



## How to Book a Book Signing

And Other Important Stuff!

By Larry James

If I am driving by a store where I've never had a book signing, I drop in. First I ask someone to check their computer to see if they are stocking my book. (They don't know I am the author yet.) If so, I ask where to find it and bring it back and tell them I am the author and ask if they would like for me to sign the books. They usually say yes and become very helpful knowing I am the author.

If they do not stock my books, I tell them that books by Larry James are great books and tell them that I should know: I am Larry James-- as I hand them my card. This usually gets a smile. I then ask for the name of the CRC (Community Relations Coordinator) and request that they ask the CRC if they have two minutes to come out and meet Larry James, an author.

If the CRC is not available, I ask when the best time is to call. They will often offer the CRC's schedule. If not, I ask for it. Although it is better to present yourself and your books in person, calling for an appointment works, too. However, when they hear you ask for two minutes, if the CRC is there, they will almost always come out to meet an author.

Honor your word. Be sure to keep your conversation to two minutes. If they show an interest and the time goes past two minutes, I usually smile and say, "My two minutes are up. We are on your time now, and I'm happy to continue the conversation, or I can schedule an appointment to come back later." I've never had a CRC ask me to come back later.

I begin the conversation by introducing myself and showing them my three relationship books. Asking to do a book signing comes after they have heard my audio bio or pitch.

If they are not currently carrying my books, I give them a flyer that tells where they can order: Ingram, Baker & Taylor, or my distributor, Midpoint Trade Books in New York.

If they currently have books in their store, I show the CRC that I have signed the books, request that they keep a good supply on hand, and let them know that I am a local author and appear on numerous radio talk shows, present relationship seminars locally and nationwide, and am a shameless self-promoter, with finesse, of course. I also mention that Barbara Walters interviewed me about my book *How to Really Love the One You're With* on ABC TV's *The View*. That usually gets their attention. I tell the CRC some of the unusual things I do when I do a signing (read "40+ Ways to Make Your Next Book Signing an EVENT!!") and ask them how soon they would like to schedule a book signing and/or seminar with me. Notice I didn't say, "Would you like to schedule a book signing with me?" I said, "How soon...?"

It is important for the CRC to know your experience and to experience some of the excitement you have about appearing in their store. Bring any collateral material that demonstrates your ability to promote your book: bookmarks, flyers, large posters of your book covers, extra book covers, awards, special newspaper coverage, endorsements from celebrities (or others), etc.

If they are hesitant to invite you to do a signing or a seminar and you are a member of a local authors group, offer to be the coordinator and have several of your author friends participate with you to make it a group signing and a special event.

I let the CRC know that I will do my best to schedule a local talk show to help promote the event. I never promise that this will happen, but I do promise I will do my best to make it happen.

I also ask them if they would share their media list with me so I can send a news release to the media. Often they will tell me that "they"

do that. I respond by saying, "So do I. And I duplicate your efforts because it's better to have two book-signing notices appear on the editor's desk than one."

My experience has been that an editor will often print more of what the author says about the book and the signing than the store. The news release from the store is a confirmation that the signing is actually scheduled. I will often send one of the store's news releases with my own.

If they don't have a media list, that is a red flag. Some book store CRCs do not do much to advertise your signings. I ask them exactly how they intend to help me promote the event: posters, special book table featuring my books for at least a week before the event, new releases to the media, etc.

If the store begins to set up the autograph table after I arrive or has no poster or special book table for pre-publicity, that is a sure sign the store is not fully engaged in helping to promote the book signing or the author.

If they are not willing to participate fully in the promotion of the event, generally speaking I will most likely back off from doing the book signing and let them know--in a kind and loving way--why I am no longer interested. I usually slip the words "partners" and "working together" somewhere into the conversation.

Once a book signing is scheduled, I maintain frequent contact with the CRC to make sure everything is still on track: books ordered and received, book table and poster prepared, media informed, etc.

I showed up for a signing in San Diego and was surprised to learn that the former CRC had only sent out a news release--I had a copy of the newspaper that mentioned the book signing--but soon discovered that the new CRC knew nothing about the book signing. No books had been ordered, but since I was doing a relationship seminar the next day and had already been on a radio talk show that morning where I mentioned the signing at the store, the CRC felt so bad about this that she allowed me to bring in books from my car,

sell them, and keep all the money for myself. Talk about incentive! I sold 37 books in two hours that afternoon.

It is important to understand that the purpose of book signings is not necessarily to sell books but to make the bookstore customers aware of your books.

Another important point to understand is that books do not sell themselves. People sell books! It's equally important to spend some of your time at your signing to schmooze with the people who take the money from the customers who buy your books. Get to know the staff at the bookstore. They can help you continue to sell your books long after you have gone!

Book signings are an opportunity to build relationships with the booksellers. I consider book signings as an opportunity to sell the booksellers on recommending my books when someone asks for a good relationship book!

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