

## Branding and Promoting Yourself and Your Work as an Author Templates and Additional Reading

### Step One: Branding yourself as an author

Your brand is who you are and what your work stands for. It helps readers form an emotional connection to you as a writer and helps sustain their desire for more of your work.

A brand is a promise about what you represent and if you deliver on that promise, it creates familiarity and trust. Your goal in branding is for readers and potential readers to be attracted to your brand. A good brand helps you form a relationship with your readers.

Think of approaching branding yourself in the same way you approach creating a character in one of your stories.

Consider:

1. What kind of writing do you do or want to do?
2. What subjects do you write about?
3. What types of stories do you want to tell?
4. What are the themes in your work? (if you write in different genres or styles, or combine fiction with non-fiction, for example – what themes are common?)
5. How do you want to serve your readers?
6. What are the spin-offs you would like to publish? (e.g. sequels, series)
7. What are your values, interests and passions? How do they align with your objectives as an author?
8. What interesting tidbits from your background would you like to include? (e.g. former jobs, where you grew up, etc.)
9. What elements of your daily life would support your brand?
10. Is there a word or phrase you can use to describe yourself as an author?

After answering the above questions, consider:

- What stands out and what are the common themes?
- Is there something unique, interesting or outstanding that identifies you?

Choose qualities from your answers to the above questions to develop your brand.

You can narrow this down to a few defining words or an image that can become a logo, tagline or concept that can be featured in all of your communications.

Additional sources of information about branding yourself as an author:

<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/2014/07/6-branding-tips-for-writers-and-authors/>

[http://www.blumooncommunications.com/white\\_papers/author\\_branding.htm](http://www.blumooncommunications.com/white_papers/author_branding.htm)

### Step Two: Defining Your Audience

Your readers are an obvious audience for your work, yet the audience for your promotional plan will go beyond your readers. You may have several audiences and each may require a personalized message or promotional tactic.

Consider:

1. Who are your readers and where do they or could they receive information about you?
2. Who do you want to attract as readers? Where do they receive information?
3. Who influences your readers? (e.g. media, bloggers, frequent contributors to social media)
4. Where are the best places (physical and digital) to reach your audience?

### Step Three: Your Promotional plan

Investing time into developing a solid promotional plan is as valuable as creating an outline for a novel. As well, just as in the process for completing a book, it may need a little research. Here are the key components of a promotional plan:

**Purpose:** Decide what you want to accomplish. What are your communications objectives and goals? This can be as narrow or broad as you wish, depending on your time and resources.

Sample purpose: This strategy will inform / persuade \_\_\_\_\_ (WHO? *readers / media*) about \_\_\_\_\_ (the author/work) in order to (do/accomplish) \_\_\_\_\_ (WHAT? *sell book / introduce author and build reputation*).

**Background / Situational Analysis:** Use this section for a brief history and description of author/work that can be used in your communications. Include key elements of the author's brand.

Consider the current context or situation: what is happening or may happen that can affect or influence successful implementation of the communications plan? (e.g. links or connections to others with similar objectives; upcoming events that are opportunities or competition; unique qualities or expertise; risks and vulnerabilities).

**Audiences:** Fill in from the audience template. Who will this reach? Who is affected? Who is involved? Who will benefit? Who is connected? Consider your primary (first) audience and any secondary audiences you need to reach in order to get the word out to your primary audience.

**Key Messages:** What messages will have a strong meaning for your audience(s)? What is important to them? How will they benefit? What do you want them to believe?

Craft three-four sentences of 15-20 words each using simple language (these are not slogans or tag lines). Consider including a call to action: What do you want your audience to do? (e.g. *Buy the new e-book now; Check out my latest blog.*)

**Strategies:** What you will do to achieve your goal/objectives. Brief, high level statements (e.g. launch new website/blog and promote through social media channels; organize and appear in a panel discussion of writers to raise profile; ask other writers to review my work and use as testimonials).

**Activities / tactics:** What will be done, timing, costs, what will be made, what needs to happen.

Examples of tactics:

- Advertising (paid advertising in traditional and digital media)
- News releases (pro-active public relations; well-written news releases get media coverage)
- Face to face (high value in face-to-face: speaking opportunities; book signings; table or booth at an event)
- Posters (inexpensive to produce and effective if placed where your audience will notice)
- Website (keep it engaging and add new content; promote and drive people to the site)
- Blog (your opinions; statements; can make a connection with readers and build your reputation)
- Social media (channels for quick promotion, discussion and sharing)
- Educational products (how-to book or website/blog – share your expertise; conduct a workshop; participate in a panel discussion at a conference; speak to a classroom)
- Partnerships (create partners between people/organizations with common objectives e.g. suggest a “writer in residence” series at a local bookstore and you both promote; link your historical novel to an event at the local museum)
- Engage influencers such as other authors or opinion leaders (who can discuss your work)

**Budget and resources:** Breakdown of time and money needed for each activity. Include time and costs for any training you may need in order to effectively learn to do it on your own; or to contract a consultant to help.

Consider: How much time or money (or both) do you have available to spend? Are there other resources you can draw on such as generous friends or family? Decide on the time and dollars you have available to dedicate to promotion and tailor your plan accordingly.

How much time to you have available for promotion? (e.g. \_\_\_\_ hours per day; \_\_\_\_ hours per week).

Examples of potential cost items: URL domain name; smartphone and mobile service (for ease of posting); paid advertising; fees to attend events; space rental at events; employing a professional photographer or artist for promotional graphics; hiring a communications professional to assist. Consider one-time and ongoing (e.g. weekly or monthly) costs.

**Evaluation:** Monitor your media coverage, new followers, etc.; assess how well you achieve your objectives; identify what needs to change and what is working well.

### Step Four: Putting your plan into action

Your promotional plan will make optimum use of the channels you choose, consistently promoting your brand within the limits of the resources you can dedicate. Here are a few ideas for authors:

- Write about topics that support your brand. Romance writers could discuss the history of the romance; the authors/stories that inspired them; and come up with special celebratory posts for Valentine's Day.
- Share your expertise on your blog – provides value for readers. (e.g. *Five ways to get started writing when you are blocked*; or provide information about your writing subject matter such as interesting facts about a topic or theme that appears in your work).
- Share your blog posts on social media
- Use social media to connect with your readers
- Build relationships with others who share your objectives or subject matter
- Support your fellow authors by engaging on their social media
- Promote your events or appearances
- Don't have time to create and maintain your own blog? Consider a guest post on a fellow writer's blog (e.g. The Sooke Writers Collective site has a section on writings and musings).

### Sample action plan for author/book promotion:

Strategy focus	Action	Timing / deadline	Cost	Materials / activities
Blog launch + social media promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and publish blog/site</li> <li>• Create Facebook profile; invite friends (to like page or be friends)</li> <li>• Create Twitter profile; select key accounts to follow</li> <li>• Build social media follows with a bi-weekly post to start, reduce to once a week when new blog posts are launched</li> <li>• Monitor other blogs for topic ideas – references and sharing</li> </ul>	1-2 weeks for initial launch by (date).  2 hours per week for blog post  1 hour per week for social media posts and review	\$50 (professional photo)  \$80 (URL)	Profile photo  Purchase URL  Consistent colour scheme / look&feel  Editorial calendar: ideas and timing for blog topics
Announce blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and distribute news release to announce blog site. Distribute to: (email addresses of key media contacts)</li> </ul>	Coincide with blog launch		Distribute to media, readers, contacts, friends
Book launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with local bookstore</li> <li>• Promote book launch through advertisement in local print media</li> <li>• Design camera-ready ad</li> <li>• Send review copy of book to (person of influence)</li> <li>• Update website/blog</li> <li>• Promote review through social media; share link from publication of review</li> <li>• Monitor comments &amp; respond/engage</li> </ul>	Ad to run two weeks before book launch date  Review runs one week before book launch date	\$xx (pay for half of advertising)	Meet with bookstore owner/agreement  Book date for launch  Book advertising  Camera-ready ad  Social media promotion

### Useful links

**Sooke Writer's Collective:**

<http://sookewriters.com/>  
[www.facebook.com/sookewriterscollective](http://www.facebook.com/sookewriterscollective)

**Free website building sites:**

[www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)  
[www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com)

**Shrink a URL for a Twitter post:**

<http://ow.ly/url/shorten-url>

**Further reading and resources on author marketing and promoting yourself as an author:**

<http://shirleyjump.com/2015/01/marketing-yourself-at-a-writers-conference/>  
<http://www.thecreativepenn.com/>  
<http://deadwoodwriters.org/2015/01/18/why-you-should-shamelessly-self-promote-yourself/>  
<http://jodyhedlund.blogspot.ca/2015/02/do-writers-really-need-to-use-social.html>  
<http://mark---lawrence.blogspot.ca/2015/02/buy-my-book-authors-simple-relationship.html>  
<http://www.brianmcclellan.com/blog/an-authors-complicated-relationship-with-self-promotion>