

## YOU'VE WRITTEN YOUR BOOK. NOW WHAT?

The bulk of an author's writing is finished about a year in advance of a book's actual publication date. And in the months leading up to the release, many authors ask what they can be doing to give their book the best chance of success when it reaches store shelves.

The answer to that is in broadening your network of people who will happily tell others about your book. Here are some things you can do.

**BECOME ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA:** Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are the three we recommend, and in that order of importance. If you have zero social media presence but can build even a modest network of 50 followers on Facebook and Instagram, and they each have 50 followers on social media, that will provide a significant number of new contacts who will let people know about your book. In addition, some of those people reached through social media may know someone in general media or have a friend who works at a bookstore, and other helpful connections such as that. Tips:

- Post at least weekly (images, links to interesting/relevant news, etc.)
- If you have a personal account only, create a new account that is just for your writing and ask all of your family and friends to follow you there too. For example, you could set-up business account distinguished from your personal account by listing your profession (i.e. "John Doe, Author" or "Mary Smith, Author and Photographer").
- Divide the months until your book comes out by 3
  - First third: Post images related to your book, and include comments that will make others want to be in the place you're picturing – "I saw one of the prettiest sunsets ever at this view point"; "This shot is of a really challenging climb I did in [location]"; "The food was so good at this little café in XXX"; etc. Even if your book won't be illustrated with images, try to find ones that help viewers relate to your story.
  - Second third: Continue posting images weekly or more, and begin mentioning your book – "This is a photo illustrating [something] in my book that will be out in XXXX."; "This is one of my favorite trails and I included it in my upcoming book, [title]."
    - During this time, reach out to other authors in the Mountaineers Books Author Group on Facebook and ask if you can help each other. Ask for advice, co-presenting opportunities, for media contacts (including bloggers) they might know, etc.
    - If you have sponsorships, ask your sponsors if they'll help you get the word out about your book when it becomes available—mentioning it in their newsletter, running an excerpt in their consumer communications, suggesting events you can do at their facility or some festival or gathering that they also are a sponsor for, etc.

- Get creative: Post short videos (2-3 minutes) related to your book, e.g. record yourself reading a passage from the book or out on a hike discussing an interesting feature of the trail.
  - Add your social media tag(s) -- @johndoe – and your website URL (or book landing page) to your email signature. (@ tags are for you and # tags are for topics.)
- Final third: Pick up the pace of your postings. Show the book cover in them. Include the book title and cover in your email signature, with some very short descriptive and availability info: “Coming in XXXX”. Include pre-order links for your book to online booksellers such as Indiebound, Amazon and Barnes & Noble.
  - Consider using your posts to count down for when your book will be available, e.g., “30 days until my book is released”; “25 days until my book is released;” etc.

**WHO DO YOU KNOW?** Books are generally sold by personal recommendations. That’s why it’s never too early to begin broadening your network of acquaintances. Here are some things you can do to get started.

- Make a list of all the potentially influential people that you know, and people that they know.
  - Then follow these people on social media and invite them to follow you
  - See who they follow and choose some of those people to follow also
  - Be sure to interact with those who follow you and comment on your social media
  - If you run into Oprah, ask her to blurb your book! Okay, so Oprah is hard, but do you know anyone with a fan base or name recognition who you could ask if they’d be willing to write a blurb?
  - Carry promo postcards for your book and hand them out – e.g., to friends and family as a reminder for them to tell others, to bookstore staff to pass to their buyer, and to anyone who is willing to talk your book up.
  - Join an affinity group or association in the field relevant to your work. Become familiar with their communications tools and network with the communications manager so that you’ll be able to reach out to their membership with a book announcement, contributed article, excerpt, or book event notices when the time comes.
  - Volunteer in order to broaden your network. If you don’t have a broad network, consider volunteering in the area you’ve written about. If you’re a guidebook writer, you could lead hikes for an outdoor group (i.e., check out Meetup.com or local organizations for groups in your area). If you’ve written a memoir or adventure story, join an authors’ group in order to connect with other authors who have connections, or another group with interests relevant to your content (e.g. a climbing club or local conservation org).
  - People like to help others, especially creatives. Do them a favor and ask them for their help.
- What media professionals do you know?

- None? Start laying the groundwork by asking people you know who they know. Perhaps you can be a guest blogger and contribute a piece related to your book timed with book availability (be sure to ask for a mention of your book and the inclusion of the book cover with the piece). Maybe there's a podcaster you can introduce yourself to. Large circulation media outlets are great, but often smaller, more targeted media can be even more effective publicity for your book.
- Do some research to get your publicist ready when you begin working together. Will your hometown newspaper write about your accomplishment? Can you score an interview in your college alumni magazine or on the college's radio station? What magazines are read by the audience for your book? Does your company have an employee newsletter that will mention your book?
- What venues are best for reaching your target audience?
  - Bookstore and outdoor stores are generally primary targets and we work with them regularly for strategic events.
  - Specialty stores, clubs, or other venues: is there a particular place where your target reader likes to gather or socialize? Let us know about these places
  - Professional conferences: is there an opportunity to present to a relevant conference or annual gathering. Start researching which of these might be most strategic for book awareness and sales and make contacts. Find out who and how they select speakers.

**WEBSITES:** We generally recommend that you have a website. If you already have one, you can add a page about your book to that. If you don't have one, creating one doesn't need to be difficult—basic is fine. More people will find you in social media than they will on your website. But people need a place to go to learn more about you. Your social media “bios,” for example, are great places to add your website URL. Website creation is getting easier and more turnkey everyday with services like SquareSpace and Wix.

Your book website or page on your existing website should include this information:

- The book cover image
- A description that explains what the book is about and why you wanted to write it (answers the question: Why would I want to read your book?)
- Blurbs—e.g., recommendations from influential people—if there are some (you can often get these from us)
- An excerpt of your writing is nice to include—a piece from your narrative, or a hike from your guidebook, etc.
- Interior page images if it's a highly illustrated book (again, we may be able to help you get these)

- Links to where your book can be purchased (e.g., your book’s “buy” page on bookseller websites such as Mountaineersbooks.org, Amazon.com, BN.com, and Indiebound.org).

**NEWSLETTER:** A more personalized way to communicate with your base might be through a monthly or quarterly emailed newsletter. This comes in handy when you are sharing book ordering info, book events, and soliciting reviews for major book sites like Amazon and Goodreads. Consider collecting names from your website via a form.