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10 Steps to Build Marketing Confidence

By Karen Whiting

Similar to dressing for success, there are steps that help you prepare for marketing success and show professionalism.

The Apostle Paul showed his professionalism when he wrote letters, gave his resume of credentials, and planned speaking tours. Investing effort to present your book, brand, and self well makes a difference in your image and your sales.

1. Dress Your Business Sharply

Your website, business cards, and social network sites provide first impressions, so make them great. Use good quality photos, layout, and content to reflect your brand. Use colors to bring cohesiveness and build your image, and wear the same colors when you speak.

Create business cards that project your message and include your photo. Use the backside of the card to showcase your books, popular speaking topics, or branding message. A professional-sounding email address adds to the image too.

Create Pinterest boards that include photos of programs where you spoke, articles, ideas related to your topic, and tip sheets that can showcase you and your brand.

2. Walk Faster

Respond to opportunities fast with enthusiasm. Hone your craft to write more efficiently. Create a list of several articles you could write related to your book's topic so you can pitch something when there's an opportunity to write or speak.

Once I knew my brand was encouraging families, I grabbed opportunities to write for publications related to the family and quickly started a family page for a newspaper, became a writer for Focus on the Family, and now write for Molly Green Magazine for homeschool families.

3. Pitch Perfect

Thirty-second pitches help you share with meeting planners, readers, and magazine editors to gain marketing opportunities and followers.

Practice creating pitches for article ideas and talks using topics within your book. Each pitch should show benefits for the specific audience. I successfully pitched an article on my preschool devotional book to a teen girl magazine because I knew the managing editor. I shared how older girls could be mentors and suggested my book would be a good resource.

The pitch should include the reader benefits and share your unique slant.

4. Position Yourself Well

Tap into affinity groups to reach potential buyers to position you and your book. Do a search on your topic and see what groups pop up as possible affinity organizations. Explore the group, meet members, and see how your book meets with their vision and purpose. Let them know about your upcoming book and what you can offer their organization.

I connected with American Heritage Girls for my book *Nature Girl*. It worked and they asked for articles for their leader magazine and scheduled me to speak as the book released. The book is the main resource for their badge on the environment.

5. Sit in the Industry's Front Row

Get known. Join and serve in writing organizations that help you connect to an audience or industry professionals. Watch for marketing opportunities the group offers.

Before a book releases, connect with your publisher's sales and marketing staff. Let them know your experience and ideas. They will support you more if they know you're working hard and have good ideas. One publisher flew me to a library event to sign books because they saw my efforts.

Reach out to retailers and read industry publications. Get to know your local retailer and find out what helps sell your book. If tips on selling the book help, post them for other retailers, or write an article for the industry.

I joined Christian Authors Network (CAN) when it first formed and now I'm a board member. CAN opened many doors, led to my name in press releases, plus gave me opportunities to speak and sign books at retailer events. With other members we held an online scavenger hunt, exchanged marketing ideas, and built a trusted organization.

6. Compliment People

Look for the best in others and praise them. That will help you notice what works to apply ideas yourself. In looking for the best you'll bring out the best in yourself too. You'll think more positively to build a supportive network.

7. Speak Up!

Develop relationships. Get to know editors and writers at writer's conferences. They are part of your networking team and a great source of information, opportunities, and camaraderie.

I've been blessed through relationships I cultivated. Editors have asked me to write books and articles over the years. As I developed relationships with authors they've connected me with radio hosts, editors, and other opportunities.

In talking with readers at events and online I build my followers and make friends who share my passions.

8. Work At Being Your Best

Work out physically and spiritually to be well-balanced and in good health for travel and speaking. You want to look and feel your best. Travel can be grueling, so it helps to be fit. Hone your time management skills too. Evaluating your diet, time management, spiritual fitness, and exercise should be part of your business plan.

9. Focus on Content

When you offer great content, people want more and trust your books will be good. While your books should be great, it's just part of what you offer. Provide good content on your

website, social networks, and in articles. Adding freebies on you website lets people get to know you and what you have to offer. Being a guest blogger with great content lets you reach other audiences and offers an opportunity to interest those readers.

10. Express Gratitude

Gratitude is always a great gift to offer others. God often blesses generous people.

I have sent handmade chocolates to editors and sales reps to thank them for their work. I sent or emailed notes to editors after publication of my words. I am thankful for their efforts and often think they remain in the background without lots of thanks.

I also offer give readers freebies when I sign books. I've given bookmarks, mini craft in a bag that matches my book, or a tip sheet related to a book's topic. I give away books when I'm guest blogger.

Creating a professional and well-dressed business builds your confidence and develops trust with readers and industry professionals. You'll be prepared for success.

Bio: Karen Whiting is an award-winning author of seventeen books. Her latest book is *Nature Girl: a guide to caring for God's creation* (Zonderkidz). Her recent book, *The One Year My Princess Devotions* is a finalist for the 2014 Christian Retailer's Best Awards.