

Market My Novel™

<http://www.MarketMyNovel.com>

Find the Right Publicist for You!

The key? Ask the right questions.

Your book is out in two months. You need to publicize - but have no idea where to begin.

You have a bit of a learning curve when it comes to promotions - like many authors today. You've heard about virtual book tour companies, or full author PR firms who make bestsellers. Could a publicist do that for you, too?

Hiring a publicist is tough business. There are a lot of issues to consider before you sign on the dotted line. This Market My Novel Quick Guide will give you the tools you need to ask the right questions before you hire someone.

Before you even begin your publicist search, however, ask yourself some key questions. The answers to these will help you shape your needs and make a good choice about who can best fulfill those needs.

- ◆ Know your budget - and stick with it. Don't take on astronomical debt for a marketing plan that may or may not work.
- ◆ Know what publicity will reach your audience. Some authors will generate traffic with virtual book tours, while others will focus on book signings in creative places.
- ◆ Know your limits. Be realistic about how much time you can devote to promotions each day. Think about your family and work obligations before you settle on the amount of time you can work on guest blogging, doing radio interviews or newspaper stories.

HOW TO FIND A PUBLICIST

Now that you know your budget, the type of publicity you need and your time limits, you need to find a publicist.

First, do a Google search for "author publicists." Check out various sites to see what they offer. Be warned that there are a lot of over-priced, inexperienced publicists selling their services online, so it is best to write out a list of prospects, then ask around about them. Also, check the Better Business Bureau's national Web site to see if complaints were filed against them.

Word of mouth is key to any business. The best businesses may have a Web site, but don't advertise. Based on personal experience, I've found that most companies that advertise on every Web site don't offer good, quality, affordable services, but companies that simply let clients talk about them are gold.

If you are hiring a publicist specifically for online promotion, they should have a dynamic Web site. I've seen sites for some publicists billing themselves as "experts," who have a few big-name clients, but a Web site that looks like

it was designed in a Microsoft Word page and uploaded to a No Name Server. If they are going to help you with Web items, they should show their experience and knowledge of good Web designer on their own sites.

Also Tweet your needs. Twitter is the most powerful social networking tool around today. I guarantee if you Tweet that you seek a publicist, authors will tell you who to talk to - and who to avoid. You will also receive solicitations from companies, but most just DM you the link to their Web site and do not become pests.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PROSPECTIVE PUBLICISTS

Now that you've done the research and narrowed your list down to the top three, you need to ask some tough questions. These questions are Make It or Break It. If the prospective candidates cannot answer them to your satisfaction, move on.

See Page 2 for a handy check list of questions to aid your search.

QUESTION CHECKLIST



General

- Have you read my book? What did you specifically like about it?
- What did you think of my book's cover art? How will you use it in my campaign?
- What other authors in my genre have you promoted?
- Tell me about two of your most successful author campaigns and what made them successful.
- What are the two biggest failures you've experienced in author campaigns - and what did you learn from them?
- Do you guarantee placement at certain radio stations, newspapers or blogs?
- How long should the campaign be? How much time should I devote to it?
- How do you plan to brand me in this campaign?
- What makes you passionate about promoting authors?
- Show me some examples of your client marketing pieces (news releases, freebies, brochures, posted, CDs, book trailers, etc.)
- Can you give me references for three clients?

Radio/Television

- What is the reach of radio? How do I know I'm hitting my audience?
- Is there an advantage to using radio over print and online promotions?
- Are online radio shows also part of your plan?
- Is it possible to get links or audio from these interviews to post on my Web site?
- Tell me about two successful radio campaigns.
- How difficult is it to get a TV interview for my genre/field of expertise?
- Give me your pitch to producers about having me as a guest.
- Can I use the TV footage on my Web site?

Print

- Is print media the best for me?
- What print publications do you feel are the best for me to be featured in and why?
- Will you purchase advertising in these publications? What newspapers and magazines do you plan to pitch me to?
- How difficult is it to get placement in print? Do you plan to ask if they can do interviews to post online, if there is no room in Features for my story?
- Should I offer to be a guest columnist at some newspapers to generate buzz? If so, what should I write about?

Book Marketing Maven Dana Lynn Smith offers these extra tips to finding a great publicist:

ASK...

- ◆ What type of books they specialize in. Have they worked with other books similar to yours and what were the results?
- ◆ What is their procedure for working with clients. A good publicist will ask a lot of questions up front about the book, the author, the target audiences, and the goals of the publicity campaign. Many publicists give their authors a questionnaire to fill out.
- ◆ What is the anticipated outcome of the publicity campaign they are proposing - what would they expect the typical results to be with this type of book and campaign?
- ◆ For specific written details on the services provided and the fees. Many publicists charge a monthly fee—be sure you understand exactly what you will be getting for that fee. Others charge by the hour, and some charge a flat fee to get a specific result (i.e. 20 media placements). If they are offering a specific number of media placements, be sure you both agree on the definition of “media placements” (are you talking about blurb in your local paper or an appearance on Oprah?) and approximately how long it will take to reach those goals.
- ◆ How/often the publicist will communicate with you. For example, will you get a weekly report of what they have done and the results?

Find out more at Dana's Web site

www.BookMarketingMaven.com

Online

- What is your philosophy about online campaigns? Do you guarantee sales for online promotions?
- What am I responsible for when it comes to online promotions?
- How do you plan to drive more traffic to my Web site, MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, etc.?
- What are your online site visit goals for each of these sites?
- How will my blog be used in the online portion of my campaign?
- Are book trailer services included in your fee?
- Are any changes needed to my Web site for this campaign? Are you willing to work with my Web designer to be sure they are completed?

Hiring a publicist is tough business, but if you go into it well-informed - and ask the right questions - you will be well on your way to finding the right expert for you.

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