

Retiree or Teenager Branding Yourself Is Essential for a Writer

I'll wager you never thought in terms of branding yourself. But now that you're a retiree who plans to spend some of those retirement hours as a writer or perhaps a housewife who has completed a writing course and wants to start her novel, it is an important step for you to consider.

In the past, thoughts of cattle probably came to mind when the word branding was mentioned. Similarly, promotion usually meant ballyhooing a product. Now that you're an author or at least a fledgling writer, it's time to realize that promotion is a two-edged tool. You promote your book and you promote yourself. But there is a difference.

The book you write will probably have a finite active lifespan. Conversely, you will live, I hope, to write lots more books even if, like me, you're older and savoring every minute of your retirement now that you have the luxury of time to write. Therefore, it is essential that you "brand" yourself as an expert in the subject you chose.

Publish and You Become an Expert

The fact that you have published a book, fiction or nonfiction, qualifies you as someone with special knowledge and special talent, and you will find the world looks upon you just that way. But that doesn't mean you can sit back and rest on that single laurel. You need a whole garden of laurels to impress literary agents, publishers and event planners who may book you for speaking engagements.

Exposure is the key to branding. Getting your name out in both the digital arena and in print. Where do you start? You need a base, in this day and age a web site, to which people can turn to learn more about you and your writing. It also becomes a home where everyone can find and contact you. But a web site alone just sitting there blandly in digital space is meaningless. It must attract visitors. It is the hub to which you invite web surfers to learn more about the field in which you specialize. That means your site must be packed with meaningful, relevant information.

You might want to add a blog as well. This latest form of communication attracts millions of readers, and can be a great deal of fun to manage. However, you will have to constantly update your blog with new information. Your visitors will expect a steady stream of fresh articles, blurbs, tips and more to keep them returning again and again. Be careful not to overload yourself with the demands of these voracious digital beasts. They eat up content. Indeed, they thrive on it...and so do web surfers.

Popularizing Your Site

Surfers turn to search engines to find the best resources for the information they seek. Those engines offer writers a powerful tool to invite readers to their sites. So powerful and so important that it has spawned an entire new industry, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to help authors, professionals, businesses and more climb to the top of the search engine listings where millions of people can find them. If you are not familiar with this

concept, I recommend you study it ASAP.

Reach out for other sites that deal with your topic. Request that they link to your site, thereby adding an increased dimension of information for their regular readers and a new source of visitors for you. Write articles on your topic, and send them to other web sites. Most site editors, particularly those that include an eZine or newsletter, need content, and will be happy to use your piece if it is relevant and informative. You can then add a bio at the end that invites readers to visit your site and read the books and articles that you have published. Linking is considered one of the most effective techniques for rising high in the search engine listings.

Print Pays Off

Don't ever neglect the print universe. Find magazines that relate in some way to your topic. Query them with ideas for articles. A visit to your library's reference room will provide endless possibilities. Directories like *Writer's Market* fill their shelves. Some will give you a complete description of the publication, the editors' pet peeves, the type of article they favor and the preferred method of proposing it. You will also want to send review copies of your new books to the appropriate magazines.

Despite all the talk about slippage by newspapers, they still represent a gold mine for creative promoters. Concentrate on the specialized section that best relates to your topic: food, business, travel, personal finance, education. There's no need to query a newspaper editor. He/she just doesn't have the time to respond, and then wait for the story to arrive.

Check the *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook* to find the appropriate section editor and address. Your library will have this directory. Send your book when it is first published to the editor of the appropriate section. Your chances of obtaining a review or a blurb are far greater in the relevant section than if you send it to the paper's book editor. You may want to try both paths.

Similarly, send notices on a regular basis to broadcasters when you have a timely issue to discuss. There are a variety of publications that list talk show producers and a number of web sites that can help you pursue this avenue. You might want even want to advertise your expertise in the *Radio-TV Interview Report*, a publication read by producers of shows, both big and small, national and local. It's expensive, but effective.

To make it happen, stay alert to every possibility to extend your reputation. Don't be shy about notifying the press about important happenings such as publication dates, signings, speeches and more. Send out press releases regularly to digital aggregators and to print publications. Package all of this together, and you will be amazed to discover how quickly you become the expert you've always dreamed of and possibly a celebrity as well. What a great way to spend the rest of your life!