

ONLINE MARKETING

FOR

Writers

ONLINE MARKETING FOR Writers

THE WRITER'S 4 STEP PROCESS FOR ONLINE MARKETING SUCCESS

According to the latest statistics there are over 130 million published book titles, 152 million blogs, and 255 million websites in the world. As a writer marketing your works, you're no longer in the rarefied pre-Gutenberg age when there were barely 30,000 actual books in all of Europe, and most of them were Bibles. You're confronting massive competition for readership in even the most esoteric of publishing microniches whether online or off, and you need to harness the most effective promotional means possible to get your word out. Writers everywhere around the world are discovering that nothing comes close to the affordability, efficiency and impact of [email marketing](#) their works. Following this four step process will help you craft a coherent online strategy to promote your blogs, books, articles and other literary works and reach an enthusiastic and engaged audience.

▶ Step 1 – Create & Post Compelling Content

Today's writer needs an author website as much as they need a keyboard. Unfortunately, having the website alone will not lead to promotional success. You can build a thoroughly compelling author's website with the most motivating [email newsletter](#) subscription form on the net and still not draw any hits if no one knows about it. You have to put on your publicist's hat and actively spread the word online among other sites that deal specifically in your subject matter or area of interest:

- Post interesting comments on forums & blogs
- Ask sites if they would accept a guest blog or article
- Write for article publishers like Squidoo or Associated Content



Always limit your marketing to a footnote or signature that contains a link to your [email subscription form](#). Nobody wants to read 800 words on why they should buy your book. Establishing knowledgeable authority in your field will automatically cause readers to want to find out more about your book.



The Content Trifecta

When you're pondering how to write specific content that can drive traffic to your email subscription form, you have to ask yourself these questions about the "trifecta of content":

- **Original** – Is it unduplicated, and reflects a completely unique viewpoint?
- **Valuable** – Will your audience discover something of relevant merit by reading it?
- **Timeless** – Is it so topical that it will quickly be yesterday's news?

Just like your manuscript writing, you should accept nothing short of perfection when you are creating your promotional content. There is an inherent merit in posting truly well-written content around the web that supersedes any **SEO** tactics or techniques. The search engines such as Google have been recently discounting tricks such as keyword stuffing while rewarding text that incorporates the Content Trifecta.



There are various methodologies that you can implement to give your optimally written promotional content additional exposure and drive more traffic to your email subscription list. Posts that consist of itemized lists usually receive more attention and linking than the more narrative articles. “Household Cleaning Uses For Vinegar” will be more highly valued if you add “The Top 20...” If you have any funds to invest in promotion whatsoever, you may want to choose ad network placements such as Google AdWords. Regardless of your budget you should spend time establishing relationships with bloggers, web ring operators and legitimate traffic exchangers. Also keep in mind that offline contacts can drive online success, so place your email subscription form’s URL on your business cards; promotional materials for your book signings, book fairs or other personal appearances; and of course listed prominently in your book.

▶ Step 2 – Leverage Social Media

We live in the decade of **social media**, so if you’re trying to publicize your works without having a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and other networks, you might as well still be using a quill pen to write on parchment. Social media can allow an author to interact with readers and fellow writers, promote content that can develop viral mobility and reach key evangelists and influencers in your field. There are some primary keys for writers to achieve social networking promotional success by standing out amidst the over one billion pieces of content shared daily on Facebook alone:



Assist – Provide expert help and guidance rather than discussing me, me, me.

Follow – It’s perpetual motion: the more people you follow, the more followers you’ll get.

Connect – Reach out to established advocates and thought leaders with an honest approach.

Blog – There is no substitute for a well-written and informative blog to draw readers.

Ask – Posing questions to your social network followers will spark participation and conversation.

Link – Liberally attributing content to others will allow them to return the favor.

Visual-ize – A picture is worth 1,000 words, so make ample use of photos, images and **videos** to catch the eye.

Post – Tweet at least twice a day and post to Facebook daily without fail... while keeping it interesting.

Engage – Give your social followers ample reasons to remain intrigued.

The Content Trifecta should be considered before you post or tweet as well. Just because you’ve committed to three tweets a day, that doesn’t equate to providing 140 characters of pap. If your followers have been attracted to your encyclopedic knowledge of the Ming Dynasty, your ruminations on Lindsay Lohan’s legal problems will be of little interest.

Be a Big Fish in a Little Pond

There is considerable value in drawing attention to your book through the primary social news sites such as StumbleUpon, Reddit and Newsvine, but locating and joining microcommunities that share your specific interests can be a considerably greater source of social media success. Seeking to become a prime Go-to Guru in specifically targeted online coteries may just be your best promotional investment of time and energy. You’ll find that being recognized as a big fish in a small pond is going to generate more interest than just being the 3,827th entry on Digg this morning.

▶ Step 3 – Ethically Compile Your List

Barack Obama’s email list is worth half a billion dollars, so if you ever needed proof that email marketing works you can look to the President’s online promotions success. You don’t have to reside in the White House to build a profitable email marketing list: All it takes is some common sense, dedication and a firm commitment to never stray into unethical practices such as sending emails promoting your latest book or other literary work to people who have not granted you formal permission to do so.



Shun Indiscriminate Email Blasting

When author Michelle Dunn was launching a second edition of one of her books on credit and collections, she made a comprehensive list of whoever had purchased her first edition as well as various credit managers and collectors she had previous contact with and knew were interested in her topics. There is nothing unethical or illegal in contacting individuals you have had previous personal or business contact with to inform them that you have a new book out. The line is crossed when you email someone you’ve never had any contact with previously, as that opens the door to indiscriminate email blasting. Always follow [permission based email marketing](#) practices.



There Is No “Book Everyone Will Want to Read”



Xlibris will actually send out an email featuring your book to ten million “book lovers and reading enthusiasts across the world” for a mere \$10,000. How they obtained permission from these individuals is essentially not your concern as they’re the ones sending out the email, but you have to ask yourself in today’s highly fragmented and oversaturated publishing market what the value is in sending a book promotion to “reading enthusiasts.” Will the habitual reader of bodice-ripping romance novels be interested in a DIY guide to fixing your own plumbing, or will the motorcycle racing enthusiast want to read about how to quilt a Little Dutch Girl? There is no such thing as a “book everyone will want to read” in the 21st century, so readers must be targeted according to how their previously expressed behavioral preferences dovetail with the subject matter of your book.

Be Sensitive when Emailing Reviewers & Journalists

There is a gray area in email marketing best practices when it comes to targeted promotion. As long as there is a clearly prominent unsubscribe facility that is immediately honored, it would not be generally considered a “commercial solicitation” to contact book reviewers and members of the press by email. Sensitivity is a prime prerequisite, as it could be considered spam to send a solicitation for coverage of a children’s book to Car & Driver magazine, or ask for a review for your casino guide from a chick lit reviewer. When emailing your promotions you have to honestly answer the question of “would this individual be genuinely interested in this book?” before sending anything.

Buying Email Lists Is Fraught with Problems

Horizontal media such as the major newspapers, magazines and television networks are effectively impregnable due to the volume they receive. The New York Times receives an average of three emailed press releases per minute 24/7, so you have to ask yourself if there is any real value in your adding to that largely unread pile. However, targeting reporters, bloggers and book reviewers working in smaller “more approachable” vectors by purchasing a list of media contacts is fraught with problems. The Bacon/Cision and Vocus Media Databases are examples of lists from a reputable publishers that contain countless journalistic contacts who never agreed to be listed and are now being unmercifully spammed by the ravenously publicity-hungry. Lifehacker founder Gina Trapani even went as far as compiling a list of PR oversenders in Gmail filtering format for one-click defusing by other journalists.

Preserve Your Email Sending Reputation

You have to be vividly aware of the mechanism of spam reporting and how it can affect your book promotions. When you send an email missive to a reporter, blogger or reviewer and that individual chooses to list that message as spam, your “email sending reputation” takes a hit. Enough hits and the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that route traffic up and down the internet will add you to a blacklist and you’ll have trouble getting an email to your granny, let alone to the press at large. To ensure that your spam reports are kept to a minimum, be explicitly clear in the subject line and [preheader](#) as to what the content deals with. If you’re soliciting a review for your book on Napoleon’s youthful days in Ajaccio from a reviewer for History Today magazine, make sure that the email is clearly identified as such so that they don’t think you’re pitching them a dessert cookbook on baking cream-filled Napoleons.

► Step 4 – Capture Your Readers via Email Marketing

It’s a fact of life for any writer promoting their works online that “social media creates the buzz but email marketing closes the sale.” A rational and sensible [email marketing strategy](#) can help writers drive readers to their works, and with an average Return On Investment determined by the Direct Marketing Association to be more than \$42 per each dollar invested, it is clearly the budget-strapped author’s best friend. A partnership with a reputable email service provider (ESP) will allow you to:

- Design professional email newsletters
- Provide attractive and functional email templates
- Manage your contact list
- Track and analyze your campaign through [real-time reports](#)
- Integrate seamlessly with social networks
- Supply sophisticated email subscription forms
- Develop polls and surveys to engage your readership while you learn about their preferences
- Assist you in segmenting your subscription lists according to demographics and behavior
- Ensure optimal deliverability due to their established reputation with ISPs

ESPs can also facilitate messages to be automatically sent at any frequency of your choosing. Author Susan P. Ascher successfully used email [autoresponders](#) to promote her *Dude, Seriously, It’s Not All About You* to allow readers to sample brief excerpts that motivate them to purchase the book. Advanced ESPs such as Benchmark Email even have an [RSS-To-Email](#) feature which automatically sends out a missive to your subscribers whenever you update your blog or post anything that is relayed through RSS, and have designed newsletter templates specifically for that purpose.



By utilizing an ESP’s template you’ll also be assured that any multimedia of your choosing will embed and display properly.

Craft the Best Possible Newsletter

The importance of creating compelling content for your newsletter is indisputable, but there is much more to promoting your works through email marketing than just brilliant writing. To achieve success in email marketing a book, manuscript or online works you should:

- Maintain a strict frequency schedule that adheres precisely to what your subscribers signed up for.
- Provide a compelling [subject line](#): August Video Card Tech Newsletter is not as intriguing as Dog Days Radeon vs. Nvidia Shootout.
- Have a consistent layout and structure for each issue to keep your readers from becoming confused.
- Proofread and proofread again, as the slightest spelling or grammatical error will be taken more seriously coming from a professional writer.
- Learn about the various testing processes and test every possible factor of your newsletter.
- Have the unsubscribe and comment links prominently visible, and act immediately on all requests.



Exercise Mobile Mastery

The mobile revolution has gathered momentum to such a point that within a couple of years more emails will be read on smartphones and tablets than on desktop and laptop computers. The problem this presents writers marketing their works through email is that a newsletter formatted to display perfectly on a 15" laptop or 24" desktop screen may be almost unreadable on a tiny smartphone screen. The mobile consideration must apply to every aspect of your layout. What's the point of placing a large image of your book cover in your newsletter if a third of it falls off the edge of a typical Android or iPhone? ESPs can ride to your rescue in providing [email templates](#) that scale to different sized screens, and offer the alternative of viewing mobile-specific versions.

Writers everywhere agree that email marketing forms the hub of their promotional efforts, and is the channel primarily responsible for attracting new readers and forging new connections. Partnering with an ESP that understands the very specific marketing needs of writers and is open to working with you to achieve your promotional goals can be the boost any writer needs to join the ranks of the illustrious literati.

▶ About Benchmark Email

Take powerful features by the dozen, sophisticated list management, hundreds of email templates, ultra-precise reports and dazzling email and video email. Now, package all that together for an extremely affordable price. Sound appealing? That's us.

There's a reason – or 100 – that more than 73,000 users trust us with their email marketing campaigns. With a second-to-none feature set, headache-free tools that make every campaign a snap and extremely reasonable price plans, we're the email marketing service for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

At Benchmark, we're more than email marketing experts, we're innovators. Our main aim is to perfect our email marketing service, but we also follow social networking, search engine optimization (SEO) and Web 2.0 just so our 100% Web-based software is completely compatible with the ever-changing Internet world.

No other service gives you this robust, standard range of features for just \$9.95 a month to start. Find out for yourself by enrolling in our free, 30 day trial www.benchmarkemail.com/register.

CONTACT US

▶ Contact Benchmark Email

We welcome your feedback and would love to talk with you about your email marketing needs. Please contact us at the addresses below.

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