

PROMOTE *then* PUBLISH

3 VITAL STEPS IN EARLY-STAGE BOOK MARKETING



A strategy guide for authors to start early and build
toward a successful book launch.



Market your book early and often

For authors dedicated to the craft of storytelling or subject matter mastery, it may be natural to view the marketing of their books as a distraction. But if the goal is to have those stories reach the widest audience possible, marketing is a necessary part of being a successful self-published author. It's also the best way to ensure authors see a return on their hard work as they endeavor to make writing a financially sustainable venture. Research backs this up.

BookBaby researched the behavior of successful self-published authors and published the findings in the report, [Revealed: The Methods of Successful Independent Authors](#). The research shows that the most successful authors (those who earned over \$5,000 in sales over a 12-month period) were more active marketers than lower earners, engaging in 5.3 marketing activities per author compared to 2.2 activities respectively. In addition, successful authors invested in more professional services (including editing and cover design) to improve their final product.

The research also shows it's not just a matter of how much you market your book, but when. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "The marketing of a book should begin even before the book is finished," 81% of high earning authors agreed or strongly agreed. The takeaway? Marketing your book should start even before you write Chapter 1 — and the process never really ends. To be successful, self-published authors need to develop a lifetime marketing plan for their books to be used and enhanced over time.

"I hear a lot of authors who say, 'I just want to write, not market'. And I understand their feelings," says BookBaby President Steven Spatz. "But simply lobbing their book onto the marketplace isn't going to earn them sales. The most successful authors start their marketing early in the process."

Visualize your audience

The lifetime approach calls for authors to begin marketing a book as soon as — or even before — the actual writing begins.

A good first step for self-published authors is to look beyond what will be written on the page and visualize the potential audiences for their books. "I'm not advocating that you write strictly for money and go out and try to find a big audience that you think will buy your book," says Spatz. "It's the other way around. It's your passion and your story, but you need to think of what people are going to be interested in. Will your readers be men? Will they be women? Will they be younger people? Will they be farmers? Do they live in cities? Are they interested in the arts?"

This step should spur you to think about who your potential readers are, where those people congregate, and how you can build relationships with them. With this mindset, book marketing can be viewed as a way to engage with and become part of the communities that will (hopefully) embrace your work. When it comes time to actually publish and sell your book, an established audience will be a lot more receptive.

Taking stock of your potential readers and considering their interests can even provide useful insight for the actual writing of a book. Some authors are even crowdsourcing feedback on early chapters or preliminary drafts of their work in an attempt to improve their stories and determine what's resonating with their readers.

Visualizing your audience early on is also extremely valuable when establishing the voice for your marketing and deciding which online platforms will be best suited to spreading the word about your book. The proliferation of social media and blogging has made it possible for authors to have one-to-one contact with their readers in a way that wasn't available a generation ago. It's up to authors to embrace and take advantage of these powerful tools.

THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF EARLY-STAGE BOOK MARKETING

Based on research conducted within the author community, BookBaby identified marketing tactics that successful authors employ. Using this insight, we'll explore three key steps an author should take during the early stages of the lifetime marketing of his or her book.



1. WORK ON SEO FROM THE GET-GO

If you have any doubt about the importance search engine optimization (SEO) plays in selling a book, consider that nearly 75% of all books sold today are sold online (according to [Author Earnings'](#) reports). While local bookstores play an integral role in bookselling and reading, the web is where readers increasingly discover and purchase books. Especially during and soon-to-be after the worldwide Covid19 pandemic, search engines like Google and Bing are often the starting point as consumers look for information, solutions, and products online.

In the most basic sense, the words you use to describe your book serve as the guideposts for readers to discover your book among the millions online. Optimizing your book marketing for search engines is just a matter of taking a structured approach to describing your book in a way that will help it be identified by readers. That goes for marketing the materials you create for your book, your website, your blog, and your book's metadata when listing on e-commerce sites.

The need to optimize your book for search is another reason why visualizing your audience is so important. Considering why and how someone would be interested in a book like the one you're writing will inform what keywords you use to describe it, and doing so early will help you produce effective marketing materials when it's time to release your book.

"Good SEO techniques are key for many niche books and authors to find success," says Spatz. "Many authors make the mistake of assuming that anyone who can read is their

target audience. The more specific the keywords and terms you attach to your book, the better the chance your book will be discovered by readers who are motivated to buy the book."

There's no reason why SEO has to be intimidating or overly technical. Educating yourself on the basic best practices of SEO should be sufficient to help you maximize your SEO efforts.



RECOMMENDED READING



[Free guide: Unlock Your Amazon Keywords](#)

Keywords are a form of marketing investment. If you take the time to research and set them up — and continue to monitor your results — these keywords will continue to pay dividends through user search-generated exposure without you having to do anything.

[Tell Your Book's Story With Metadata](#)

Metadata is data about data. Book metadata provides booksellers, libraries, and your potential readers everything they need to know about your book, including the title, genre, description, ISBN, book subject codes, price, and cover image. Your book is introduced to the world through its metadata.



[Free guide: 5 Steps To Self Publishing](#)

Section five of *5 Steps To Self Publishing* includes an overview of the role metadata plays in how readers find your books online.

[BookBaby service: Book Metadata Optimization](#)

BookBaby's Book Metadata Optimization service offers core optimization, keyword maximization, and spelling/grammar check.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING FOR YOUR BOOK

While this guide focuses on the promotional work you can do before your book is in production, it's never too early to consider some of your post-production marketing opportunities too.

Social media marketing has exploded over the past five years. It's no surprise that BookBaby authors have found considerable success in marketing their books on many of the different platforms. Facebook lists over 2.8 billion active users and its sister site Instagram has over 1 billion.

Each person with an account on Facebook readily shares their information: Likes, favorite movies, favorite books, favorite actors, brands, and much more. This critical information allows savvy book marketers to target people most likely to

purchase their books. Advertising your book on social media creates opportunities for you to communicate directly with your readers.

Authors who advertise on Facebook and Instagram have the power to understand, attract, and engage online with more potential readers than ever before. It's a book marketers' dream come true!

Advertising on Facebook and Instagram can be challenging at first—especially if you don't have general experience with social networking or book promotion. But BookBaby social media experts have the skills to create a professional ad campaign that targets readers on Facebook and Instagram likely to have interest in your book.



We'll handle everything:

- **Ad Development**—Our marketing experts will analyze your book metadata and target Facebook and Instagram users who are potential readers of your book.
- **Ad Design**—We'll then create and launch a compelling ad that leads readers straight to your book sales page.
- **Reporting**—You can view and export data detailing your campaign's performance from your account dashboard, including how many readers clicked through to your sales page.

You can utilize BookBaby's Social Media marketing anytime during the process of your book marketing project. Even if your book was published 5 years ago or published through another company or yourself – our team of experts can go to work on boosting your book's sales through ads on Facebook, Instagram and now LinkedIn!

Call our team at 1-877-961-6878 or go to www.bookbaby.com/facebook-ads-for-authors/



2. ESTABLISH YOUR AUTHOR PRESENCE ONLINE

When it comes time to publish your book, being known by potential readers, critics, and bloggers is crucial. But you can't wait until you have your book in hand to start building your reputation. Successful authors are established in writing communities and recognized as subject matter experts because they work to build an online presence.

Building an online presence can take many forms, but the goal is to develop contacts and build relationships. In other words, slapping up a Twitter page and saying, "Buy my book!" is not a good way to establish relationships.

Think of the web as a virtual café — a bookstore where authors and readers meet, share ideas, and develop friendships. Just as you wouldn't show up to a book club and only talk about yourself and your book, participating in conversations online is a good way to define yourself and find your community. Commenting on articles and blog posts with subject matter related to your genre can be a good way to join ongoing conversations and establish yourself as an expert.

"If you spend time fostering these relationships and these bonds with readers," says Spatz, "they'll be hungry and anxious for you to finish your book."

Create an author website

The centerpiece of your online author presence and marketing efforts should be an author website. Your website will serve as your authorial stake in the virtual ground and be the hub for your various marketing efforts. Facebook and Twitter are important to building your presence online, but social media isn't the best place to showcase the depth of your personality and your work.

An effective author website can be your best tool to demonstrate that you're a subject-matter expert if writing nonfiction. For fiction writers, it's often the best platform to engage in discussions with other leading fiction authors or super-fans.

Your author website should also be the centerpiece of the promotional efforts you plan for your book: use it to release your book's publication announcement and to launch cover reveals, content teasers, and book giveaways.

Keep it simple

It's important to note that your author website doesn't have to be complex. There are a lot of affordable, user-friendly website platforms that can be easily mastered. These solutions are intended for use by people without technical web-development expertise and typically have easy-to-use drag-and-drop functionality.

Here are some popular do-it-yourself platforms for building your author website.

[Squarespace](#)

[Wix](#)

[WordPress](#)

[Weebly](#)



Blog your personal story

Possibly the most important part of your author website will be your blog. Thousands of self-published authors have found blogs to be an easy way to attract and engage readers and keep them posted on their work.

A blog should be a place where you can share what you want your readers to know about you as an author, says Spatz. "It's where you can — and should — showcase your personality. I think the more humanity you can display on a website, the better off you're going to be."

Use your blog to chronicle your writing process or share research you're gathering — or post a preliminary chapter of your book and allow your readers to comment.

Blogging doesn't have to be a full-time job. A few blog posts a month should suffice in the early stages to keep people updated and show you're still active. Once you have more to announce and promote, you can ramp up your activity.

While setting up your own blog is important, it's just as important to spend a lot of time on other people's sites, commenting and sharing your perspective. If your contributions are interesting, people can't help but click to find out who you are. By being active on social media and other sites, you increase your chance of being exposed to new potential readers. Your author website will then serve as the place where you send interested parties to learn more about you.

Sell your book

A mandatory component of any good author website is the ability to sell directly to your readers. Most website solutions provide built-in e-commerce tools. "There's no reason you have to send buyers to Amazon or Barnes & Noble and let those retailers take a huge chunk of the margin," says Spatz. "You're much better off having your own selling pages. There are huge advantages to establishing a direct relationship with your readers."

Be active on social media

Just like your blog, social media is a platform to tell your personal story and share your ideas and interests. In other words, it's not the place to just talk about your book and explicitly promote it. This is the basic tenant of content marketing: offer your audience valuable and interesting information and they'll stick with you.

RECOMMENDED READING

[Five Things You Need As You Begin A Career As A Self-Published Author](#)

The most important part of being a writer is writing, but if you want a career as a self-published author, you have to do a whole lot more than just write: you have to learn the business of writing and market yourself in a way that puts you on the same playing field as mainstream authors with big publishing houses behind them.

[Blogging For Authors: How to boost reader engagement](#)

Engagement is what turns casual readers into regular subscribers and subscribers into raving fans. What are you doing to engage readers?

[Is Your Author Website Ready to Meet the Press?](#)

Sharks love chum. Bears love honey. And members of the press love media-friendly websites.

"You're really going out there to make friends," says Spatz. "The last thing you'd do in real life is barge into a coffee shop and say, 'Be my friend!' When it comes to social media, be careful, be diplomatic, be attentive. It's everything you would do to try to establish a friendship. It's the same kind of principle."

Knowing what social media platforms to be active on is just as important as what you put out there. For example, a management book or corporate memoir would be best suited to LinkedIn, where people are discussing issues affecting the workplace and business. If you're writing about wedding dresses or in-home decor, the visually focused Pinterest would probably be a better environment.

Based on what you're writing, choose one or two social media platforms on which to focus your efforts instead of spreading yourself too thin. That said, Facebook is pretty much the universal platform that all businesses (and authors!) should have a presence on, so make sure to set up shop there.

RECOMMENDED READING

[Social Media For Authors](#)

This is a useful collection of the many blog posts BookBaby has published featuring tips and tricks to help you navigate and optimize your promotional and professional exploits on social media platforms.

[Use Your Author Blog As A Hub For Social Media Promotion](#)

Book designer/blogger Joel Friedlander chats about using your author blog as a social media hub to engage readers.



[Book Marketing in the Age of COVID-19](#)

Even during a world-wide pandemic, self-published authors are finding thousands of new readers. BookBaby president Steven Spatz will show you how to progress your author career, even while staying safe at home.



3. START BUILDING YOUR NETWORK EARLY

It's never too early to begin reviewing your personal and professional networks for potential fans who might be willing to spread the word about your book when it hits the marketplace. This network can include friends with media contacts, your favorite local bookstore owner, or a co-worker with 10,000 Instagram followers.

How you build your direct network will largely be determined by what your ambitions are for writing a book and who might be in a position to further your goals, says Spatz. "It depends on what your vision is for your book. Are you doing this to check something off your bucket list? Are you doing this to promote your career? Do you want to be the next great American novelist? It really depends on your aspirations."

Use email to establish a direct connection with readers

If you're going to build an audience of potential readers, you'll need to go beyond your personal network. One of the best ways to do that is by building an email list. With social media platforms catching all the buzz, email might seem old-fashioned. Truth is, email remains the most effective selling medium today. People are used to buying and transacting through email.

"Email might seem very 'old school' in today's social media world, but we have an important rule of thumb at BookBaby," says Spatz. "One current, opted-in email name is equal to about 25 people who are your friends or fans on social platforms. It's important to have that core group that you can always market to and have a conversation with."



Convert web visitors and social media followers to your email list

Building an email list involves taking the people you've caught the interest of on social media and your website and converting them into email subscribers. The first step to converting these folks is to have an email marketing tool that allows you to manage email addresses and deploy emails. There are quite a few email marketing tools, such as [MailChimp](#) and [Benchmark](#), that are free to small and upstart business. Some of these tools are already bundled into website and blog solutions.

Put an "opt-in" box on your website and include a call-to-action at the end of all your blog posts encouraging readers to sign up for email updates. Incentivize social followers and visitors to your site to give you their email contact information by offering something of value, like a PDF of your first chapter or a regular newsletter. Converting Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter followers into an email database enables you to share your thoughts, ideas, and promotions much more directly.

Stay connected

Once you've built a list of email contacts, it's important to actively engage with that list. "It's almost like a carton of

eggs," says Spatz. "If you don't do something with those eggs, they'll spoil. It's the same with email. They've given you their email addresses. They expect to hear something from you. If you don't email your contacts once a month, they're going to spoil. You almost have an obligation to stay active and keep them engaged."

Through email, you can share blog posts, chapters of your books, special offers, requests for reviews – anything that someone interested in your work or its related subject matter would find of value.

Keep on marketing

Having a more structured marketing approach is especially important if you consider the "virtual bookshelf" available to authors today, whether selling through Amazon and Barnes & Noble or through an author's own website.

"It's important to realize that marketing is going to continue for much longer than the writing portion in the publishing cycle," adds Spatz. "Publishing a book isn't just an event. It's the first milestone on a journey without an end. You're in it for a lifetime."

