

How to Promote Your Books with Blogs

by Karen Leland

When I first became an author (20-plus years ago), publishing a book meant making a commitment to going out on the road to promote it. The first few months after the book release became a blur of bookstore readings, conference center speeches, and Courtyard by Marriott hotel rooms.

The logic behind this strategy was that the “back of the room” book sales would make the travel well worth the trouble. And while the traditional book tour can still be a viable option, the advent of social networking means an author can now help launch a book effectively—without ever leaving the comfort of home or pajamas.

Below are five good guidelines to keep in mind when it comes to promoting books with blogs.

1. Find the Blogs That Fit the Book

No book, not even one on an evergreen topic—such as diet or dating, time management or marketing—is for everyone. Knowing your audience is the first step in finding blogs that might be interested in a particular book. Ask yourself:

- What types of people or groups would find this book most interesting or useful?
- Who is the ideal audience for this book?
- Who would get the most value from the book?

Once you know who you are looking for, the next step is to locate blogs that cater to that audience and cover your topic. Here are some easy ways to locate appropriate blogs:

Do a general search on Google for a main keyword associated with your book, followed by the word “blogs.” For example: My latest book is on time management, so I would do a search with the term “time management blogs.” Try placing quotation marks around the entire search to get better results.

Review the relevant players in your field by searching blog directories such as Technorati (*technorati.com*), Google Blog Search (*blogsearch.google.com*) and Blog Catalog (*blogcatalog.com*) to find blogs by topic. For example: Dianne Gregg wrote a book called *The Hidden Dangers of Soy*. Her searches on these sites were for “health blogs,” “allergy blogs,” and “food allergy blogs.” After extensive research and a well-crafted approach, she was able to get more than 35 blogs interested in being part of her virtual book tour.

Check out the current conversation on your topic by going to Samepoint (*samepoint.com*) or Viewzi (*viewzi.com*) and typing in keywords that relate to your book.

2. Research First, Reach Out Second

This second step is where the real work begins. Consequently, it’s the one people most often want to skip. Before you reach out and request that a blogger review a book, run a guest post or do an interview for their readers’ benefit—do your homework. Spend some time studying the blogs you have identified to get a sense of what they write about and how your book might fit in. For example:

- Does this blog site do book reviews?
- Does it use guest posts from other writers?
- Does the blog owner do interviews to post on the site?
- Does the type of information you are offering fit with the site’s content?
- Does the tone of your book fit with the feel of the site?

If, after perusing a blog, you’ve determined that it’s a likely candidate for your purposes, your next challenge is to locate the blog owner’s contact information.

Sounds easy, doesn’t it? Unfortunately, some blog owners—intentionally or unintentionally—make it hard to reach out and touch them. If no email address is readily available, see if an alternative Web site is listed and look for contact information there. You can also check search

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engines such as ixquick, bing, and Google to see if you can find the contact information. As a final option, you can fill out the "contact" section on the blog, or leave a short and polite comment in the blog "comment" box.

3. Approach the Blogger with Grace and Gratitude

This is an excerpt from an email I received:

Dear Karen. Hi, my new book [title omitted] is coming out next month, and I just know your readers at the Huffington Post would love it. I'm really busy, so if you want to interview me, I would rather do it by e-mail. This is a hot topic, so take advantage now.

What was this person thinking? And if you are thinking, "Well, this is an extreme example," you're right. The problem is that many authors approach blog owners with messages that sound more sophisticated but essentially convey the same substance.

The three most important things to remember in pitching a blogger are:

Approach in a gracious way. For example: "Dear Jim, I've been reading your recent blog posts on how to get rid of common house rodents and have learned a lot. I wanted to let you know that I am the author of a new book titled *Great, Green Ways to Get the Rodents Out of Your Grass*. I'm reaching out to see if you would have any

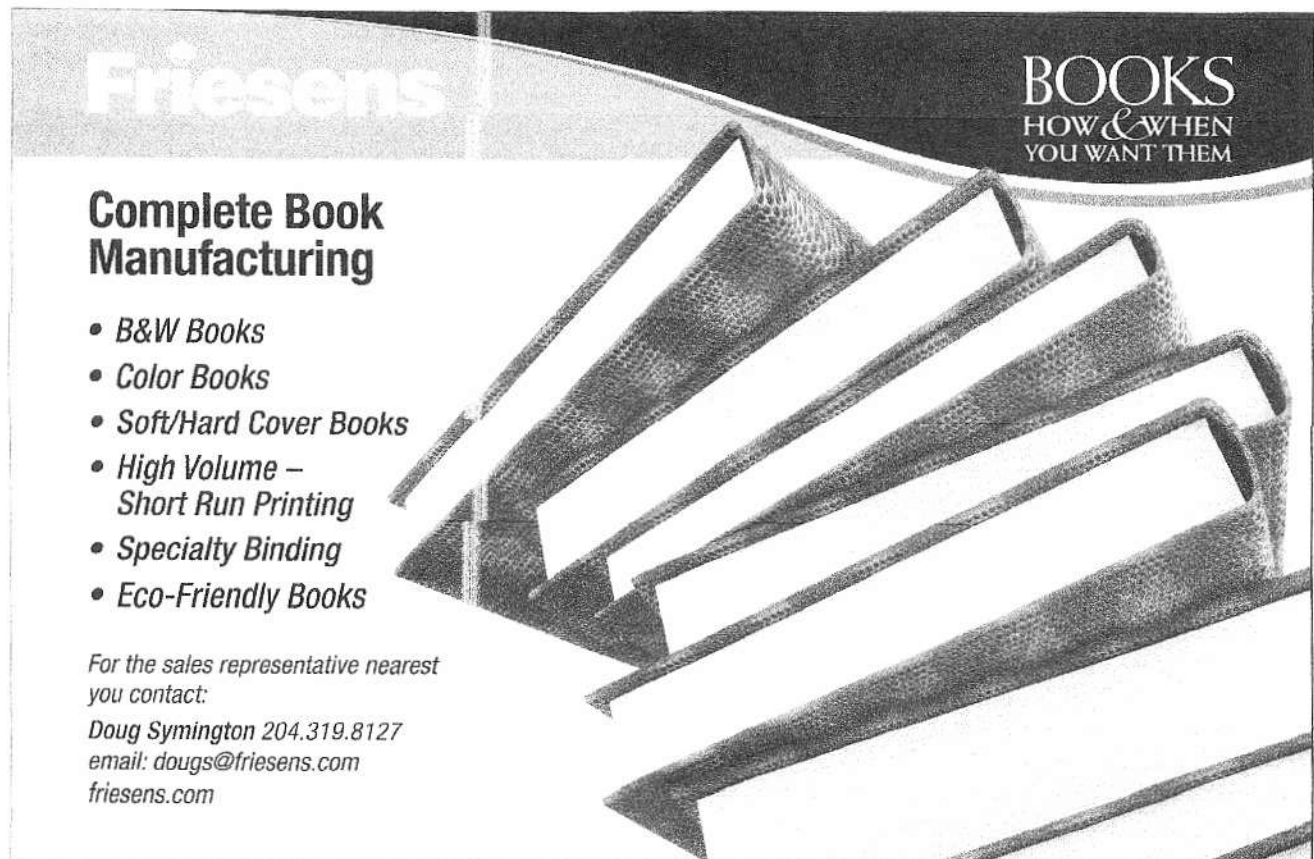
interest in reviewing the book for your site, or having me write a guest post for you..."

Express gratitude for the valuable time spent reviewing your email. For example: "I know how busy you are, and I truly appreciate your taking the time to consider this request. I hope to hear from you soon."

Offer a win-win relationship. This is the most important point. Instead of making your message a one-sided, here's-what-you-can-do-for-me canned pitch, let bloggers know how they can win as well by:

- giving the blogger an authentic compliment about the site and/or explaining what you feel you can contribute to the blog's readers
- offering to help drive traffic to the site with social bookmarking and networking (Twitter, Digg, StumbleUpon, etc.) on whatever post runs about you and/or your book
- noting that you alert everyone on your mailing list to blogs that mention the book, and that a landing page on your Web site shows a list of who's hosting you, on which sites, when
- making it easy for the blog owner to say Yes by having downloads of guest posts and articles easily accessible, and by being flexible when it comes to customizing your content for a blogger's site

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4. Follow Up Gently

Just like you, blog owners are busy folks with a lot on their plates, and you're probably not the only one pitching them. So if you don't hear back within a week or two, send a second friendly email, contact them through a social network such as LinkedIn or Facebook, or take a deep breath and call them on the phone if you've found a phone number.

Once you do get a Yes, make sure you deliver what you promised and on time. Keeping your word is the foundation on which your future relationship will be based.

5. Hire Some Help

Should you hire a blog tour administrator or not? That is the question.

As with many other aspects of PR and marketing, it comes down to time, money, and comfort. I've had clients who simply had me coach them through the process and did all the work themselves—with excellent results. I've also had clients who wanted only to turn the whole thing over to me to handle.

While there is no one right path to blog book promotion, here are two things to keep in mind:

The advantages of doing things yourself (with or without some guidance) are that you learn the process; you are

more engaged with the blogs; and you save money. The downside is that this takes considerable time and requires handling the administrative nitty-gritty.

The advantage of hiring someone is that they will take care of the details and free you up to focus on other, more creative and/or income-generating activities. The downside is that you'll have to pay. How much? It's all over the map. I've seen authors pay companies anywhere from \$600 to \$5,000. The spread is that big, and so is the quality.

Before engaging any individual or company to help you, make sure you understand their process, their past results, and their personality. Don't underestimate the importance of hiring someone who understands you and your book and will provide the personalized service it deserves. ●

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Karen Leland, co-author of the recently released book Time Management in an Instant: 60 Ways to Make the Most of Your Day, is also the co-founder of Sterling Marketing Group (sterlingmarketinggroup.com), which helps authors and entrepreneurs use the power of PR and marketing to promote their books and businesses. For more information, visit karenleland.com or email kleland@scgtraining.com.

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