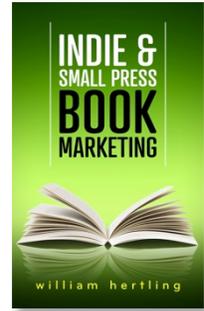


Indie & Small Press Book Marketing Checklist

This checklist, from *Indie & Small Press Book Marketing*, is based on my experiences marketing three indie published books and feedback from other indie and small press authors. *I&SP Book Marketing* presents a detailed plan for how to build credibility, reach influencers, find new readers and grow book sales. If you find this checklist useful and would like more details on how to implement the marketing plan, please check it out on Amazon: [buy kindle edition](#), [buy paperback edition](#). (<http://bit.ly/indiebookmarketing>)



Phase 1: Pre-Launch

This phase is focused on what to do before publication. Good marketing starts with creating a compelling book with high quality writing, layout and design.

Book Focused Activities

- Choose Title:** A good title evokes the theme of the book, is unique on Amazon, search engine friendly on Google, and is pronounceable.
- Run Title Effectiveness Testing:** Using a Google Adwords campaign, test titles by creating ads that are identical except for the proposed book titles. See which have the highest click-through-rate.
- Professional Cover Design:** A compelling cover can dramatically increase sales, while a poor cover (especially an amateur appearing one) can kill a book.
- Good Interior Design:** It's tricky to design a good print book interior, and one that violates design rules will scream "self-published" (and not in a good way.) Either spend the time to learn the design norms, or hire it out.
- Get Feedback:** Make sure your content is the best it can be, and realize that you are not the best judge of your material. You can get feedback for pay, in trade, or for free from friends and family. (The value of what you get varies to the person's skill level, which may or may not correlate with what you pay them.)
 - Critiques:** Beta-readers can give you early feedback on plot, setting, and theme.
 - Copyediting:** Copyeditors will evaluate writing style and structure, repetitive words and phrasing, and continuity errors.
 - Proofing:** Proofreaders will look for grammar issues, spelling, and other typos.
- After-matter Call to Action:** When a reader finishes your book and is basking in the glow of warm, fuzzy happiness, it's the best time to ask them to post a review, buy other books, or sign up for a mailing list.

Web/Social Media

- Create Book Landing Page: A compelling book landing page can convince at least twice as many to buy a book as an Amazon book page. This is the place to showcase a great cover, the best praise and third party reviews, descriptive text, and purchase links.
- Establish Blog: A blog allows you to engage with readers and drive ongoing traffic to your website. Use the four types of blog posts: original, expert opinion; curated best of content from the web at large; note-taking; and slice of life.
- Use Social Media: It's impossible to learn everything you need to know about participating in social media in the crucial few weeks after you publish, so get started early.
 - Write Five Blog Posts
 - Sign Up and Use Facebook and Twitter
- Create Mailing List: A monthly email list is a great way to stay in touch with fans, celebrate successes, and give back to readers. Subscribers will be the first people to rush out to buy your second novel or respond to appeals for help. Be wonderful to them.

Other

- Order Book Business Cards: Inexpensive, elegant, and effective advertising tools, a book business card is something you can hand to someone you talk to at a party, on the bus or airplane, or at conferences. They vastly increase the likelihood that they will buy your book.

Phase 2: Book Launch

This phase is focused on launching the book, getting initial reviews to help build credibility, and seeding the Amazon recommendation engine to get ongoing sales.

Timing

- November/December: The highest book selling months are November and December. Launch then if possible, otherwise use January to April. Avoid summers, which are typically weak.
- Simultaneous Kindle/Print: Have both print and kindle versions ready at launch, which drives sales by increasing legitimacy and ensuring preferred format is available.

Week 0 date: _____

- Publish: Upload to Kindle Direct Publishing and Createspace (and/or other platforms)
 - Kindle (allow 48 hours)
 - Print (allow 1 week)
- Link Print and Kindle Pages: Wait 24 hours after books are available, and ensure they are linked. If not, use the “Contact Us” link in KDP to request pages to be linked.
- Set Up Opt-in Mailing List: Ensure the sign-up form for your mailing list is visible on your website. (I use MailChimp for my mailing list.)
- Set Up Amazon Author Central: Claim your books, fill out your author profile and fix/add to book descriptions and review sections.

Week 1 date: _____

- Close Friends and Family Appeal: Send an email out to your closest friends and family letting them know about your novel, and explaining mentioning the book on social media, to other friends, and posting reviews are the biggest helps to success. This is a personal appeal based on your relationship, as opposed to the merits of your book.
- Check Sales Reports: Learn how to check sale reports on KDP and Createspace, and keep a spreadsheet to track daily or weekly stats. (Daily is preferred, but is obviously more work.) This is essential to evaluating the success of later marketing efforts. If published via a traditional publisher, ensure you’ll have prompt, regular access to sales data.
- Follow-up to Appeal: After a few days, send a follow-up email to your closest friends and family, letting them know how the book is doing and thanking them.

Week 2 date: _____

- Widespread Friends, Family, Coworker Appeal: With a few reviews posted to build credibility, it's time to make a widespread appeal via email and social media to everyone you know. Appeal on both the personal meaning to you as well as early praise about the book.
- Follow-up to Appeal: After a few days, send a follow-up email, letting them know the results. Ask them to join your mailing list if they're interested, so you won't have to spam a large group again.

Week 3 date: _____

- Send Review Copies to Influencers: With more reviews building more credibility, now it's time to leverage any connections you have to influencers (people with a large social reach). Send them a free review copy (kindle or paperback as appropriate, with the offer of the other format if they prefer it.) Excerpt existing reviews as social proof.
- Update Landing Page: Include excerpts from the best reviews on your landing page.
- Share News: Use social media to share news, including good reviews, sales milestones, etc.

Week 4 date: _____

- Hold Book Launch Party: It's time to celebrate with a launch party. This will inspire more friends to buy and post reviews. It's preferable to have people buy via Amazon rather than direct from you, as it will help feed the recommendation engine, leading to more sales.

Phase 3: Post-Launch

During the post-launch phase, which lasts about six months, you'll run the gamut of social media and web tools to continue to drive ongoing sales, build credibility, and reach wider and wider audiences.

Many of these activities could begin in phase 2, during the launch month, but as an individual author you'll likely be too busy to do everything at once.

- Monitor Mentions and Inbound Links: Use Google search, Tweetdeck (or Hootsuite), and Statcounter to monitor the web and twitter for mentions. Thank reviewers personally, link to good reviews.
- Engage with Fans: One of the great joys of publishing is engaging with fans. If someone cares enough to take the time to tell you how much they enjoyed your book, give them a personal response. Take it one step further and give them a gift: a unique story about writing the book, or something that influenced you.
- Connect with Communities: Find online communities that you're interested in, and be a participating member. Don't spam them with pleas to buy your book, but just engage and contribute valuable content. If they value your presence, they'll eventually check out your books.
- Participate on Social Networks: Same as above, but on Twitter and Facebook.
 - Schedule posts with Bufferapp (optional): If you can't engage in social media all the time, just spend an hour a week researching noteworthy topics that your readers might be interested in. Then schedule them out across the week with Bufferapp.
- Continue Blogging: At least one blog post a week.
- Monthly Emails using Mailing List: Send a monthly update. Topic ideas: update on your writing/publishing projects, recommended books, noteworthy news related to what you write about.
- Targeted Facebook Ads: If you can figure out a particular niche to which your book will appeal, you may be able to target Facebook ads to that group. A niche can be based on interest in a topic (e.g. how to train dogs) or an author (e.g. fans of Bruce Sterling). The more focused the niche, the better the results usually are. Targeting a genre (science fiction) or blockbuster author (J.K. Rowling) is usually too broad.
 - Monitor Ad Results: Establish a baseline for your sales, then run an ad for a duration of one week, and see how sales change. Rule out any other contributions (e.g. an influencer review), and you can compute how many sales resulted from the ad. Are the results good? Keep running and monitoring the ad. Could the results be better? Experiment with different niches, wording, and landing pages.
- Listopia Lists on Goodreads: An inexpensive way for your book to be found by more readers. Anyone, including you, can vote to have your book added to appropriate lists.

- Conduct Goodreads Giveaway: As an author, you can giveaway print copies of your book on Goodreads. In a month-long giveaway, typically several hundred to a thousand people will sign up for the book. For the cost of a half-dozen books plus postage, you can expose many people to your book. It also goes onto their “to read” list automatically, so they’ll see it again and again.
- KDP Select Giveaway: If you choose to participate in the KDP Select program, you can elect to hold giveaway promotions up to five days in every three month period. A giveaway can be a great way to get your book onto bestselling lists, listed on kindle freebie lists, and gain reviews and new readers. However, KDP Select requires your book to be distributed solely via Amazon. I’m ideologically opposed to giving Amazon such control over the entire marketplace, and yet the technique is effective. I’m used it for my non-fiction books, but not my fiction titles.

Phase 4: Influencers

The activities here are specifically geared towards reaching influencers; those people who have an especially large online social reach. Influencers may have a large number of Twitter followers, blog readers, or mailing list subscribers, or they may be in a position as head of an organization where they have a large reach.

Influencers are necessary to jump from a steady trickle of ongoing sales into category bestselling lists. Once there, the additional exposure can be self-sustaining, keeping your book on those lists.

- Look for Influencers: Find influencers based on a likely resonance with what you've written, connection with your target readers, or on the basis of connections you can utilize. For example, my near-term technothriller resonated with technology futurists who make a habit of studying long term technology trends.
- Make Luck: You can make luck by setting yourself up for the conditions that will bring you what you need. If you wanted to meet movie stars, for example, you'd be statistically more likely to do so in Los Angeles than a small rural city. In the case of publishing getting reviews, ongoing sales, and media mentions will increase the likelihood of organically reaching an influencer. In other words, phase 1 through 3 set up the conditions for exposure.
- Touch on Contemporary Issues: Talking about contemporary issues, no matter how fantastic the setting or plot, can give people something concrete to anchor to. For example, my futuristic cyberpunk novel grapples with the impact of pressure due to online social reputation, a very real and current issue.
- Give, Give, Give, Ask: It's been scientifically established that people are more likely to do a favor for someone when they've received a favor from that person, the concept known as reciprocity or the favor economy. If you make a habit of giving to people, most will eventually volunteer a favor in return. Unless you've been offered, don't ask for a favor unless you given at least three times.
 - Make a List of Offers: What can you offer other people? Make a list of at least three things of value you can offer people. Can you critique their website? Offer them feedback on their writing? Help them make a connection?
- Build Relationships: If you haven't done so before, this is a time to cultivate relationships. Attend workshops and conferences and make a point of talking to your fellow attendees. Join a local or online writer's group, or other group related to the topics and themes you write about.

How effective are the techniques in this checklist?

Using this approach, I sold 15,000 books in my first year of sales and hit #2 on the bestselling technothriller list, and received more than a hundred reviews and dozens of mentions by influencers. But don't just take my word for it:

“Finally, a structured approach to marketing books.”

– **Tonya Macalino**, author of *Spectre of Intention* and *The Shades of Venice*

“Even for the traditionally published author, this book is full of great stuff! It takes a detailed, easy to follow approach to promoting your book. Highly recommended!”

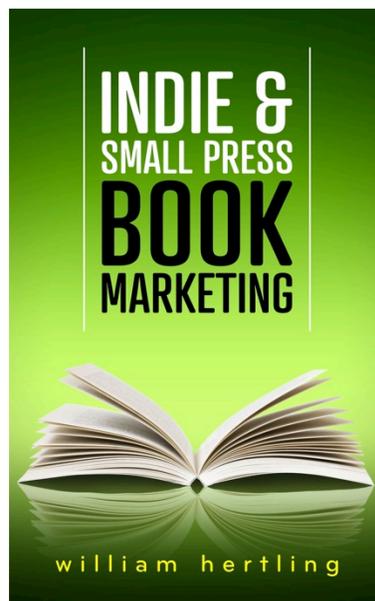
– **E.C. Ambrose**, author of *The Dark Apostle* series

“Chock full of actionable marketing tips I wish I'd known years ago.”

– **Gene Kim**, author of *The Visible Ops Handbook* and *The Phoenix Project: A Novel About IT, DevOps, and Helping Your Business Win*

“Too many authors say there isn't any way to market your ebook.... Will Hertling's story demonstrates there is another path and now he has put that path down in a book that is easy to execute and full of useful information.”

– **Erik Wecks**, author of *Aetna Rising: A Snowball's Chance in Hell* and *Brody: Hope Unconquered*.



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