



TEN TOOLS FOR AUTHOR SUCCESS:
A Quick Reference Author Success Handbook

The following is a *FREE* excerpt from
Finding Author Success:
Discovering and Uncovering the Marketing Power within Your Manuscript
by author and author success coach, Deborah Riley-Magnus.

This is a brief overview of the ten most important tools for author success.

TOOL 1

Have a Plan

Every author needs a Book Business Plan. Without one it's a slow, painful road to failure, so it's time to think like a business person.

What are your goals? If you are seeing your first book published, what are your publisher's expectations? If you've been published before and want bigger sales next time, exactly what are those sales goals? How do you propose to let the world know you have a book coming out, and how do you intend to approach your market? In other words, what's your plan?

In order to create a competitive plan, you need competitive strategies. You can start by looking to your publisher, or if you're self published, you can look to the experts. Ask them what you should expect from your book. Which books, genres, and authors are most successful, and why? This will tell you a lot about the market in general.

Now, knowing the average expectations, you can multiply that and set personal goals you'll be proud of. Within your goals should be the following categories:

- **Pre-launch exposure**
 - How many pre-orders or prospective book buyers do you want on a waiting list for your book? This will determine how active your pre-launch marketing and publicity will need to be.
- **First three months sales**
 - Research the market, know standard sales numbers for your genre, and set your goals HIGHER. A book's success or failure is based on its first quarter sales, don't sell yourself short. Set high goals and enthusiastically push for them.
- **Responses to your platform and social network elements**
 - You'll have many platforms from which to shout about your book. Decide now how active you want the response rate to be on those platforms; this way you'll have viewing and response goals to reach. Of course response can only be made to a statement, and since you are the only one to make these statements you must decide how active and proactive you plan to be within your platforms. Nothing happens if you show up randomly or only once. Response activity is necessary and it starts with you.
- **Demand for the next book**
 - Effective platforms and promotional efforts can create demand for more books from an author. Is this something you want? If so, add it to your goals list.
- **5 year sales goals**
 - Look at your author life. Where do you want to be in five years? Does writing A LOT fit into that image? Do you want to use revenue earned from your books to improve your life? The sad truth is that most authors simply can't live on what they earn as writers, but with a solid plan, effective strategies, and clear goals, you

can create an income to substantially add to your dreams and lifestyle. It doesn't just happen. It must be set as a goal and made part of the plan.

- **Number of successful books in 10 years**
 - Seriously think about this. Some writers see themselves as the author of one or two books, the creator of a mega success that rocks the world and then they can retire. There is a difference between fantasy, goals, and strategic plans. Building a career demands that you identify that career. If you want a booming writing career over 10 years, you may need to plan seven to ten books, several articles and short pieces published in collections, compilations, or publications. You may want to include speaking engagements, possibly writing in several genres, or even adding non-fiction to your mix. This is a *going wide* strategy rather than a *going deep* strategy which limits the writer to a single genre or non-fiction subject. There are several industry theories on both approaches to building an author career, but the most important opinion is yours. You'll be living the career and doing the work.
- **THE TIME IS NOW!**
 - It is NEVER TOO EARLY to start marketing your book. NEVER WAIT until there is a book to sell because that's just too late. Marketing is all about creating awareness for your coming product. Start as soon as you can, possibly even while you're writing the book. Create awareness, excitement, a great following and BAMM! You will have developed a waiting audience that will make a real mark on your bottom line upon the book's release. Get this into your plan. Timing is everything, and it's never too early to start marketing.

Remember, you're not just an author; you're an author building a career. Once your goals are set, it's easier to take the following tools and put a plan in play.

TOOL 2

Find Your Unique Hooks

What makes you so special? What makes your book so special? We've all taken a stroll through those huge book stores and gotten that shiver of terror. Even if you're already published and about to launch your second or tenth book, that fear trickles in and without warning you start to wonder. *Who is going to buy my book when they're bombarded with all these other books?* Yes, you're writing is wonderful and your story kicks butt, but one twirl around and you see thousands of other authors' offerings and can't help but feel the pressure. Book store or online store, it's the same.

Relax. The solution to the question is so simple it might shock you. The most important things you need to know to make your book stand out are not in marketing classrooms or genre statistics. They're not in publicity strategies or media hype. The most important elements to make you and your book stand apart *are right inside your manuscript.*

Your all important unique hooks are in your characters, your plot, and your story. In other words, you have already created all the solutions you need to market, promote, and publicize your book when you wrote the book. Surprise!

The actual elements that make your book so special are the things that make people sit up and take notice. It's deeper than genre or writing style—it's your unique hooks and the audiences you can reach through them. Don't ignore these powerful elements. Too many authors foolishly purchase expensive or professionally hired strategies, but there was no need. The marketing answers were already mapped out within the unique hooks right inside their book. For example:

- **Location.** Where does your book take place? Small town? Outer space? Big city? Ancient Rome? Can you build, develop and implement entire promotions around that location? This is the way to each people who love those locations.
- **Character.** Is there something special about your characters? Are they werewolves? Historic sailors? Contemporary businessmen? Members of a club or organization that drives the story? Ride motorcycles? Is there something special about your main character? Do they have a silly saying they repeat? Wear two different size shoes? Love cats? Enjoy root beer floats? Go deep into your story, identify what makes your characters special, and consider how that element might create a powerful hook that resonates with prospective book buyers who love those things.
- **Association.** If your main character is a gardener, are gardening clubs a good target to reach out and pitch your book? If he/she loves animals, are animal rescue groups a good readership target? Does your character connect with any large group of any profession or interest? Are these possible fans? Always consider association, it can open big doors for target marketing
- **Plot.** Is your book an adventure about whales, or space travel, or apocalyptic in nature? Is your book a romance that involves people from different backgrounds? Is it a fantasy about supernatural characters struggling to remain hidden in the human world? Here are

the facts about finding your unique hooks—they can be in any and every part of your book, they're implanted inside your story and they are ready to be effective.

The real power of identifying all your unique hooks is that you can then find more target markets for your book. This technique slips past the traditional author marketing strategy that focuses solely on genre readers. It expands deeper for larger audiences. Naturally, readers of a specific genre will take a look and possibly buy the book. The trick to seriously successful sales is to go further, dig deeper, and reach even *more* buyers.

TOOL 3

Build Your Platforms

Yes, platforms. Plural. If a politician stands on only one platform, he reaches only one set of ears. The same goes for an author. Your job is to reach as many sets of ears as possible, to reach them quickly, efficiently, and with as little difficulty as possible.

What are your platforms?

- **Author Platform Website** (or formatted blog) – This website is specifically designed to promote you, the author. It will feature you, your books, your future projects, and plans. It will offer insight to your future books and tell viewers what you're up to. This site will have a specific area for a **Media Room** where you'll list your press releases, announcements about your various speaking and book events, upcoming interviews, and links to videos or audio interviews you've already given. The Media Room will show all your press releases, have a downloadable bio and photo of the author, and contact information for the media. Your author platform website link should appear on your Twitter and Facebook profiles, email signatures, and everywhere you can post it. This web presence is about ALL of the author's work, published articles, short stories, all the books no matter genre and all the news about his/her work. This website is your **Business Office**. Clean, simple, and straight forward.
- **Book Platform Website** – This website is very different. This website is your **Store Front**. A Book Website is specifically designed to promote, market, and expose a specific book or genre of books. For example, if you write romance, all of your romance (and sub-genre romance) books would have a showcase on your Romance Book Website. BUT, if you also write non-fiction about aviation, that would require a completely different book website. Why? Simple – these are two very different readers and a prospective book buyer will not explore a romance website for a book about landing gear, anymore than a reader wanting romance cares to explore a website about pilot qualifications. These two book websites should cater to their specific audience differently and never cross reference to each other.
- **Blog** – This is a venue that can greatly reach out to your unique hook audiences! It can be as simple as an ongoing exploration of the research you did to write your historic book. It can explore politics in your story and even talk about choices you made for the story. You can use this blog to announce information about your promotions and coming events. It's always wise to embed your author blog into your Author Platform Website. Moving deeper, your blog should focus solely on your unique hooks and connecting with people interested in those unique hooks. For example, if your book is about a romance that takes place in the frozen tundra of Alaska, write blog entries about Alaska, the weather patterns, the Aurora Borealis, and various remote Alaskan towns and cultures. Always end your blog entry with an open-ended question to invite comments. Always respond to

everyone who comments on your blog. AND ... always post your book cover and the buy link at the bottom of every blog, like a signature.

- **Character Blog** – Not necessary but oh so much fun! This is a playful way of exploring your character/reader relationship dynamic. If your character is a curmudgeon and you develop a blog written by him where he states his point of view and banters with the readers when they respond, you've made inroads into creating loyalty and interest in the book. You'd be surprised how many readers respond to this approach and get involved with comments. Character blogs can be super effective. Have fun with this, create impact and take your cues from the responses you get.
- **Twitter** –Yes, you must use Twitter. Create an account and build your followers carefully from a pool of possible book buyers, future fans, and unique hook lovers. Be active but be careful. Don't let it take you over. A good rule of thumb is to use Twitter at least twice a day for about 10-15 minutes each time. Interact, eavesdrop and comment on other follower's tweets, promote your blog and website updates, and always respond when someone talks to you. Efficient and effective tweeting is a learned skill and you'll soon discover that when done right, followers think you're there all the time and full of fun and valuable information even though you only tweet during a few breaks a day. I suggest you use the TweetDeck as it helps you organize several streams of targets to follow, but you can do it any way that works best for you. **WORD OF WARNING: DO NOT LOAD YOUR TWITTER FOLLOWING WITH OTHER AUTHORS.** Keep your twitter follower at a healthy ratio for selling books – that means that for every 1 author on your twitter follower list, you should 10 prospective book buyers and unique hook lovers. Selling books isn't about tweeting a lot ... it's about who you are tweeting to!
- **Facebook** – There are several ways to use Facebook and I strongly suggest you Facebook every day. Not only are there different people on Facebook than Twitter, but they communicate differently. Without the Twitter limitation of 140 characters to make a point, Facebook creates several venues of communications. Everything from your current status and direct messaging, tagging and inviting friends to join events or joining groups targeted to your unique hook lovers are all there. Facebook every day with something interactive in your status – a question of the day or tip of the day works great. Build friends by reaching out and asking for friends but be careful what kind of friends you make. Be sensible and be targeted with all your efforts. Choose how you want to spend your Facebook time, be practical and efficient because as writers and authors, we really need to protect our writing time. Do NOT mix your personal Facebook activities with your Book Business Facebook activities. In other words, keep those accounts separate. **WORD OF WARNING:** Keep your Facebook friends list at a healthy ratio for selling books – that means that for every 1 author on your friends list, you should 10 prospective book buyers and unique hook lovers. Selling books isn't about Facebooking a lot ... it's about who you are Facebooking to! The **KEY** to using Facebook successfully is to bring your prospective book buyers to **YOUR** Facebook page to talk and interact ... and **NOT** to spend time on the Home page news feed talking with everyone else.

- **Email** – Email lists. We have them, several of them in fact. We build them almost daily but what we seldom do is categorize them to make them easy to use. Create a group list for people you know who would love the unique hooks in your book, love to read your blog updates, love to know about your next project. It's likely that if you explore the massive contact list you already have, you can find many people to fall under this group category. Create the group and voila, you now have the perfect targeted market to promote your book, your blog entries, your Author Website Media Page, or invite to your book launch party. Email. Such a powerful marketing tool and right there under our nose. I'm sure if you think about it, you can find several ways to create email lists and use them to streamline promotional and marketing strategies. Yay Google+.
- **Online Groups/Organizations** – You can find them on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Groups, Online groups and organizations, Goodreads, *anywhere!* There are big, wonderful groups of knitting lovers, baking buffs, foodies, historians, gun collectors, anything that might fit your unique hook categories. It takes a bit of effort to find them and decide how they'll work for you, but this is worth the effort. Be a joiner but don't overdo it. Remember, participate only in the groups that are interesting to your book's unique hooks. This approach serves your marketing efforts best, because it's not overloaded with hundreds of authors shouting for attention. If you do join a unique hook lovers group, participate. Never imagine that simply joining anything—a group, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo private groups and/or organizations—means automatic sales. It simply means that you've opened your possible audience. You're doing it in a protected environment and many groups will slap your wrist if all you do is promote, promote, promote. You need to seriously participate in the groups, give and get support and that's what turns into book sales.
- **Live Networking** – With all the online and internet hubbub, we often forget our real life, living, breathing network. Your family, work friends, church. Your dentist, vet, eye doctor. The health club, the woman who cuts your hair, or the masseuse you use. Don't forget about where your kids go to school, where you shop for groceries, and where you get your lottery tickets. These are breathing people who know you already. These are people who like you. Most people ever meet an author and are thrilled to know one. They become walking, talking advertisements for your book. Don't leave this vital network out of your loop, whether you write fiction or non-fiction, are traditionally published or self-published, remember to toot your horn to everyone you know. Keep fliers in your car and post them everywhere a community or business bulletin board calls.

TOOL 4

Understand Your Market

It's time for some serious research about your book's market. Who are the other authors write in your genres? Which genres are growing and which ones are dropping off in popularity? Where can one buy their book? What are some of the best promotions or marketing efforts you've seen for a book? Do book videos work for your genre? Do you understand how the most successful authors manage their careers?

I'm sure you can come up with a hundred more questions about your market as well. It's vital to ask the questions, explore what other authors are doing, what's currently selling, what marketing efforts work and which ones don't, and how far wide or deep successful authors go with their marketing strategies.

Don't just look at the publishing industry either. Look around. Everything you buy is being marketed and promoted. What kind of promotions make an impact on you? Can that kind of approach work for your book?

Next, where is your market? Where are they buying books? In bookstores? Online? In discount stores? Small independent bookstores? Used bookstores? Exploration for ways to reach them goes further than simply using your platforms, you have to reach them where they live. If one of your unique hooks is dog lovers, you need to connect with dog lovers both live and online. They're at the pet store, so think about posting a flier on the bulletin board, and think about holding a book signing at an animal rescue location. They have blogs. You can respond because you like dogs., but better than that, you can offer to write a guest blog about the dogs in your book to that dog blogger's audience. Just think about it ... a blog talking to people and not another author in sight! You will own that audience. You can consider writing articles for dog magazines, or columns for online pet stores about dogs. This is seriously reaching out and touching your unique hook audiences where they live! Always remember to end every approach to your unique hook lovers—a blog entry, a column, or an article—with a picture of your book cover and the places to purchase the book.

There is a **MARKETING RULE OF THREE**. A prospective buyer must hear about your product three times, in three different places, and three different ways before they actually make the decision to purchase. Never forget to seek out your prospective buyer through your unique hooks. This technique is something other authors seldom if ever do, so it will be a sales landscape all your own. Understanding your market is vital because if you don't know who will want your book, how can you talk to them?

TOOL 5

PUBLICITY

Great publicity is when you use the media to create relevant exposure for your book. The smartest, easiest way to do this is by connecting with a charity. Take a serious look at your book, especially your unique hooks that not only make your book stand apart, but identify additional readers for your book beyond typical author strategies to genre followers. What in your book's unique hooks might lend itself to publicity or a charity? Connecting with a charity does several wonderful things. It shows you're a caring author, it supports something you care about, and it connects with your story.

Don't just randomly choose a charity. If your book has nothing to do with cancer research and none of the characters are cancer survivors, it's not really a productive choice to help with sales. If the charity is near and dear to your heart, by all means support it, but don't connect it to your book, it will look and feel random.

On the other hand, if your story or non-fiction subject directly connects with a charity, move ahead. Create fundraising events. Donate a portion of your book profits to the charity, and make sure they and everyone else know. Be sure to have the charity logo displayed on your website with an announcement that a portion of your profits support Cancer Research, or The Kidney Foundation, or the ASPCA or whichever charity works.

Be honest about this; there should be no fake or half efforts. Charitable organizations all over the world are desperate for financial help. It's a chance for the author to be a hero. It's a kind of giving back that is good for the author's soul and good for the book buyer's soul. And, as long as you are doing well, the charity will notify it's supporters that you are doing this. It just may result in more sales.

All of this publicity takes place in the world of the media. Press releases and press contacts are a huge part of your publicity, and the charity will benefit from this press as well. Remember the Media Room in your Author Platform website? This is the kind of information that goes in there. If a newspaper does a story about your charity fundraising event, you will post that story in your Media Room for everyone to see. If you are interviewed and/or a podcast is created, post it in your Media Room, too. News doesn't just happen; you have to make it happen.

TOOL 6

YOUR IMAGE

Image is EVERYTHING.

You should have no Facebook or Twitter avatars your mother would be embarrassed to see. No pictures of your dog or cat cleaning itself. No photos of you drunk at a club, or at the game wearing one of those beer can helmets. You're an author, be aware of your image.

This doesn't require a professional photo session with an expensive photographer, just a nice picture of you, clean and neat. We don't need to see you working hard at the computer or appearing overly serious. You can show your personality, smile, and enjoy the moment. Just remember, literary agents, publishers, the media, other authors, and your prospective book buyers are looking at that avatar. Are you really proud of it?

If you prefer not to use a photo of yourself, your book cover is a good option. No book cover yet? Use an image that represents your book until you have one. And one final suggestion, please don't change your avatar picture more than once a year. It's how your friends and followers recognize you. Don't confuse us.

TOOL 7 MARKETING

Marketing is building awareness that your book exists, and it starts long before your book is available. An author's marketing tools are:

- Your Polished Image
- Your Platforms Activity
- Your Social Networking

Sound a little like everything, doesn't it? But everything thus far was put together just to build awareness of you and your book.

If you don't blog regularly, use Facebook and Twitter effectively and on a regular basis, your hard earned followers will lose interest. If you don't keep your websites updated and Media Room neat and full with every element readily downloadable for the media to use, you've dropped the ball.

Only with all these things in play and working like a well oiled machine, can you know that you've done your job and created awareness for your coming book. If you haven't, all your post release promotional efforts will fall on deaf ears. Sorry. Sad but true.

TOOL 8 PROMOTION

Promotion is the activity around which you sell your book. It's finally time to promote that book you've been writing, talking, blogging, Facebooking and Twittering about. Time to promote the book to all those prospective readers and unique hook lovers you've been reaching out to and connecting with. Remember all those goals listed under Tool #1? Now you can make them happen.

The question is how to promote? Be careful NOT to do the same kind of promotions other authors do. Your book is nothing like theirs, so why should your promotional efforts? Everything you need for promoting your book is all inside your manuscript. Create promotions and events that are tightly related to your unique hooks, subject focus, story, and characters. If the murder in your mystery takes place in a museum, hold your book launch events and speaking engagements in museums or museum gift stores. Find the unique hook and twist it tightly to make it your promotional key. Is your main character a coffee expert? Have your events in coffee shops, use coffee shop discount coupons as bookmarks, campaign to have a coffee drink at the coffee shop named after your book. Does your story involve a corrupt lawyer poaching wild animals in Africa? Hold your events at the zoo and have tee shirts that say "So Zoo Me!"

Promotion is about making a splash but you can't make a splash without any water. The water's there! It's wave upon wave of unique hook lovers you've connected with that are waiting for your book. It's all that marketing and publicity that has laid the groundwork for success.

Is your book only published as an ebook? Again, there are perfect venues for your promotions. The Zoo has a website. So does the museum and the coffee shop. They might be thrilled to let you show your book on that website, perhaps sell your book with a link on that website, especially if you're donating a portion of your profits to support the zoo or museum, or a charity near and dear to the coffee shop's heart.

Get creative. Seek every opportunity and promote. And by the way, don't forget the simplest and most effective way to promote—just tell people. Tell all those friends on Facebook and Twitter that your book is now available and where they can buy it. Let all your associates in those unique hook interest groups that the book is out, and remember to get the news out to your email groups too.

TOOL 9

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Understandably, few authors can afford everything they want in the line of services. Some expenses are vital, like the cost of a good editor if you're self published. Choose carefully for other services. If you can't build your own websites and can't afford to hire someone to build them for you, think about trading services. Be careful not to juggle too many things at once. Use careful time management.

When looking at services from professionals, beware of the freebee services that pop into your email inbox. Nothing is ever free and if it is, it's usually worthless. Another thing we all know is that there are no shortcuts, so don't leap to pay someone to make you a top ten best seller in four short weeks. It won't happen.

Be careful of the promotional item sellers. You may not need tee shirts or printed coffee mugs or ink pens with your book's name on them. Think before you order.

Be picky, have a plan and don't let some sparkly, crazy silliness come along and take you away from your plan. If tee shirts were on your original plan for a good reason, because they work with your book's unique hook and make sense, then order them.

Always be reasonable. Does the tee short have to be 100% organic cotton? Does the book video have to be produced by a Hollywood director? Does your book promotion really require real actors in period costume to appear at your launch party? Only you can decide.

Create a budget and **STICK TO IT**, even if that budget is \$0.

TOOL 10 **FOLLOW UP**

Consistency builds a career. Don't drop a ball anywhere—not in your platforms, not in your social marketing, or blogging, or group associations. Don't simply drop off the planet for a while, you will pay when it comes time to rebuild your lost following.

If you are an expert at something as part of your platforms, BE the expert, always and everywhere. Expect people to ask questions and plan to answer them. Be gracious.

Constantly look for new growth avenues, new opportunities to make yourself and your book(s) visible.

And finally, keep your Book Business Plan alive, well, growing and breathing! If you take care of it, it will take care of you and your career.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Riley-Magnus is an author and an Author Success Coach. She has a twenty-seven year professional background in marketing, advertising, and public relations as a writer for print, television, and radio. She writes fiction and non-fiction.

Since 2010, she had two novels released. In 2013 her nonfiction, *Finding Author Success* (Second Edition), and *Cross Marketing Magic for Authors* were released. A third nonfiction entitled *Write Brain/Left Brain* is slated for release in 2015 and focused on bridging the gap between the creative writer, and the creative marketing tools that make marketing fun for authors.

Deborah produces several pieces monthly for various websites and online publications. She writes an author industry blog and teaches online and live workshops as The Author Success Coach. She belongs to several writing and professional organizations.

Deborah's previously published fiction is currently finding a new home. *The Twice-Baked Vampire* series is moving ahead and when the series is re-released with a new publisher, it will include the third in this five book urban fantasy series. She is also working on a YA series entitled *The Lost Orphan Race*.

Deborah has lived on both the east and west coast of the United States and has traveled the country widely. She is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and recently returned after living in Los Angeles, California for several years.

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