Social Media: Getting the Word Out in Today’s Digital Age

PANELISTS

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Twitter: https://twitter.com/jenforbus
Pinterest: http://www.pinterest.com/jen_forbus/
GENERAL STATS

Facebook has over 1.23 billion users, Twitter has over 243 million active users, 135,000+ sign up daily. Pinterest has 70 million users (as of 2013, all other statistics are current as of 1/2014) and Goodreads has 25 million users and they all love books.

93% of book buyers are on Facebook.

As of December, 2012, 17% of book buyers discovered books by reading about them on a social networking site. That’s up from 1.9% in 2010. An almost 800% increase in only two years. And still growing.

65% of book buyers own an e-reader, this is up from 19% in 2010. The most active group of eBook buyers are females between the ages of 30-44 who live in urban areas.

GENERAL TIPS FOR ANY PLATFORM

• Be authentic
• Be present
• Remember that Content is King!
• Be consistent: don’t disappear when you don’t have a book coming out!
• Be patient – growing a quality following doesn’t happen overnight
• Remember that a few quality followers is far more important than gads of non-quality followers
• If you always keep in mind: “it’s not about you, it’s about your audience,” you’ll have the best chance for success!
• Always think before you post. Remember that you can often delete, but rarely can you completely undo. So if you’re about to post in anger or frustration, step back, breathe and rethink it so you don’t have to live it down.
• For profiles, remember it’s your introduction to strangers. Think of your WHOLE self, not just your author self.

TWITTER

Use your name/brand as your twitter handle.

• Don’t make it anything long or confusing
• If possible, don’t use underscores or things which are difficult to spell
• Don’t use your book title as your handle unless you’re absolutely sure you’ll never write another book...EVER!

Don’t constantly change your profile image. If people can easily recognize your image, they’ll be more likely to pay attention. If you’re constantly changing they won’t know it’s you.
Follow people in your genre, fans of your genre, bloggers, etc. Follow people who interest you! Remember that you’re here to have fun.

Use lists and Twitter follow apps (but don’t let them tweet for you). You can do this by finding someone like you (or someone you admire) on Twitter and looking at who they follow, and if they are on any “lists”, then follow people on those lists. There are also outside applications that will help you do this, like “Twellow” which has a number of categories you can look at.

Another word on following, at the outset, you’re going to follow way more people than are following you. However, when following back, pay attention to that person’s bio and how many followers they have themselves.

Tweet often:
• Share links to your blog posts on twitter
• Share links to articles you genuinely find interesting or relevant
• Retweet other people’s tweets that you find interesting or relevant but don’t retweet just to retweet; remember your audience and think of what will interest them.
• The point is to become a resource for your audience and give them value, even if the content isn’t always yours.

Think of Tweeting like an NPR broadcast. You listen every day, and only a couple times a year do they ask you to support what you’re hearing. 80/20 is the right formula. But also remember timing; most books come out on Tuesday. Your readers are probably inundated with “buy my book” posts on Tuesdays so they don’t care if it’s the only time you’ve posted something like that. They only know they’re tired of seeing it. Be creative and promote without actually looking like you’re promoting: host a contest, share an excerpt, ask questions related to the themes in your book, etc.

**Have a human presence.**
• Engage with the audience by thanking them, answering questions, asking questions.
• Show you’re paying attention and participate in what’s happening.
• Don’t just reply to people who Tweet to you, jump into a conversation and be one of the gang!
• Avoid auto-tweets. If you do auto-tweet, keep them to a bear minimum and be sure to turn them off in the event of sensitive news events (i.e., a school shooting, a terrorist act, etc.). Never rely solely on auto-tweets, it’s vital to BE PRESENT!

Track Keywords:
• Look at Hashtags that mention your subject matter, or use something like TweetScan to find keywords on twitter
• interact with the people making those posts.
• For example if you find a hashtag or keyword #Italy, and you’ve written an Italian guidebook, you could use that to start a conversation.
PINTEREST

HINTS:
— When you sign up, use your name rather than book titles, etc.
— Be choosy about the pins you add to your boards, using only the best of the best in a category.
— Don’t overwhelm your followers’ feed with a bunch of your pins all at once. Likewise, don’t have TOO many boards!
— Your boards should show different sides of you: as an author, nature or pet lover, traveler, etc.
— Use descriptions on each pin (hashtags, keywords, links, etc.)


IDEAS FOR AUTHOR BOARDS:
1. Boards for your individual books (or series):
   — Pins can include characters, settings, maps, floorplans, time-period images, fashion, forensics, etc.
   — Pin book covers from sites in which the book can actually be purchased.
   — Tag every book cover pin with genre, author, and title information.
   — Add a description to each book board—put a short synopsis of the book.
2. A board to get you in the mood to write (“writing inspiration”)
3. Make an "I want to write about this sometime" board
4. Use "Secret" boards (hidden from the public) for a work in progress.

LINKS:
Some authors who use Pinterest well:
http://www.pinterest.com/leciacornwall/
http://www.pinterest.com/darkvoyage/
http://www.pinterest.com/soniagensler/
http://www.pinterest.com/shanagal

YOUTUBE

IDEAS FOR VIDEOS:
— book trailers
— video about yourself and your writing
— video of a speaking event
— read an exciting part of your book aloud
— music clips that inspire your writing
— reviews of books
— interviews (of other authors etc.)
— talks about book culture & community
— discussion between you & another author about topics like characters, plot, etc.
— favorite videos you want to share
LINKS:
Some authors who use YouTube well:
https://www.youtube.com/user/ceciliagraybooks
http://www.youtube.com/user/KodyKeplinger

FACEBOOK

Pages vs. Profiles

Profiles:
• Now allow followers so you aren’t limited to 5000
• Allow interaction with other profiles and pages
• Don’t allow contests

Pages:
• Don’t allow interaction with profiles unless you are tagged in a post
• Offer stats
• Allow contests
• Reduced visibility with the new algorithms
• Create custom tabs

Tips for increasing visibility on a Facebook page:
• Limit automated posts
• Use variety in your posts: images, links, video, status updates
• Think in terms of value to your readers
• Post regularly but not excessively
• BE PRESENT!

Facebook Dos:
• Post regularly and consistently
• Respond to posts, tags and comments—interact with others!
• Share pictures, links to things that interest you, videos, etc.
• Watch what others are doing/sharing/trying
• Know your audience
• Be creative!
• Pay attention to what kinds of posts interest your followers and elicit interaction
• Have fun

Facebook Don’ts:
• Post your Amazon rankings, reviews or buy links
• Auto-post
• Overpost
• Be afraid to fail. One post flopping is as much a lesson as one succeeding, so learn from it.
**BLOGS**

August McLaughlin's Blog: Savor the Storm:
- 3 Ways Blogging Can Make Our Writing Lives and Sales Shine
- The 500 Hats of Blog-tholomew Cubbins: Reducing Social Media Stress
  [http://augustmclaughlin.wordpress.com/2013/04/18/de-stressing-social-media/](http://augustmclaughlin.wordpress.com/2013/04/18/de-stressing-social-media/)

Great writing and social media blogs:
- Chuck Wendig’s Blog: TerribleMinds
- Kristen Lamb’s Blog: We Are Not Alone
  [http://warriorwriters.wordpress.com](http://warriorwriters.wordpress.com)

**GOODREADS**

*Even though we didn’t talk about Goodreads in the session, since there was a question about it, we’re adding a little content here.*

What is Goodreads? It’s a social media network for book readers as well as authors, to connect and network. It’s also a great way to keep track of what you’re reading. There are numerous ways for authors to connect with readers and features reader reviews.

It’s likely that whether or not you want them there, readers will add them there, so you may as well have control at the outset. So, it’s best to make sure your books are there and discoverable.

Once you register with Goodreads, you should join the Goodreads Author program and add all your details. You can also link your blog posts to your Goodreads page, and get more views that way. If you have a book trailer, you can also add that to your page.

Then add all your books onto your bookshelf. Once you become more familiar with the site, there’s ways you can upload your books to the site and offer free chapters or giveaways.

You can also host giveaways so you can provide free copies of your print books to readers and get reviews there and on Amazon. Goodreads will randomly select a winner for you and send you their address.

You can use Goodreads Events to promote book launches, tours and appearances.

You can also join groups (both featured and not) to interact with other users, either about your books, or readers with similar interests.
GOODREADS TIPS

Goodreads’ community manager Patrick Brown gave some tips at BookExpo America:

1) Start promoting titles early: 3-5 months before publication to jumpstart their recommendation engine to include your book. He emphasized giveaways as a huge draw for readers.
2) Pay attention to your “stats”: when you’re logged in there’s a “stats” link in the upper right hand corner. Statistics are important for seeing what’s working for your audience and what isn’t.
3) Use content to build anticipation: Cover reveals and experts are two effective methods to garner interest.

Keep momentum going: The goal for authors on goodreads is to get as many reviews for a title as you can. Don’t limit yourself to just one giveaway, excerpt, reveal. Mix things up and use a bunch of promotional tactics.

GO FURTHER WITH GOODREADS!

Don’t just complete your author profile and leave your Goodreads account to fend for itself. Use Goodreads like your readers use Goodreads:
• Add the books you’re reading
• Review or rate them—you don’t have to include books you dislike if you fear offending anyone. But your readers want to know what you read and enjoy!
• Share that information

Remember that if readers start to feel like the only reason you’re there is to promote your book, they’re going to lose interest. They’re there to interact with other readers, so be a READER as well as an author.

DANGER: if you use Goodreads to simply promote your friends’ books and you aren’t being authentic, your followers will catch on quickly. They’re likely to feel betrayed if you aren’t honest and genuine. So don’t alienate readers in order to scratch your friend’s back. You won’t find a good pay-off.

GENERAL RESOURCES

• Scott Stratton, Unmarketing: http://www.unmarketing.com
• Shana Galen, The Virtual Living Room: http://shanagalen.com/writers-virtual-living-room.php
• Penny Sansevieri’s Red Hot Internet Publicity
• Time article: “What You Think You Know About the Web is Wrong” http://time.com/12933/what-you-think-you-know-about-the-web-is-wrong/?iid=biz-category-mostpop2