

How Low Profile Authors can ***Sell More Books***

by Steve and Cherie Miller

It's no secret that the major presses put their big bucks behind their best-selling authors, leaving their lesser-known authors to market themselves. But if you abandon the big players and go indie, you'll find that the average self-published book sells about 100 copies over its lifetime. How discouraging!

As small time, not-yet-famous authors who are both traditionally and self-published, we decided to learn from low profile authors who were selling lots of books. Often, their methods defied conventional marketing wisdom.

If you're low profile like us, perhaps a few hints will help.

Sure Fire Methods That Didn't Work for Us

- **Get on TV!** Steve was interviewed on two big-time Atlanta news stations. They went great! The hosts held up his book and recommended it. Yet, we saw no sales as a result – zilch. Our conclusion: While a few may hit it big on Oprah, TV isn't the ultimate for sales and the odds of landing that big gig are slim.
- **Tweet several times a day; blog several times per week.** It may work if you've found a popular niche that dovetails with your book, if you love blogging, and if you have the time. But it takes lots of time to write quality posts and market your blog. When will you find time to write your next book? We find few low-profile authors who point to their blogs as a major source of sales.

So what *does* work? ***Different strategies for different authors.*** Here are some effective ones:

- **Think local, but not just bookstores.** By



obsessing on the Web and social networking, authors miss tons of local opportunities.

David Cady is a small town Georgia author who wrote his first novel – a thriller about rescuing a young woman ensnared in a snake-handling cult. Having no following and no big-time publisher behind him, he offered his book, *The Handler*, to a locally owned restaurant for sale at the cash register. Within six months, David sold 200 copies *in that restaurant alone*.

It makes sense. His book isn't competing with thousands of other books. If someone in line spots it and gets hooked on the first page, she'll make an impulse book purchase along with a pack of gum. So if you have a book of general interest (not *Advanced Calculus for Dummies*) talk to the managers of those locally owned restaurants or stores. Local managers can make quick decisions. They also love additional sources of income. If it works in one store, take it to another, and another.

- **Think popular blogs, not just your own blog.** Publishers warned me that personal finance books don't sell without a large platform, like a national radio show. But I wrote one anyway, *Enjoy Your Money!*, targeting young graduates. Rather than trying to build a following by starting yet another personal finance blog (there were already thousands), I found bloggers who had already captivated large followings.

By searching "personal finance" in search engines like Technorati (search "blogs" instead of "posts") and Google's BlogSearch, I found the top 200 personal finance blogs. I contacted the bloggers via e-mail before graduation season, linking them to the reviews on my press page. I offered them

a free book for review, and another copy for a giveaway.

Top bloggers have a passion for their subject and desperately need new material for their posts. So about 50 of them replied and at least 20 of them wrote reviews. That exposed my book to thousands of people who were already interested in personal finance, recommended by a thought leader they already respected and followed. No wonder my sales increased by multiples. Our lesson:

Go where people already gather rather than trying to gather people around yourself.

- **Think “content,” not just traditional books.** These days we sell as many e-books as traditional books. Strategies can include pricing them low to gain momentum or by giving away the first book in a series to hook readers. You can easily set up coupons on SmashWords to offer discounts to special groups. Take a couple of stand-alone chapters from your non-fiction book and sell them separately as Kindle Singles or white papers from your website.
- **Keep learning!** We discover what’s really working for low profile authors on forums (like John Kremer’s Book Marketing Network), blogs, writers’ groups, and any place we can. As a result, we thoroughly enjoy selling our books. We wrote *Sell More Books!* to help those like us – authors who love to write, but aren’t yet famous.

Through trial and error and the determination to find the methods that work for you, one can transform a low profile into high volume success. ■

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