



27 Effective, Innovative, Creative, Fun (& Cheap) Ways to Sell More Books!

By Cathy Stucker

"If you print it, they will come."

Sorry. It doesn't work that way. You may have written or published the greatest book ever, but if people don't know about it, they can't buy it. Whether you are the author or publisher (or maybe you're both), it is your job to create excitement about and interest in your book.

Use the ideas in this article to create a buzz about your book without breaking your budget. While some of them won't be right for you, many ideas will be a good fit. The more ideas you use, the better. People often take their time before making a decision to buy, and the more often they hear about your book, the more likely they are to buy it. Keep coming at them in different ways with the message about your book and what it can do for them.

Don't be too quick to discard an idea, thinking that you can't do it or it won't work for you. Just because you've never done something before, don't assume that you can't do it, whether it's making a speech, doing a TV or radio interview, or staging an outrageous stunt.

These ideas are also good brain food: think about them, and see what else you can grow. Can you put a twist on one of them or combine two of them in an interesting way?

Pick a few ideas that appeal to you and put them to work right away. Time to see results will vary. Choose a good mix of ideas to start generating book sales and to keep selling for a long time to come!

Declare a holiday

A holiday does not have to be declared by Congress to get attention for your book. If you wrote a book about finding your prince and living happily ever after, why not create "Kiss a Frog"? Get your holiday listed in **Chase's Annual Events**

(you'll find it at your library), and the media will call you. Even if it's not listed in **Chase's**, you can still send out press releases announcing the holiday and any related events you schedule. How do I know this works? Take a look in the **Chase's** index for Solo-preneuring Week, and note that the contact is . . . yours truly.

Create a booklet

Excerpt a portion of your book into a booklet. (This article originated as a booklet/handout for a speech I gave.) Give it away as a promotion or sell it. Paulette Ensign has sold more than 500,000 copies of her small booklets about organizing. Not only do the booklets promote her organizing business, they have become a profit center themselves.

Teach a class

Colleges, community centers and continuing education programs are always looking for interesting classes. If you were to become an instructor, information about you and your book would be printed in every catalog. Plus, you could offer your book as a required or optional text. I've sold hundreds of copies of **The Mystery Shopper's Manual** and other titles this way.

Make friends with the "competition"

Are there other publishers with the same audience? If your books are not in direct competition, you might make a deal to promote each other's books. For example, they might include your flyer or catalog in their mail outs, and you do the same for them.

Throw a party

Hold a book signing party. It may be at a bookstore, but why not try someplace different? If your book is about animals, hold it at a pet store or the gift shop at the zoo. For a beauty book, why not try a salon? Invite everyone you know, get the shop owner to help promote it, send press releases, etc., to get lots of people there.

Exercise your right of free speech

And give free speeches all over. Lots of organizations are meeting in your town every day, and most of them need speakers. Check the newspaper for meeting notices, and ask your friends about their groups. Then call and offer your services. You won't get paid, but they usually feed you and you'll get to sell books after your talk.

Write articles about your topic

Offer the articles to newspapers, magazines and newsletters read by the people who would be interested in your book. You may get paid for the articles, but even if you don't, make sure information about your book (and how readers can get their own copies) is included. Even easier, excerpt portions of your book and offer them as articles.

Film at 11

Are you and your book newsworthy enough to make the nightly news? Sure. I've done it lots of times, and so can you. Local news shows run a lot of features about local people and events. Let them know about your book signing, seminar, outrageous stunt, whatever. While there is no guarantee of media coverage, when you get it, it can sell lots of books.

Put your book in unusual outlets

Don't just think bookstores. Where will you find the people who should read your book? Don't overlook doctors' or veterinarians' offices, truck stops, souvenir stands, restaurants and coffee shops, etc.

Help yourself by helping others

Offer your book as a fundraiser to schools, charities or other organizations. Sell them to the organization in quantity at a discount. Members sell the books at the retail price, and the organization pockets the difference.

Offer your book as a premium

Does your book have a natural relationship to a product? The manufacturer of that product may buy thousands of your books to give away or sell to their customers. Contact the brand manager to see if they are interested (and be prepared for any decision to take a while). Also approach local merchants to see if they would like to buy premiums. Would the local car dealer give everyone who buys a car a copy of your book on car care? Come up with a good connection, then sell some books!

Centers of influence

Are there people who could influence others to buy your book? Might doctors recommend your book on stress relief? Would teachers suggest parents read your book on helping children excel at school? Get copies into the hands of those who can reach your audience.

Get listed in catalogs

Most of us receive hundreds of catalogs with all kinds of things in them. When you find one that seems to fit your book, contact the catalog company and ask about submitting your book.

"Is the caller there?"

Do radio interviews, locally and across the country. By sending out short press releases, I've gotten interviews for my clients and myself on stations all over. A radio show may need three or more guests per day, five days a week, 52 weeks a year. They want to hear from you. News/talk stations run lots of interviews, but don't overlook the drive time and public affairs shows on music stations. And the best thing about radio is that you can do many of your interviews over the phone from the comfort of your own home.

Talk it up

In marketing classes, I teach a technique called The 10-Second Brag. The Brag is a quick way of introducing yourself in a way that is interesting to your audience. If you tell someone that you are a consultant, their reaction may be "So what?" (Although they may not ask that to your face!) Instead, tell them about the problems you solve, and they will be interested. The same applies to your book. No one (other than your mother) cares that you wrote a book. But if your book contains secrets that will help me make my dreams come true, then I care! The secret of the Brag is remembering that people care about the world as it relates to them and their needs. Remember that, and they will care about you and your book.

Hold a contest

If you wrote a book about organizing closets, give a prize for the messiest closet in town. Have entrants send in photos of their messy closets, and/or write a short essay about how disorganized they are.

And the survey says . . .

Do a survey related to your book topic, then announce the results. If you wrote a book about managed health care, survey people for their opinions on managed care and what they like/dislike about it.

Weave a Web

Put a site on the World Wide Web where people can get more information about you and your book. If they can't order it online at your site, tell them where they can get it.

Exchange links

At your web site, offer links to other sites of interest to your audience. Contact the webmasters of those sites and ask if they would consider offering visitors to their sites a link to yours.

Be active online

Show your expertise by getting involved in discussion groups on your topic. While sending purely commercial messages about your book is generally not acceptable, you can answer questions and offer information and include a sig file with more information about your book and how to get it.

It's for a good cause

Announce that you will give a portion of the proceeds from book sales to a particular charity or advocacy group. Then, let interested groups know about it so they can help publicize your book.

Make a value-added package

Package your book with other items to make it more attractive as a gift or easier to use. If your book is about a craft, could you package it with craft materials? Bundle a cookbook with utensils, spices, etc.

Get others to sell books for you

Many speakers make money selling books in the "back of the room" (BOR). Speakers who don't have books of their own, or who wish to expand their product lines, may be interested in selling your books. Structure a discount schedule which allows both of you to make money.

Get a business card for your book

Business cards are cheap. Get one made up especially for your book, then put it around wherever you can leave business cards. I had some made up for The Mystery Shopper's Manual. When I return a library book, I stick one in the book as a bookmark. Know what? I've gotten calls as a result!

Take a flyer

Make up a simple flyer about your book, and get it copied onto colored paper. The flyer may be one side of one page, or just a portion of a page. Put it out when you speak, leave it on literature tables at meetings and conferences, etc.

Alert the media

Whatever you do, send press releases to make television, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc. aware of you. Make it newsworthy. They don't care that you wrote a book, but they will care that you can give their audiences information they want or need.

Be outrageous!

Don't be afraid to try something new or unusual, even odd. Ask yourself, "Will this attract/appeal to the people I want to reach?" and "What will it cost me in time and money to try it?" If the first answer is "yes," and the second is "not more than I can afford," then go for it!

Think about what you can do beyond these ideas. Do you want to be on **Oprah**? Would a celebrity be willing to endorse your book? Would your book be perfect for a home shopping network? Or an infomercial? Could you develop a whole line of products related to your book? Sometimes it is easier to sell several related books/tapes/etc. than just one title.

What is your wildest dream of success? Imagine it, and then take steps to make it come true. Don't be afraid to think big and aim for the stars! That's what they're there for.

Cathy Stucker is The Idea Lady(tm). She helps authors, publishers, entrepreneurs and professionals get publicity, grow their reputations and attract customers with creative, inexpensive and fun marketing strategies. Visit her at www.IdeaLady.com

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