



Self-promotion and the Writer

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IN TODAY'S PUBLISHING INDUSTRY, authors are generally expected to provide much of the marketing and PR for their book. Only big debuts, million-copy sellers and celebrities attract a fat marketing budget as part of their lucrative deals. Ironically, the latter two already have enviable media platforms and/or a massive, loyal readership. It's the mid-listers who *actually* need the marketing spend, but publishers can't afford to let expensive acquisitions sink.

Before being published, I notched up two decades' worth of experience in marketing. I headed up corporate marketing for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and for the erstwhile government's 'Science Year' educational initiative. I've personally written the content for, and designed, websites and marketing literature. I've bought advertising space and written copy. I've designed direct marketing campaigns. I've written successful press releases. I've briefed designers. By the time I'd hung up my day-job hat, I'd amassed the tools needed to scale the marketing cliff-face of a newly published author.

In commercial genre fiction, your imprint will often just put a few hundred pounds behind some Facebook ads and a Bookbub, to propel you up the Kindle rankings. A PR executive might get you one or two reviews in the press. The rest is up to us. When my debut crime-thriller – *The Girl Who Wouldn't Die* – published, I was a wanton Twitter ignoramus. But I knew developing my social media platform and honing my skills would be the difference between the book succeeding or sinking without trace.



My efforts on social media and my PR support helped my publisher to propel me into the Kindle top 100. I sold 70,000 copies of that debut alone, albeit at a knockdown price of 99p. In the digital world, in the commercial world where books in supermarkets are heavily discounted, volume is king. Hardly surprising, then, that I never miss an opportunity to secure national radio and TV coverage — the icing on the marketing cake.

More recently, I self-published my first series in the States. I was the proverbial old dog, learning new tricks! I designed my own Twitter, Instagram and Facebook banners. I commissioned book covers from a professional designer. I organised a US blog tour. I've (*shudders*) spent and lost money on Amazon and Bookbub advertising and tweaked metadata, learning how to tickle the algorithms. Getting into the top 1,000 and garnering a subcategory bestseller flag in US-paid Kindle was no mean feat on my shoestring budget. The self-publishing adventure, however, was so time-consuming and costly, that I gladly threw the towel in, once I'd exhausted my allocated budget. Yet it was a valuable experience in learning what it takes to launch a new title successfully in a new, tough market.

As an author, research is one of the most attractive aspects of my job. If ensuring the longevity of my career demands that I *also* learn the latest tricks of the book-marketing trade, then so be it...though I might need a *lot* more caffeine!