Confirm they write about topics similar to your own. Go the extra mile and read some of their stories. If you read one or more of their stories, you'll know what interests them. If you tell them you read their stories, you'll be five times more likely to receive a response because they'll know you took the time to understand their beat and their interests before you contacted them.

6. The pitch should be short. No more than few short paragraphs, followed by your press release pasted below the pitch. Address them by name, and never by "Dear reporter, or Hi, or To Whom it May Concern." They have a name. Use it. Try to leave the door open so if they can't do a story now, they'll consider you as an expert resource in the future.

Here's how a good pitch might read (without the italics of course):

Hi Sam,

I just read your story from last year at [http://\[insert a direct hyperlink to their story – it reminds them of what they wrote, and it confirms to them you read it\]](http://[insert a direct hyperlink to their story – it reminds them of what they wrote, and it confirms to them you read it]) about weed control. I'm a master gardener, and I thought it was excellent.

Yesterday I published an ebook at Smashwords titled, 50 TIPS FOR CHEMICAL-FREE GARDENING, and I dedicated an entire chapter to weed control. Would you believe bantam chickens are great weed eaters? I also address important topics such as soil conditioning, water conservation, squirrels and pesticide-free bug control[NOTE: I'm dropping in other topic areas I know will interest a gardening reporter].

If you'd like a free review copy, I can email you a coupon code you can redeem instantly at Smashwords. I'd also be happy to speak on the phone if you'd like to learn more about my organic gardening tips. I pasted my press release below.

Please let me know if you're working on anything now or in the future where I can be of assistance!

Thanks for your consideration, and best wishes.

Joe

*Joe Gardener
313.333.1212
[Insert the rest of your email signature here]*

[Paste your press release here]

7. Great pitches are about substance. Avoid hyperbole and hype. That's a turn-off to reporters. Stick to the facts. Put yourself in their readers' shoes, because their job is to help

their readers, so your job is to help the reporter help their readers. Always be 100% honest. You want to develop a life-long relationship with that reporter, and relationships are built on trust and credibility.

8. Don't expect a reply. Every reporter is constantly hounded by people who want free press coverage from them. Even if they're interested in your story, they may not have time to reply. Or, they may file your query aside for future reference. If they ignore your pitch, don't worry. Most pitches will not receive a reply. PR is a numbers game. If you write 20 personalized and targeted pitches, and you get a single story out of it, that single story could make all the effort worthwhile. If your pitch is personalized and targeted like my example above, however, you'll probably have a much higher response rate.

9. Always respect a reporter's time. If you contact the wrong reporter, or if you pester them, they'll remember you for the wrong reasons. Remember, they're under no obligation to cover your story, no matter how wonderful your story is.

10. Repackage the old as new again. If your book has already been on the market for some time, then package your press release around helpful hints, like "5 Tips for Pesticide-FREE Gardening," drawing upon information in your book. Reporters love to run checklists.

11. Tips for contacting bloggers. The tips above will work equally well with bloggers, though you're unlikely to find bloggers in Bacons. Instead, use Google. Google "gardening blog," or "[insert your topic] blog" and you'll be surprised what you find. Or, use a blog search engine such as Technorati (www.technorati.com), where you can search for blogs and blog posts by topic. With bloggers, in addition to pitching them stories, you can also offer yourself as a guest blogger.

Learn More about the Practice of Public Relations

I wrote a short ebook, *The 10-Minute PR Checklist - Earn the Publicity You Deserve*, available at Smashwords and all major ebook retailers. I wrote it for marketing professionals and entrepreneurs to help them understand how to obtain press coverage to achieve any business objective. Although it's not specifically written for authors, some authors have found it worthwhile. Unlike my free ebooks about ebook publishing, this ebook is priced at \$5.99.

Tip #11: Join HARO, Help-A-Reporter-Online

Each day, thousands of journalists across the globe are on deadline for stories they need to write, right now. These journalists often need to interview experts for the insights that build their stories. Merely because you're an author, you're probably more qualified than you think to serve as an expert on many topics. Journalists love to interview authors, and when they interview you they'll identify you as the author of such and such book, which gives you free publicity! If you were a large company, you'd hire a PR agency such as my former company Dovetail and pay them \$8,000 a month or more to get you interviews (and press coverage) from these reporters. But clearly, most authors don't have that kind of money, nor would I ever advise they even consider spending so much, especially when there are some free publicity tools out there that allow you to do some of this yourself. One such tool is called HARO, which stands for Help A Reporter Online. HARO is a free service that emails you a summary of what reporters are working on, and the types of experts they want to interview. Subscribe to this service today. To read my review of the service on the Smashwords blog, go to <http://blog.smashwords.com/2008/09/haro-great-publicity-tool-for.html>.

Authors also use HARO for research purposes. If you're writing a non-fiction book you plan to publish on Smashwords, and you need to interview experts, you can post a query to the HARO list. Experts will want to speak with you because if you include them in your book, it's free publicity for them.

Tip #12. Encourage your Fans to Purchase and Review Your Book

Your prospective readers will feel more comfortable purchasing your book if they see that their fellow readers have already read and enjoyed it. Encourage your fans to write honest reviews at Smashwords and the other retailers that carry your book. If you find shills (like your mother, grandmother, husband/wife, best friend) to write artificially glowing or embellished reviews, your book buyers will feel suckered and you can bet they'll react with their own review that is perhaps more negative and mean-spirited than if they didn't feel suckered in the first place. So encourage your fans to write intelligent, thoughtful and balanced reviews. Encourage them to state what they liked and what they didn't like. Your prospective readers will appreciate the honesty.

Tip #13. Write Thoughtful Reviews for other Books on Smashwords

Whenever you review another book at Smashwords, it creates a hyperlink back to your author page, so to the extent you participate in the Smashwords community and support the work of other authors, you'll raise your profile by building paths back to your pages. Like any community, you get out of Smashwords what you put in to it.

Tip #14: Participate in Online Forums

If you're like most authors, you probably participate in a lot of online forums or newsgroups. If your forum has a location for book announcements, then post a note about your book along with a hyperlink to your author page or book page at Smashwords.

When you introduce yourself, consider telling folks there about your book. Before you post about your book, make sure such posts are allowed. Don't spam the board with notices. Not only would that be disrespectful, it'll probably get you banned from the site. After you post your notice, you can usually subscribe to that thread so you receive an email whenever anyone replies. If they ask you a question, go ahead and reply. Engage your readers in discussion, and by starting a conversation, you'll expose your book to even more people.

There are many great general ebook-related communities where authors connect with readers. Consider participating at Mobileread.com, Amazon's Forums, Nookboards, and Goodreads. Smashwords has a Facebook forum at <http://facebook.com/smashwords>

You should participate in these communities. Don't just flog your books. Join the conversations, add value to the conversations, and make new friends. Did you write a book about gardening? Join a gardening community. Did you write a book about overcoming, or coping with, some medical condition? There are communities for that too. Just Google "topicname community" for a long list of prospects. When you join a community, study the community's rules before posting. If the community doesn't allow posts about your book, consider adding mention of your book in your signature. See Tip #5 above.

Tip #15: Experiment with Coupons

In recent months, Smashwords authors have done some really interesting experiments using the Smashwords Coupon Generator, available at <https://www.smashwords.com/dashboard/coupons>. The coupon generator makes it easy for you to issue limited time coupons to your fans and prospective fans. You can promote these coupons on your blog, your web page, your private mailing list, and on your social networks such as Twitter, Myspace and Facebook. You can do

cents off, dollars off, percentage off, and even issue coupons to make your book free for a limited time. Limited time coupons build urgency in the minds of consumers, because everyone wants to save money and get a good deal.

Other coupon ideas:

Use Limited-Time Coupons to Create urgency: Create a coupon with an expiration date, and then use the limited-time coupon to create urgency with readers. Post a notice on your blog, or on Facebook or Twitter, and encourage your fans to share the code with their friends.

Virtual Print Book/Ebook Bundle: Create a virtual bundle. If someone buys the print version of your book, consider issuing them a coupon for a free ebook version on Smashwords, or a 1/2 off ebook, or get creative and think of another promotion that creates urgency in the mind of your prospective reader, or that rewards them for purchasing or promoting your book.

Blog promotion: If you have a blog, run a limited promotion that rewards your blog readers for visiting your blog. For example, you can run a contest. Do a post where you offer the first 10 or 20 or 50 people who comment on the post will receive a coupon for a free copy of your book at Smashwords.

Integrate all social media with your blog promotion: Leverage Facebook and Twitter to draw people to your blog promotions. Consider offering free Smashwords ebook coupons to the first 20 people who leave a comment on your blog, or consider some other creative prize. Such a promotion won't cost anything but your time to organize it.

Use Coupons for Book Review Promotions: Offer a promotion to bloggers. If any blogger anywhere agrees to review your book on Smashwords, offer them a coupon so they can download a free review copy. Since Smashwords makes your book available multi-format, anyone with any form of e-reader can review the book.

Tip # 16: Write a blog

One secret to good marketing is to engage your prospective readers in conversation. Share your thoughts, your insights, your opinions and of course your writing talent. Expose yourself and you'll attract a following of people who respect how you think, or who enjoy debating and discussing ideas with you. With hard work and time, you'll eventually build a following of people who are more inclined to read your books, or help you spread the message about your books. Starting a blog is easy. Google's Blogger (www.blogger.com) is a good free blog - it's what I use for the Smashwords blog at <http://blog.smashwords.com/>. If you want a more advanced blogging platform that gives you more control over the look and feel of your blog, take a look at Wordpress (www.wordpress.org). Good blogging requires a commitment. If you only do a few posts and forget about it, your blog will be a failure. Try to do at least one post a week. If you can't commit to a blog, do Twitter instead.

Tip #17: Write Guest Columns for Blogs

Most literary blogs are run by people who love books and authors. Most bloggers do their blogs entirely as a volunteer effort. It's a lot of pressure for a blogger to constantly "feed the beast," which is how many bloggers feel when they can't find the time to write new posts on a frequent basis. Many of these bloggers allow their readers to write guest columns. These guest columns offer you the opportunity to write about a topic of interest and reach a large audience, often thousands of people. Usually either at the beginning or at the end of your post, the owner of the

blog will give you a quick bio, where they'll mention who you are, your web address and your book. To write a guest column, first review the blog to ascertain if guest bloggers are allowed to contribute. If so, put together a great query for an article you'd like to write that you think would appeal to that blog's audience.

Tip #18: Invite other Authors to Post to your Blog

If you operate your own blog, invite your favorite authors to write guest posts for your blog. This is a great way to offer your fans interesting new content that increases the value of your blog. It also helps fans of the other author learn more about you.

Tip #19: Do Q&A Interviews of other Authors on your Blog

Every author appreciates free media coverage. Do Q&A interviews of your favorite authors in your genre. Simply contact the authors and offer to interview them for your blog. Send them five or six questions via email, and invite them to include both their head shot and book cover images. Once you publish your exclusive interview, your interviewee is likely to promote the interview across their social networks. This helps introduce their readers to your blog, and through your blog, they can learn more about you and your books. The other author may also reciprocate by offering you a Q&A on their blog.

Tip #20: Join the conversation on blogs

When you comment on another blog, you're often asked for your web address. You could give your Smashwords Author Profile page, or your book page, or your own web site or blog if you have one. Whatever you do, don't spam other blogs with messages to buy your book. That's rude. Instead, participate in relevant discussion. If readers think your posts are intelligent, they'll be curious to learn more about you and will click on your name to access your link.

Tip #21: Organize a blog tour

Many authors go on tour to promote a book by organizing book signings at bookstores. But nationwide and worldwide tours are too expensive for most authors and publishers. With the Internet, consider a virtual blog tour instead. With a blog tour, you arrange to have news of your book published in multiple blogs, with each story timed to appear on a separate day. In a well-run tour, all of the participating blogs cross promote each other (this gives the blog owner incentive to participate), and readers are encouraged to follow the author day by day as the tour progresses. To keep the interest of readers, work with each of the blog owners to cover a different aspect of your book, or you as an author, for each day's story. Maybe one blog does a Q&A interview with you; another allows you to write a guest post; another examines a specific aspect of your book; etc. For an example of a well-orchestrated blog tour, and how to set one up yourself, see the Smashwords Blog for our story on Alan Baxter's blog tour at <http://blog.smashwords.com/2009/07/interview-with-alan-baxter-how-to-set.html>

Tip #22: Use Google Alerts to discover where the conversations are taking place

Authors are special people, because it takes an enormous amount of talent to write a book on any subject. Because you're a subject matter expert, there are probably dozens if not hundreds of online opportunities for you to join conversations and in the process, help promote and sell your book, and promote your own subject matter expertise. Let's say you wrote a book on how to grow prize-winning pumpkins. There are probably hundreds of gardening web sites and online forums that discuss that very subject! You can join the conversations by commenting on message boards, blogs and news stories related to that subject. Share your knowledge. How do you track where the conversations are taking place? Create multiple Google Alerts at <http://www.google.com/alerts>, and Google will email you whenever a new conversation, or a new news story or blog post on a given subject, appears. For this pumpkin example, you might want

to track keywords and phrases such as “pumpkin growing,” “prize-winning pumpkins,” and “gardening tips.” Remember, the goal is to join the conversation and add value with your wisdom and opinions. Don’t spam.

Tip #23: Leverage YouTube Videos to Reach Readers

Another secret to book marketing is to engage the senses of your prospective readership. We humans are sensate creatures - we use sight, smell, touch and sound to inform us of our environment. When you simply write a textual book, and upload your book on Smashwords, you’re engaging only a sliver of the reader’s senses. If you embed a YouTube video in your Smashwords book page (we support this), possibly of you talking about why you wrote a book, or you reading a section of the book, or talking about your writing process or your muses, you engage the prospective reader on a completely different sensory level, because you’re touching them both visually (sight) and audibly (sound). You’re giving them a level of insight into you as a writer that they can’t easily perceive by written words alone. You’re engaging them, and with engagement comes action (like making the decision to sample or purchase your book).

Tip #24: Print up business cards

I realize it may seem sacrilegious for a digital publisher (who loves green trees more than pulped trees) to recommend printing business cards, but it’s important to realize that our lives are unlikely to ever go 100% digital. We humans still meet face to face, in the flesh, with our fellow humans at church, conferences, restaurants, bars and the grocery store. Print up business cards to advertise your authorship, and list all the ebook retailers that carry your book. Most Smashwords authors, the list might read something like, “Available at Smashwords, the Apple iBookstore, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Sony, Amazon and other fine ebook retailers.” Post the cards on community bulletin boards at bookstores, and hand them out to everyone you meet.

Tip #25: Encourage your fans to become affiliate marketers of your books

Who better to promote your books than your fans? With the official launch of the Smashwords Affiliate Marketing Program on May 25, 2009, your fans can earn generous commissions simply by adding links to your books on their web pages and blogs. All they need to do is sign up for a free Smashwords account, then click to the Account page for instructions on how to enroll in the affiliate program.

Tip #26: Create a reader’s guide at the end of your book

You’ve probably seen these in print books: Publishers append short discussion guides for reading clubs and book groups at the ends of their books. Make it fun and easy for a book group to discuss your book. While most of like to read books in private, we enjoy talking about books with our social circles, both online and offline. If you create a reading guide, be sure to advertise it in your book description with a simple statement such as, “Contains a helpful discussion guide for reading groups.”

Tip #27: Insert sample chapters from your other books

The last page of your book is valuable real estate. Your reader just loved your book, and they want to read more from you, so give them more book samples to read at the end of your book. At the end of each sample, provide a hyperlink back to the Smashwords book page for your other book, so readers can purchase it. Or, if the book isn’t published yet, give them a sample teaser.

Tip #28: Do a sample chapters swap with another author

Identify another author you admire who writes in your same genre. Do you think your fans would enjoy their work? Do you think their fans would enjoy your work? If so, then partner with the author to introduce your fans to their books, and their fans to your books. Do a sample

chapter swap. At the end of your book, offer your readers a few sample chapters from the other author's book, and then they can agree to do the same.

Tip #29: Invite other authors to join you at Smashwords

Thousands of new authors join Smashwords each month, and each new author brings with them additional fans and readers who can easily discover books from other authors such as yourself. With every new book, Smashwords becomes a richer, more vibrant destination for authors, publishers and readers alike. Invite every author you know to join you at Smashwords.

Tip #30: Promote your book to top ebook listing sites

Many popular websites and blogs specialize in providing directory-style links to ebooks, and routinely link to Smashwords ebooks. The sites I list here collectively drive *thousands* of readers to the book pages of Smashwords authors each month. There is no cost to you, although you must earn inclusion from the operator of the site. Many of the sites specialize in free books, although some will list priced books if you provide them a time-limited Smashwords coupon that will enable their visitors to access your book for free. I'm a big believer in such promotions, because it's a great way for you to gain a lot of readers in a short period of time, and many of these readers could be your first fans and your first reviewers. Before you contact the web sites below, be sure to study the sites and their rules. Provide them direct hyperlinks to your Smashwords book page, and pay careful attention to any other information they request, such as book descriptions, price, etc. If you carefully follow their instructions, you'll maximize your odds of a listing.

[Free-Online-Novels.com](http://free-online-novels.com) - This is a popular web site run by author Jennifer Armstrong. She provides links to ebooks in all categories, with one simple requirement: The ebook must be free. <http://free-online-novels.com/submissions.html>

[Online Novels](http://online-novels.blogspot.com/) - Online Novels at <http://online-novels.blogspot.com/> provides an attractive directory specializing in free books. Unlike the Free-Online-Novels.com, however, Online Novels will occasionally list books that are free for a limited time, such as Smashwords books that have 100%-off coupons. Consider creating a 100%-off coupon that expires at some date in the future, and then contact this site and ask them if they'd consider linking to your book at Smashwords and publishing the coupon code. Be sure to let them know when the coupon expires! Submissions link: http://online-novels.blogspot.com/2008/10/submissions-and-broken-links_02.html

[Books on the Knob](http://blog.booksontheknob.org/p/about-this-blog-and-contact-info.html) - This is a popular blog that actively supports indie ebooks. Offer the proprietress a coupon (free is best, but she runs discount coupons too). For submission guidelines, visit <http://blog.booksontheknob.org/p/about-this-blog-and-contact-info.html>

[BookBarista.com](http://bookbarista.com) - Founded by Smashwords author Mike Dion (pen name: Dodge Winston), his new site offers free directory listings for Smashwords authors. Visit <http://bookbarista.com>

Tip #31 – Read *The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success*, also by Mark Coker

Learn the best-practice secrets of the most commercially successful Smashwords. Learn how to take your marketing to the next level by focusing your time on tasks that create permanent marketing benefit, as opposed to ephemeral benefit. Learn how to make it easier for customers to find your book, rather than you having to find customers.

Tip #32 – Upgrade your cover image

Your cover image is the first impression you make on a prospective reader. A great cover image makes a promise to the reader. It tells the reader, "I'm the book you're looking for." Click over to Barnes & Noble, the Apple iBookstore or Amazon, and study the bestseller lists for your genre or topic. Does your cover stand toe to toe with these covers? Does your cover look as good or better than the cover images produced by large NY publishers? If the answer is "no," then consider upgrading your cover image. I've seen multiple examples where an upgraded cover doubled or tripled book sales. In one case, Smashwords author R.L. Mathewson upgraded her cover image and it helped catapult her all the way to the New York Times bestseller list. Read her fascinating story here: <http://blog.smashwords.com/2012/07/author-r-l-mathewson-on-some-of-secrets.html> in the Smashwords blog. Great covers need not be expensive. There are hundreds of great cover designers on the web, and most cost under \$300. If they can create a cover that looks as good or better than what's put out by a big NY publisher, the small cost is one of the best investments you can make in your book (other than professional editing, which is much more expensive). I maintain a list of low-cost cover designers (all fellow Smashwords authors) who provide covers for between \$35 and \$100. All have online portfolios so you can review the quality of their work before you hire them. Get the list via instant autoresponder simply by sending an email to list@smashwords.com. These are all independent freelancers, and I don't receive a commission or referral fee if you hire them. They're on the list because they've done great work for other Smashwords authors. After you receive your new cover, click to your Smashwords Dashboard, click Settings, then upload it.

Tip #33 – Share these marketing tips with your fellow authors!

Share the marketing tips you learned here in this Guide with your fellow authors. Remember, when authors help authors, all authors benefit.

Tip #34 – Create an online calling card and bio at About.me

About.me is a free online site that allows you to post an online bio, with links connecting to your entire social media presence. I created mine in about 15 minutes at <http://about.me/markcoker>. One of the secrets of good online marketing is to make it as easy as possible for people to find you and connect with you.

Tip #35 – Create a presentation and upload it to SlideShare.net

Consider creating a SlideShare Deck for your Book. I LOVE Slideshare. Slideshare is a free service, owned by LinkedIn, which allows you to upload and promote online presentations created with PowerPoint or similar presentation software programs. I started using Slideshare four years ago to publicly share the PowerPoints from the workshops I do at writers conferences, and to date my 24 presentations have had over 250,000 views. I've also used them occasionally for PowerPoints created for the sole purpose of sharing on SlideShare and to embed in the Smashwords Blog. You can access the complete library of my Smashwords presentations on the Smashwords SlideShare page at <http://slideshare.net/smashwords/presentations>. One of the cool **embed** feature allows your friends and fans to embed your presentation on their websites and blogs (much in the same way people can embed YouTube videos). Here's what an embedded presentation looks like: <http://blog.smashwords.com/2013/05/new-smashwords-survey-helps-authors.html>

How authors can use Slideshare: Do a PowerPoint book trailer for your book, upload it to Slideshare, then embed it in your blog or website, promote it across your social networks, and encourage your fans to embed it in their blogs and websites too. You can even embed YouTube Videos in your Slideshare Presentation, as I did in my "Upon the Gears" presentation at <http://www.slideshare.net/Smashwords/upon-the-gears-of-big-publishing-asja-may-15-berkeley->

[ca](#) which included a video of Mario Savio, a leader of the free speech movement at UC Berkeley in the '60s. Or, imagine you're doing a presentation at your local library about you and your books, then create that presentation and put it up. At the end of each of my presentations, I add hyperlinks to where viewers can learn more about Smashwords, or connect with me via the various social networks, or email me direct. Obviously, I'm out there promoting ebooks, ebook education and Smashwords. You can promote yourself and your books. Or, share what you've learned about e-publishing and share it with your fellow writers. Maybe create a presentation on ebook formatting tips, or how to design a great cover, or share your own ebook marketing tips. The point is, just get yourself out there in as many places as possible. Ebook buyers (or whomever you want to reach or help) consume all forms of media. These SlideShare presentations are just another form of media. Once you get your presentation up and out there, it's a perpetual calling card, waiting to be stumbled upon by someone looking to consume the information you presented. Over time, you may get dozens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of views (Slideshare tracks the views for you) depending on the quality of your content and how well you promote it (Hmmm, just like ebooks!).

Tip #36 – Join LinkedIn, post links to your books

LinkedIn is a free social network for business professionals. As a self-published author, you're running a business. LinkedIn offers numerous online forums where you can network with, and learn from, fellow authors who are learning to reach readers just like the rest of us. Once you create your free account, LinkedIn allows you to create a comprehensive, online-accessible, search-engine-optimized personal profile page, and on that page you can list all your books. Here's my personal profile page at LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/markcoker> At the bottom of my profile, you'll find links to some the LinkedIn groups I've joined. You might want to join some of them yourself. Some of the groups offer weekly digest emails so you can still follow the conversations if you don't have time to participate each day. LinkedIn also offers other common social media features, like news feeds, and integration with your Twitter feed (so your Tweets on Twitter can automatically appear at LinkedIn). Entire books have been written about LinkedIn, so I won't attempt to cover everything. Just jump in, create a profile, connect to me as a friend, and start learning. **Some LinkedIn Tips:** **1. How to Add Connections.** When you try to friend someone (they call it "Adding a Connection") type a note in there about who you are. If you don't, the recipient will receive a generic message, and is less likely to accept your connection. If someone writes a personal note for their connection request such as, "Hi Mark, I'm a Smashwords author!" I'm much more likely to accept the connection. **2. Never Spam:** Once you create an account and start connecting with people, LinkedIn allows you send emails to all your friends. I never send mass emails through LinkedIn. **Don't ever spam** your connections with solicitations to purchase your book. When I get these solicitations, I unfriend the person. LinkedIn makes it easy to remove connections though their "Remove Connections" feature.

Tip #37 – Do a presentation at your local library on ebook publishing

Contact the events coordinator your local library and offer to do a talk about ebooks, or about ebook self-publishing. As part of your talk, you can share your own personal journey as a self-published author, and part of that journey includes talking about your books. At Slideshare, I posted a template that you can use, if you like, as the foundation for your presentation. You can download the PowerPoint file at Slideshare and then modify by inserting information about yourself, your book, and your self-publishing journey. Download the template here: <http://www.slideshare.net/Smashwords/template-for-smashwords-authors-introduction-to-ebooks-for-library-presentations> or access of Smashwords ebook-related presentations at <http://slideshare.net/smashwords/presentations>

Tip #38 – Tweak your Viral Catalysts to Make your Book More Discoverable and Desirable

We would all love to identify the single silver bullet that helps propel our book into bestsellerdom. There's no such thing. The truth of the matter is that to become a bestseller, you must do many things right while avoiding the mistakes that can derail you. In my free *Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success* book, I identified the most common best practices of the most successful authors. In the *Secrets* book, I introduced the concept of the **Viral Catalyst**. A Viral Catalyst is anything that makes your book more available, more accessible, more discoverable and more desirable. A good Viral Catalyst helps you connect with readers. The Viral Catalyst concept creates a framework through which you can identify the many silver bullets necessary to reach readers.

Discovery precedes reading, and reading leads to fans. Fans can become superfans, and superfans become the word-of-mouth advocates that market your book for you. This is what people refer to when a book, product or idea “goes viral.” It's all about word-of-mouth. Your readers will determine your success at reaching other readers.

Think of your book as an object, and attached to this object are dozens of dials you can twist, turn and tweak to make your book more discoverable and enjoyable to readers. These dials and knobs are your Viral Catalysts.

Examples of Viral Catalysts could be broader distribution, a better cover image, a better price, better editing, a better book description, better categorization or (brace yourself!), a better story. There are many more. The opposite of a Viral Catalyst is anything that creates friction that prevents a reader from discovering or enjoying your book. Friction reduces virality.

The above case study about R.L. Mathewson showed how this great romance author, simply by upgrading her cover image, hit the New York Times bestseller list. Her previous cover image was creating unnecessary friction that prevented readers from reading her great books. Identify and remove all points of friction and you have a better chance to reach readers.

If you pay special attention and maintain an open mind, your readers and prospective readers, through their action or inaction, will give you clues as to whether or not your book's Viral Catalysts are resonating with them. This was the subject of one of my blog posts in March 2013, titled, [*Six Tips to Bring Your Book Back from the Doldrums – Reading Reader Tea Leaves*](#). In May 2013, I published a study that examined multiple other potential Viral Catalysts, such as word count, pricing, the idea title length, and more. You'll find that study in my blog post titled, [*New Smashwords Survey Helps Authors Sell More Books*](#).

Self-published ebooks are immortal. They never go out of print. This means you can evolve your book over time. When you get the Viral Catalyst formula just right, you'll reach more readers.

Tip #39 – Link to Every Retailer

When you distribute your ebook with Smashwords, we'll get your book listed at multiple ebook retailers. Each of these retailers – large and small – reaches a unique audience of readers. Many of these readers shop only at these stores, which mean if your book isn't available there, you're less likely to reach all the readers you deserve.

If you maintain a blog or website, or if you're actively promoting your books on social media, it's critically important that you provide direct hyperlinks to your books at all the retailers where your books are listed. This is especially true for your blog or web site, which for many readers will be

the home base of your author brand. If, for example, a prospective reader visits your website, and this reader prefers to read on their iPad and shop at the Apple iBookstore, yet they only see a link to Amazon, you're less likely to get the sale. Other readers prefer to shop at Barnes & Noble, or Kobo, or at Smashwords.com. Provide direct hyperlinks to your book's listing at every retailer and you'll eliminate yet another point of friction that can prevent a reader from reading your book. Make it easy for readers to purchase your books at their favorite retailer!

Tip #40 – Do a Preorder for Your Next Book

For your next book, release it as a preorder. With preorders, an author's ebook is listed at retailers in advance of the official "onsale" date. During the preorder period, customers can read a sample teaser of the book and place advance orders. The book accumulates orders leading up to the official release date. On the day the book officially goes on sale, the reader's credit card is charged and the book is released to the customer. At Apple and Kobo, your accumulated preorders credit to your sales rank on the day you officially go onsale, causing your book to spike higher in the bestseller lists. Since readers use bestseller lists to discover their next read, placement in a genre or store-wide bestseller list significantly increases your visibility, which increases sales. Smashwords announced preorder distribution to Apple, Barnes & Noble and Kobo on July 26, 2013. Learn more about the benefits of preorders at the Smashwords blog at <http://blog.smashwords.com/2013/07/smashwords-introduces-preorder.html> and read my story at the Huffington Post, [eBook Preorders Help Indie Authors Hit Bestseller Lists](#).

Tip #41 – Do a Smashwords Interview!

On August 20, 2013, Smashwords introduced a fun new author marketing tool called Smashwords Interviews. With Smashwords Interviews, we present you with a series of questions you can answer to help readers learn the story behind you, the author. You can also modify our questions, or create your own questions. Make your interview unique! Once you create an interview, we promote it across the Smashwords web site by linking it to your author profile page, your book pages and the Smashwords home page. The interviews also contain social sharing links so your fans can promote your interview to their friends. You'll find the Smashwords Interviews feature underneath the Account tab at Smashwords. Read the original announcement at the Smashwords blog at <http://blog.smashwords.com/2013/08/smashwords-interviews-helps-readers.html> or start your interview now at <https://www.smashwords.com/manageinterview/info>

Thanks for reading!

Thank you for taking the time to read the Smashwords Book Marketing Guide. I trust the ideas you learned here will help you become more successful as an author. Do you have suggestions for additional marketing tips I should include in future revisions? I welcome your feedback. Contact me at mc at smashwords dot com. If you found this free ebook useful, won't you please tell a friend?

Happy marketing,

Mark Coker
Founder
Smashwords, Inc.
<http://www.smashwords.com/>

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The 10-Minute PR Checklist – How to Earn the Publicity You Deserve

Boob Tube (a novel about soap operas)

About the Author



Mark Coker is the founder of Smashwords, an ebook publishing and distribution platform. Smashwords that has helped over 60,000 authors and publishers around the world release and distribute over 200,000 ebooks. Prior to founding Smashwords, Mark served as president of Dovetail Public Relations, where he provided strategic communications counsel to dozens of Silicon Valley technology firms ranging from hot garage startups to some of the largest technology companies in the world. In addition to the Smashwords Book Marketing Guide, Mark is also the author of the Smashwords Style Guide (how to format and publish and ebook), The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success (ebook publishing best practices), The 10-Minute PR Checklist, and is the co-author of Boob Tube, a novel he wrote with his wife, Lesleyann.

Connect with Mark Coker

For updates on Smashwords developments, follow me on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/markcoker>

Smashwords blog (offers RSS and email subscriptions): <http://blog.smashwords.com>

Smashwords Site Updates (bug reports, marketing tips, Smashwords site news): <https://www.smashwords.com/about/beta>

My Huffington Post columns: <http://huffingtonpost.com/mark-coker>

Friend me on Facebook: <http://facebook.com/markcoker>

Connect with me on LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/markcoker>

My Smashwords author profile: <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/mc>

My Smashwords Interview (remember to make your own!):

<https://www.smashwords.com/interview/mc>

Connect with fellow Smashwords authors

Official Smashwords Facebook page: <http://facebook.com/Smashwords>

Smashwords authors on Facebook:

https://www.smashwords.com/socialbuzz/smashwords_authors/latest/facebook

Smashwords authors on Twitter: https://www.smashwords.com/socialbuzz/smashwords_authors/latest/twitter

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