

The book cover features a central sunburst pattern in shades of yellow and brown. The top and bottom sections are dark red. The title is in large, bold, dark red letters with a drop shadow. The subtitle is in a lighter, outlined font. Binary code (0s and 1s) is scattered across the cover, following the sunburst lines.

# THE BOOK MARKETING HANDBOOK

How to sell more books  
in the Digital Age

ROBERT SIMS

# The Book Marketing Handbook

**How to sell more books  
in the Digital Age**

by

**Robert Sims**  
Biblio Publishing

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The following quote may be a slap in the face for many authors, but if you want to make your book a success, it is the most important rule of book marketing:

*For every book you write, you should be willing to commit three years to marketing it. You don't have to market full time, but you do have to do something each day for the full three years if you really want your books to make an impact.*

John Kremer

*1001 Ways to Market Your Books*

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## **Introduction**

So, you've written a book. You may have had several reasons for writing the book. Maybe you wrote the book to prove that you could, or to impress your friends and family. Maybe you're an instructor at a university and have written a book for one of your classes. Maybe you want to be the next great author, or make writing your career.

Depending on your motivation, you may, or may not need to promote your book. If you are motivated to spread the news about your book, you should be ready to work to do so. The fact is, you will most likely have to work harder promoting your book than you did writing the book itself, especially since, as an author, writing is probably one of your great loves, while promoting is just a necessary evil.

This book offers a brief discussion of ideas that an author can use to promote their book in an age when Amazon.com is the largest retailer in the world, eBooks are becoming more widespread, and more and more people are spending their time looking at their smart phones, iPads, and laptops. Some of the concepts in this book will help sell many books, and some will only help sell a few, but they are all part of a greater game plan that may result in the next "Best Seller." The idea is to get the word out in as many ways as you can, or at least to choose the most efficient marketing methods for

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your skill set and time constraints.

Note that there are many for-fee services offered that can market your book, and some of them are very good, but the best marketer for your book is always you. You know your book, and probably your market better than most, and you have a vested interest in the outcome. If you decide to pay to have your book marketed, make sure that you research what will be done to promote your book, and that you monitor the results closely to determine if your investment is paying off.

## Online Marketing

### Your Book's Description

No doubt, your book is being sold and listed on a number of websites, such as Amazon.com, The Biblio Bookstore, Goodreads and others. How the book is perceived on these pages is the first line of marketing for any product. You may think, "I've put all this time writing a book, so it should practically sell itself." Obviously this is never the case for any product. The consumer needs to get "hooked" into buying your book. Hooked by a catchy description, an excerpt from a great review, or something that will get their attention. The importance of making an effort to create a great description cannot be stressed enough.

The description should tell the consumer why they need to buy and read the book. It can include excerpts from positive statements by reviewers and readers, and achievements by the author and the book. You should also add a "Call to action." I.e. "If you enjoy great military novels based on the historic events of World War II, you should buy this book!"

### Your Book's Cover

*You can't judge a book by its cover!* Maybe not, but you can sell a book by it's cover. A great cover catches the eye, tells

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the consumer what the book is about, and convinces them to buy it. Like the book description, the book cover is a very important, but often overlooked, consideration when creating your book.

Many authors don't have that "visual" creativity that allows them to develop a concept for their cover. Others have a great cover idea but can't turn it into a final product. If you aren't a professional visual media designer, you should probably consider hiring a professional. A professionally designed book cover can cost a few hundred dollars to well over a thousand dollars. However, the investment is often worth it. A well design book cover can often pay for itself through the increased sales that you will receive.

Similarly your back cover can also be very important. The reader that would pick up your book in a store will usually look to the back cover to read the description or Bio. And, the online consumer will most likely look through your book preview at various websites to determine if they want to buy the book, and may eventually read the back cover. Don't neglect to make the back cover interesting. It may sell numerous copies of the book on its own, which is your goal.

### **Book Previews/Samples**

Many online bookstores offer book previews that the consumer can view to determine whether they should buy a book or eBook. Examples of these sites would be Amazon.com, The Biblio Bookstore, Barnes & Noble... There are also some websites that don't actually sell the

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books, but offer information in a social setting instead. Goodreads, for example, is one of the sites. They also offer previews of books. Book previews are normally about 10% of a book, but can vary from site to site, and they can be accessed in many formats. Some are offered as eBook downloads, and some as simple online previews embedded into the site.

Most online stores will automatically post a preview of your book, but sometimes, they must be prodded to do so.

Amazon.com, for example, will automatically post your preview if you have also posted an eBook. But, if they have not created a preview for your print book, you, if you are the seller, or your publisher, can create a Search Inside the Book account, which will allow you to upload a file to be posted.

Likewise, if you would like to have preview of your book on a site like Goodreads, you can sign into your author's page, visit your book, and add an eBook of the first portion of your book. It is best to add the opening section of the book, and a chapter or two from the book. Give the reader a good taste of the book, but not too much.

You should also keep the preview concept in mind during the creation process of your book. The initial pages should be interesting and enticing to the reader, leaving them wanting to read the rest of the book. This can be helpful, not only for the online preview, but also for the consumer at the corner bookstore that is paging through your book.

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### **A Website or Blog for your Book**

A Website or Blog is a great vehicle for making information available about your book. The website should include information about the book and the author. Information that would convince the consumer to purchase the book. A good website and blog will offer information related to book, and/or the book's topic. The website/blog should be constantly updated with new information to give the consumer a reason to continuously visit the pages, and to tell others about the site.

#### ***Book Promotion Tip:***

***Create a destination for users. If you create a website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, Podcast... that offers useful information to your audience, they will be more likely to regularly visit, tell their friends, and buy your book. This is especially true if the postings relate to your book, or allude to the user that there is more information available in your book.***

### **A Facebook page for your Book**

Similarly a Facebook Book Page can act as a source for information about your book. Easily updatable, you can constant add information about the book, related events, images, videos and more. Additionally, you can easily invite others to "Like" or "Share" your page, which will automatically post your updates to their page.

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It is also possible to create inexpensive Facebook ad campaigns, that can drive traffic either to your Facebook page, or to a webpage of your choice, such as your book webpage, Blog page, or even your Amazon.com product page.

### **Twitter for your Book**

Twitter is the fastest growing social media platform. Like your Facebook page, or your website, your Twitter account can be used to educate users about your book.

Creating a Twitter presence that offers information that is useful to your followers is a good way to increase your following. Choose a topic that relates to your book. Then post related articles from your blog, post related articles from other blogs or websites, or simply retweet posts from other users. Soon your page will become a regular stop for users interested in your topic. Then you can sprinkle your tweets with information about your book and how to buy it.

But stay on topic. If your book is about investing, don't start talking about your dinner, or Justin Bieber. The people that are following you are there to learn about investing and will be turned off by personal anecdotes.

### **Amazon.com**

Many authors will sell most of their books through Amazon.com. The hurdles to getting your book into brick

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and mortar bookstores are sometimes too high, and Amazon.com has a simple system that is easy to use and yields book sales with very little investment of time and money. Again, depending on your goals as an author, you may choose to only use Amazon's online store, but even if you're working toward a NY Time's Best Seller, you will want to list your book on Amazon.com.

### **Amazon's KDP Select Promotion Tools**

As an eBook author, you should acquaint yourself with some of Amazon's promotional tools available through Kindle Direct Publishing Select (KDP Select).

([https://kdp.amazon.com/select?ref\\_=kdp\\_BS\\_TN\\_se](https://kdp.amazon.com/select?ref_=kdp_BS_TN_se))

These tools are designed to spur interest in a book and to create sales. There are two tools that are most effective.

The first is the Free Book Promotion tool. It allows the seller to choose 5 days during every 90-day period term to make their book free to the public. The motivation is to get more eyes on the book, hopefully spurring interest, and to increase reviews. Consensus is that the offering of free eBooks does tend to raise subsequent sales, at least nominally.

The second tool is the Kindle Countdown deal. This promotion can last for anywhere from one hour to seven days. It allows the user to lower the price to as low as \$.99 per copy (Must be at least \$1.00 less than the retail price). The price can be rise in 4 step back to the original retail price during the period and there is a countdown clock visible on the product page. The obvious benefit of this tool, beyond

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the promotional effect, is that the author is still making 70% off all sales on the book.

Now, one note that is important, your book cannot be available as an eBook anywhere else during the KDP Select term of 90 days. This means that if you want to use the service, you must stop selling the book on Barnes & Noble, Apple's iBookstore... and this can often be a challenge to do. If you are working through an aggregator such as Smashwords, you will need to unpublish your book at least two weeks before signing up for KDP Select. If you have not done this, Amazon will warn you and can remove your book from the KDP select program and keep your revenues.

That being said, the KDP Select program has proven to be more effective for some titles than the alternative of selling them through the various bookstores. And the reason is that Amazon.com is the largest online book and ebook seller.

### **Create an Author page on Amazon.com**

Register as an author on Amazon through Author Central (<https://authorcentral.amazon.com>)

Through your Author Profile, you can add your Bio, Author Pic, Blog Post links, events, videos, and create a short URL to use for promotion. Plus, various sales information and your author ranking is available.

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### **Shelfari.com (by Amazon.com)**

At Shelfari.com you can sign on with your Amazon Author Central account, or you can create a new account. You can add your book(s) and add information about the books such as a review, rating, tags, characters, quotes and much more. There appears to be no better website for posting information about your book, with 22 areas of description as well as areas for reviews and discussions. As a member, you can also join groups, which will help with your book promotion. You can also add your favorite books to your list. The more books that you add, the higher your ranking, which will draw more people to your page.

### **Register as an Author on Goodreads**

Goodreads is a great place to generate interest for your book. You can sign up for an account and add your book to your reading list. Send your friends the link on Goodreads and ask them to review it, and share it on Facebook, pin it to their Pinterest account or Tweet about it on their Twitter account. Goodreads also offers a well-developed description page for each title. For more information about the Goodreads Author Program: <https://www.goodreads.com/author/program>

### **Reviews**

Get fans to post their reviews on your Facebook page, Goodreads, your Amazon product page or, wherever reviews are accepted for your book. From asking friends to write

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reviews, to offering incentives, there are numerous ways to build your reviews. Some authors offer discounts on their books or freebies such as free eBooks to fans that post reviews. It is also often possible to work with other authors, reviewing their books in exchange for their review of yours.

The importance of positive reviews, and many of them, cannot be understated. Marketingland.com reports what you probably already know. Nearly 90% of consumers read reviews and base their purchases on those reviews.

### **Press Releases**

Write a press release and either send it directly to book reviewers, media contacts, or distribute it using one of several press release services.

[PRLog.com](http://prlog.com), for example, offers free press releases that will create a web presence for your press release (much like a one page website) and will make its information known through search engines, email, and more. However, the best part is that, for \$49, they will send the release to the Associated Press, newspapers and news sites. And, for \$349 they will also use the PR Newswire service, which can get your release listed on Yahoo and Google news, as well as thousands of other websites.

List of 20 sites that offer free press releases:

<http://mashable.com/2007/10/19/press-releases/>

Note that a press release can be included in any promotional correspondence and can be posted through any of your

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online posting methods.

### **Book Trailer Video posted to YouTube, website, Facebook...**

A book trailer is an entertaining and professional device for the promotion of your book. There are numerous tools that can be used to create a trailer. A professional trailer can be created for a price, or you can create your own using online applications, or computer applications such as iMovie.

Stupeflix (<http://studio.stupeflix.com/en/>) is a simple online application that lets a user to create a free trailer that can be distributed to promote their product. In this case your book.

Before you start making your book trailer, there are a few things that you want to prepare. Start by preparing an outline or “script” for the trailer. This can be as simple as a simple list of what you will be placing into the “video,” to an actual script to be recorded. Note that all images, videos, audio and text should be prepared before starting the online process, including an image of the book cover. Stupeflix offers robots to read your narration if you don’t want to do so yourself. Keep the trailer short. Two minutes or less is best. In the trailer, you should indicate some highlights of the your book, but don’t reveal the entire story. And tease the audience. Leave them wanting to buy the book to answer the questions you pose in the trailer. At the end of the trailer, tell your audience how to get the book. Finally, your trailer can be published to YouTube, downloaded for you to post, or embedded on your website. So, use it as much as possible to

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promote your book.

Similarly, an **author interview** video can be created and posted to YouTube, website, Facebook...

### **Podcasts**

Podcasts are audio and video downloads on various subjects for the Apple platform. As an author, you can create individual podcasts, or series of podcasts that users can subscribe to and download on a regular basis. Your podcasts can relate directly to the promotion of the book itself, or it can act as an informational tool regarding a subject related to the book.

### **Offer Bloggers Review Print/Digital copies of your Book**

Blogs have become the Newspapers of our time. As many print publications have disappeared, the writers for these publications have turned to the Internet through blogs to provide news to the masses. Additionally, the ease of blog publication has allowed anyone one with a laptop to write articles about their favorite subjects. Although some of these bloggers can be unprofessional, this new wave has developed some of the best new journalists of our day and some blogs have become important sources for news.

As an author, the opportunity arises to contact and communicate with bloggers that write about books, or subjects related to your book. Bloggers are often looking for

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ideas for their articles, and your book might just be what they're looking for. It is always best to contact the blogger before sending them your book and press release. Not only to gauge their interest, but also to determine what format they would like to see for your book. This will also give you an opportunity to "sell" the blogger on your book.

On request, your publisher will usually set up and send you a digital version(s) of your book. Include printed press release with print copies, or PDF version with digital copies.

### **Guest Blogging**

If you like to write articles, you can offer original content to blogs or websites whose audience will be interested in your book, or the subject that it covers. Blog sites are often interested in interviews (Audio, video, text), excerpts from books, and guest articles.

### **Mailing Lists**

Set up a mailing (Postal or email) list to communicate to readers. You can send out a single letter announcing your book, a press release, or you can create a periodical newsletter that offers information about the book and related subjects.

## **Offline Marketing**

### **Physical Bookstore Sales**

In most cases, brick and mortar bookstores will not automatically place your book on their shelves. They will often need to be convinced that your book is popular and will bring in revenues. Their shelf space is valuable, and they don't want books taking up space while not being purchased.

As an author, your first line of attack should be to contact your local bookstore managers, and visit them to discuss your book. A personal visit is a very good way to convince the manager that you are sincere about selling your book and will allow them to ask questions about the book and your marketing efforts. And, they will expect to hear what steps you are taking to sell the books. At the very least they will usually allow you to schedule a book signing for your book. In their eyes they will at least benefit from increased traffic and added interest in the store. They may, of course, also benefit from added sales, but be aware that the financial arrangements vary from store to store. Some managers may actually buy copies of the book for the signing, while others will require that the author provide the books, basically on a co-signing basis.

Now, a word about contacting bookstores. It may tempting to simply send a batch of letters or emails to many stores, hoping that some will answer with a book order. This will rarely happen. Not only do bookstore managers receive allot

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of marketing from authors, agents and book sellers, most of which are ignored, but many are also hampered by the corporate front office that controls what they can stock on their shelves. It is far better to make a phone call or visit a bookstore a day than to spend the day, and the money, sending a large batch of letters. You will sell far more books.

Your next question may be, “How do I get bookstores such as Barnes & Noble to stock my book in all of their stores?”

This is a question that has a very long answer. Here is the link for the Barnes & Noble page that discusses the process:

[http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/for\\_authors/how\\_to\\_work\\_with\\_bn/how\\_to\\_work\\_with\\_bn.html](http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/for_authors/how_to_work_with_bn/how_to_work_with_bn.html)

## **Physical Book Distribution**

Most bookstores don't buy directly from an author or their publisher. They require that a book be made available through a distributor or wholesaler. Normally a distributor or wholesaler requires the production of a large number of books to be stored and distributed to the ordering stores who use the distributor's order processing system. This service can be very expensive for an author, and the author is often lucky to receive 30-40% of the book revenues, while investing heavily for the upfront costs of production and storage. The only way to make money using this process is to sell a lot of books. Tens of thousands and more. And. Although you may plan to sell that many books, and more, if you don't, you may lose money on your investment. This is a game for the big publishers and authors.

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### Lightning Source

<https://www1.lightningsource.com/>

A great alternative that is becoming popular is Lightning Source, which is a service offered by Ingram Content Group, one of the largest distributors in the world. Lightning Source (LS) lets an author or publisher upload their book to their system, and then adds it to the Ingram Catalog, making it available to over 30,000 wholesalers and booksellers around the world. If a bookstore wants to order your book, they simply do so through their computer system. Books are printed and sent as the seller orders them, and pays you your cut less printing and shipping costs. There is no inventory cost, and no fulfillment hassle. There is, however a bit of a steep learning curve for setting up the books on LS.

Now, all that being said about Lightning Source, LS will not sell more books for you. It will simply make the books more available. If you'd like a bookstore manager to place your book in their store, you will still need to convince them to do so.

Note that there are other services similar to LS. One such service is Create Space. <https://www.createpace.com> It is not affiliated with a distributor but is associated with Amazon.com. Basically, if you believe that you will sell your book mainly through Amazon.com, you may want to look into this service, which otherwise works in a similar way to Lightning Source.

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### **Book Signings**

Schedule book signings at local bookstores, or other venues such as libraries, coffee shops etc... The venue will often see the signing as a positive way of increasing business. Book signings offer readers the opportunity to meet the author, purchase copies of the book, and get the book autographed.

### **Host a Book Release Party**

Similar to a book signing, a book release party allows readers to meet the author, purchase copies of the book, and to get the book autographed. A book release party can be combined with a book signing, or it can simply be an announcement that the book is now available. From a small gathering of friends at your home, to an extravagant event at a venue featuring catering, speeches and special guests, the idea is to sell the book and the author, and to create a “Buzz” about the book.

### **Send a Review, or Preview copy to Media**

Send a print copy/digital copy to magazines, newspapers, ezines, and websites and request reviews either before the book is published, as a preview copy, or after publication. It is best to determine who is responsible for the book reviews on each publication before sending copies. And, it is actually even better to communicate with that person before sending. Not only to let them know that you would like to send them a copy, but also to determine how welcome it would be, or

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maybe even to discuss the book with them and to give them a simple “sales pitch.”

A good review in the media can give your book sales a good “bounce” and can get the ball rolling for additional marketing efforts.

A copy of your book can also be sent before the book’s actual release date. Marketing efforts are sometimes built around creating a “buzz” for the book before it is released, with the goal that a book will open with strong sales.

### **Local Interviews**

Ask to be interviewed by local newspapers, news shows or interview shows where the book is published. The local aspect of a book is often of great interest to the media in your area. Note also, that local media especially, are always looking for ideas for stories to fill their slots. Morning shows are an especially good prospect, because the producers usually have to fill hours of programming time.

### **Radio Interviews**

If you are a good speaker, radio interviews can be an easy way to spread the news about your book to a wide audience. Because of the new technologies, many interviews are now performed using phone, or even using the Skype application. Note that Skype can also be used for remote video interviews for Television or web shows.

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### **Always include your Links**

Remember to include the link to your webpage, twitter account, product page on Amazon, publisher's product page etc... in every promotional device. Also, make sure this information is included in your personal emails. If you'd like to include a short URL (link) that is easier to remember or use, you can use services such as TinyURL (<http://tinyurl.com>). Note that this service is also great for links included in Twitter posts because it uses fewer characters.

## **A few final thoughts...**

### **Crowd funding for authors**

The Pubslush platform allows authors to raise money and gauge the initial audience for new book ideas, and for readers to pledge their financial support to bring books to life. The funding raised can be used for book promotion, editing, cover design, the purchase of copies and more. As you might expect, it is important when setting up your Pubslush entry to make a compelling argument for funding your project.

Sign up through the Biblio Publishing Pubslush page:  
<http://BiblioPublishing.pubslush.com/authors>

### **Your next book**

Before writing your next book, you may want to put a little thought into what will sell. Most authors write their book based on a “great idea” but fail to consider if their great idea might be a great idea to a majority of the readers. Books that relate to trending topics, offer solutions to issues common to many users, or that are just plain exciting to the majority of readers, are your best bet. Do some research, take a poll, ask your friends. As an author, if you can hit on a truly great idea before you write your book, it will help you when it’s time to sell your book, and during the writing process itself.

FOR EVERY BOOK YOU WRITE,  
YOU SHOULD BE WILLING TO  
COMMIT THREE YEARS TO  
MARKETING IT. YOU DON'T  
HAVE TO MARKET FULL TIME,  
BUT YOU DO HAVE TO DO  
SOMETHING EACH DAY FOR  
THE FULL THREE YEARS IF  
YOU REALLY WANT YOUR  
BOOKS TO MAKE AN IMPACT.

JOHN KREMER

IT'S IMPORTANT TO  
KNOW WHO YOUR  
READERS WILL BE  
AND HOW THEY  
WILL HEAR ABOUT  
YOUR BOOK.

CATHERINE WEST

NOT ALL  
MARKETING PEOPLE  
ARE WRITERS, BUT  
ALL WRITERS MUST  
LEARN TO BE  
MARKETERS.

JOANNE KRAFT

**BIBLIO PUBLISHING**