

2020 Expo: Tips on Book Marketing

How many times have you attended a book-selling event and heard some authors say they didn't sell a single book. Well, there's always some reason behind this, and those results aren't surprising to many of us. A variety of challenges are likely behind the cause. Let's look at a few problems every author faces:

Challenge #1, Birth of the Book:

Never underestimate the tremendous competition your book will face once it appears before the public, no matter what the subject. Therefore, without exception, it must be professionally presented. This means:

- **Editing.** Professional editing is the best investment for any book.
- **Cover design and formatting.** Second only to editing when it comes to importance. You can write the most fabulous book ever, but if it doesn't have an eye-appealing cover, it will not be discovered.

Challenge #2, Know your audience:

You must have your audience in mind when you write your book. Otherwise, you must recognize that not everyone will find your book appealing. For example, some authors believe their book can potentially appeal to everyone. *Wrong!* No book ever published, now or in the future, will appeal to everyone. Not Harry Potter, Not 50 Shades, Not any religious text, or any other. The fact is, the vast majority of books are unappealing to most people.

Who is your most likely target audience? For example, my business books are poor sellers in The Villages, but those on baseball are excellent. Your book's goal should be to appeal directly to a specific group of readers.

Challenge #3, Reaching Your Ideal Reader:

Remember, no matter how great your book is, it won't sell unless people are aware of its existence. Sure, your book may be on Amazon, along with millions of other books. However, one of your very best opportunities to publicize and promote it will be at this Expo.

Challenge #4, Competitive Book Market:

When it comes to statistical trends in book sales, adult nonfiction showed the largest growth with a 5.4% revenue increase from 2016 to 2017, according to the StatShot Annual Report from the *Association of American Publishers*. Adult fiction showed a decrease of 1.2% in the same time, while sales of young adult books rose 4.4%. Audiobooks are the fastest growing format, with a massive 28.8% growth from 2016 to 2017.

Challenge #5, How many books can you expect to sell?

So many factors depend upon the number of books you will sell. For example, the estimated cost associated with self-publishing a book is \$100 - \$3,000, including production costs like editing, cover design, formatting and layout, and more.

According to The Guardian Media Group in 2018, nearly a third of authors **made** less than \$500 a year, and 90% of **books** sold less than 100 copies. My Advice: Keep sales expectations low, and work on inspiring your targeted readers to buy your book. I also learned that if you want to lure an agent into your fold, you had better develop a robust platform of followers who will be ready to buy your book. For example, I sent query letters about my first book, *Business Fraud, From Trust to Betrayal*, to two popular agents – one on the West Coast and the other on the East Coast – both responded, but to make a long story short, neither showed interest in my book ...they only were interested in my platform and how many books I could estimate that I could personally sell.

Challenge #6, The Perfect Elevator Pitch:

The number one question: “What’s this book about?” To that, you should have a **short and concise answer** that describes your book in an engaging way. Your perfect pitch should be well crafted *before* you arrive at the Expo.

Granted, what works on selling to one person may not work on another. Therefore you may want to have a few different pitch versions in mind. that you can substitute in or elaborate on. Even then it will take tons of practice until you have your pitch down to a science, but hopefully by testing a few ideas on friends will help you improve your skills. Through proper practice, you will find that it’s much easier to answer when people ask, “What’s your book about?”

Here are five simple steps to help you develop a killer pitch.

- a. *Briefly describe your book.* Write down what it is about in 50 words or less. Just the facts; don't try to be witty.
- b. *Give readers a sense of what to expect.* Clearly tell them what they will be getting.
- c. *Why should your reader care?* Readers want to be entertained, educated, challenged, or inspired.
- d. *Polish your pitch, and practice it until it's perfect.* Allow your unique voice to shine through so that readers will get a sense of your style.
- e. *Practice, practice, and practice.* Like anything worthwhile, having developed a perfect pitch can be critical in increasing your book sales.

With my six challenges out of the way, let's switch to the preparation and planning phases to help make your Expo 2020 a fun and successful event.

1. Advance Preparation:

Never leave anything to chance. At home, develop your table's display plan, including how you will organize and place your books. Supplies are another critical issue. I encourage you to create a supplies checklist. Essential items should include a tablecloth, your name tag, an ample amount of purchase bags (used plastic bags & store those bags in a 'Kleenex' box), pens, business cards, bookmarks, brochures/signs, adhesive tape/clips, water bottle, freebies, etc.

2. Cash & Credit Card App:

Be sure you have a sufficient amount of change on hand. Remember, other authors may be reluctant to make change for you, out of fear they may become faced with a similar problem.

Credit Cards: Don't risk losing sales because you do not take credit cards. The process is both simple and inexpensive. Check out your alternatives online. The card approval vendor that we use is Square.

Also, your Expo Team, recognizing the critical role that dependable Internet access plays in quickly getting card purchases approved, have rented a more dependable Internet access system than those installed at the recreation center. This temporary Internet setup should minimize, if not eliminate, any problem with connecting to your credit card approval vendor.

ARRIVAL & ON-FLOOR TIPS

Obey the WLOV rules that include NOT parking your vehicle near the entrance. These spaces are ‘reserved’ for our customers. Be on time and have your table ready to sell. Before the Expo opens for business, any last-minute announcements will take place in the General Bradley room. Expect guests to arrive early and start visiting the rooms and your table.

Making the Sale:

There are a variety of ways that authors attempt to sell their books, and your personality can play a crucial role in your success. I have listed eight critical tips worthy of your attention.

1. **Greetings. Engage:** If the person looks at you or appears to be glancing at your books, greet them with a smile. I prefer to make eye-contact as people walk close to my table. Always smile and look friendly and approachable.
If they approach the table, many authors will give them a few seconds to browse before striking up a conversation. I like to open with a friendly conversation almost immediately, and it can be about practically anything interesting or complementary. Sometimes, I will have a book in hand and make an interesting comment.

2. **Become a storyteller:** Everyone has a story to tell. Since four of my seven books are on Major League Baseball, (My other three books are business-related and not a good seller in this retirement environment, so my focus is on baseball.) I love it when I see a person wearing a Major League team hat or jersey, or anything else that will start the conversation. I will ask such questions as, “Who’s your team? “Are you a baseball fan, or are you looking

for a gift?" Once I have this information, I give my 'pitch.' Other authors will do a variety of things to try to bring people in. It just comes down to your selling style and what works best for you.

3. **Combo Pricing:** While your great greeting or perfect pitch goes a long way in generating interest, nothing does it better than *Combo pricing*. The good news is, if you're buying your books in quantities, you likely have a good margin to play with, allowing you to offer some creative discounts and still make money. For example, I allow guests to purchase each of my books **separately for \$15 or two for \$25**. As a result of this discount, the combo is by far my best seller. I'd say some 90% of my buyers take home two books or more.
Series Books: Hook new readers into a series by pricing low. So giving a good discount on the first book of a series often leads to full-priced sales later.
4. **Think 'Out-of-the-Box:'** My wife is an artist, and I always help out at her art shows. After two or three shows, I noticed this pattern: The women would stop at her table and peruse her paintings. The men would generally just stand around. One day I ask my wife if she would give me one foot of her table space and also sketch six Hall of Fame baseball players I had selected; she agreed. I had copies made of each, and at her art shows I displayed a copy of the sketches in my one-foot of space. Using my combo sale price, I would also give the purchaser their choice of any one of the drawings. This technique still works great. Think about what you can do to increase your sales.
5. **Pitch a book as a holiday gift.** Depending on the type of book you're promoting, the giftable nature of a physical book may help boost your sales, especially around the holidays. Keep in mind, with this upcoming Expo in January and the following month Valentine's Day, promote your books as an excellent time to buy that special someone a loving or appreciation gift.
6. **Offer prizes!** Everyone loves a chance to win. Promote the free lottery taking place in the General MacArthur room, or even set up your own promotion.

7. **Things not to do:** So many times, I see authors simply setting behind their table and paying little, if any, attention as to what is taking place in front of their table. I have seen also seen a few busy reading a book or magazine, and then they wonder why their book sales were poor.

8. **Accolades:** People are more inclined to buy books from you when they know you're the author. Let your successes be recognized: Are you an award-winning writer, or perhaps a respected leader in your field? Was your last book a good seller on *Amazon* or elsewhere? Is this book part of a beloved series? Did someone famous give you a killer quote? Let your prospective customers know. I have seen a couple of award-winning authors display their plaques on their table for all to see. If you don't have anything that qualifies as awesome and relevant, don't add anything ... and don't worry. Remember, the most important thing to buyer is the book. *Never ignore this opportunity.*

A well-written and professional-looking book, in the hands of YOU, a talented author who knows how to entice readers to your book, is a winning combination ...And, WLOV and the Expo Team wish you an enjoyable and successful 2020 Expo!