



News & Views

▶ Empowering authors and publishers to create and market books

NOVEMBER 2011

November 9 meeting: Ebooks Demystified!

There's no denying that the way people discover, purchase, and enjoy books is going through monumental changes—especially when it comes to ebooks and digital technologies. It's a new but rapidly growing opportunity that confuses a lot of authors and publishers. Our November meeting will demystify the subject by providing you with the latest information on ebook sales, the most popular reading devices (including the new Kindle Fire and the changes it brings), and formats. The speakers will also share their personal stories of converting their books to the various digital formats, what services to use, resources to help you with conversion, best practices, and much more.

Featured Speakers:



Bob Baker is a full-time author who has developed a successful niche writing and speaking about music marketing and self-promotion for songwriters, musicians, and bands. He has served three terms as president of the St. Louis Publishers Association, is a regular presenter at IBPA's Publishing University, and is an advocate for the self-publishing movement.

His books include *55 Ways to Promote & Sell Your Book on the Internet*, *Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook*, *Unleash the Artist Within*, *Branding Yourself Online*, and three other paperback books.



Kim Wolterman teaches a class on writing, publishing and promoting non-fiction books at St. Louis Community College at Meramec. She owns Provenance Publishing Company LLC, and is the author of the print books *Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed(room)? Researching a St. Louis County, Missouri Home* and *From Buckeye to G.I. LeRoy C. Kubler The War*

Years 1942-1945, as well as the ebook *Keys to Unlocking House History*. She frequently speaks on researching house history and can often be found with her nose pressed against the microfilm

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How to sell books using social media

by Jeff Molander

Authors who self-publish sell, actually *move* books with social media like Facebook and a blog. I am and so can you. So forget about buzzing, engaging and “being more human” on social media and learn how to sell with it. Here are 3 things you can do tomorrow—to start making social media sell more books, speaking gigs and educational goods.

But first I need to say something that may surprise you. In the world of social media there is no shortage of bad advice posing as good, time-tested “best practices.” Too often “experts” offer social marketing tips that are actually huge time-wasters. Said plainly, you do *not* need to know what time of day to be re-Tweeted or Liked more often. You need a systematic way to apply social media to sell books. Right?

Avoid the Most Common Mistake

I use Facebook as a listening post for readers and meeting planners, not just a place to broadcast. But just listening is not enough. *This is where most authors go wrong. Respond* to what you hear by publishing useful information to your target audience. And here's the most important part: publish in ways that always prompts readers, speaking bureaus or planners to ask more questions... that your books, DVDs or training products give answers to.

Make sure everything you publish either solves a problem or identifies a problem (so you can solve it). Most authors and

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Ebooks Demystified! ... *continued*

reader at the St. Louis County Recorder of Deeds office. Kim holds a Master of Education degree from the University of Missouri – St. Louis.

SLPA meets on the second Wednesday of the month: Brentwood Community Center 2505 S. Brentwood Boulevard, Brentwood, MO 63144

Doors open for networking at 6:30 P.M. and meeting begins at 7:00 P.M. The formal meeting concludes at about 8:30 with networking continuing after the meeting.

Our regular meetings are free to members.
Guests - \$10.00 at the door, cash or check only. 

How to sell books ... *continued*

business owners I interviewed in my book say it is most effective to answer questions in short form, on Facebook. Then simply link back to your blog site to provide additional detail—and a call-to-action that prompts the customer to give insight on purchase intent, for instance. Or lure them to exchange their email address for a chance to win a free book. Generate a lead.

Always-always-always be driving customers toward doing something that lets you database/index their purchase intent (at the moment), problems they need solved, etc. For instance, I use my site www.askjeffmolander.com to do exactly that. By giving away free advice (scratching my customers' itches) I earn more insight into my customers' pain and a chance to sell to them. *Again, this is where most authors miss the boat.*

Solve Problems, Get Back to Basics

Don't get caught up in worrying about what to blog or converse about on Facebook. That's a trap that many authors who self publish fall into. Rather, *get back to basics*. Do what you do in your book online but in ways that interact with readers. Answer questions and/or appeal to the personal desires of your target market. Exploit secret desires or urgent needs. If you listen to this Webinar you'll hear Gunnar Branson refer to the "desire" aspect as "the sex and violence" (opportunity and risk) of what you're publishing... your wisdom.

For instance, your book and/or products may help kids achieve better reading comprehension in school and/or help them avoid being bullied in the classroom... all while giving parents a sense of confidence and better looking report cards. Play to these aspects, just as you might in traditional marketing. But also mix in a direct response element (call to action for some kind of registration).

As Gunnar Branson playfully suggests, think about how the illegal narcotics trade operates and mimic it. Your job as a social media wizard is to create and then nurture an addiction to whatever you publish — not to "engage" or be discovered.

Take Action, Ask Better Questions

Ready to get going? Ask yourself: "What are my customers doing in social spaces, why and how? What is he/she demonstrating a clear need for? What itch can I scratch for him/her? What questions does he/she ask over and over that I can answer... in the form of a blog story that can be posted as a response to recurring Facebook questions, for instance?"

As Markus Sheridan of River Pools and Spas recommends in chapter one of my book, consider prioritizing questions your customers ask most often. Or focus on lesser-known tips — or often-overlooked tricks that you regularly provide customers. Since I practice what I preach, you can be inspired and educated by Markus himself by downloading my first chapter free at www.makesocialsell.com/ch1.

Now it's time to quickly pull together the beginnings of a "content marketing" asset. In other words, a blog, e-book, white paper or video that solves a common problem. Are you with me? Here's the good news: You're already providing tips and tricks to customers. Consider: Are you already helping customers put fires out or do more with less? How, where?

Brainstorm a practical way to collect and organize this information using simple, accessible tools like a blog. Focus on providing practical information first. Then mix in creative ways to present the information... like blogging controversial opinions, appealing to "inner desires."

Forget About Best Practices

We're all human. And that means we're programmed to choose the path of least resistance. But cutting-and-pasting a social media "best practice" is never going to be the path toward better results. Instead, borrow ideas that "work" for others — applying them within your environment. Make mistakes and learn from them. You'll create more of what you want by discovering processes that do not work and quickly fixing them.

"Our brains, contrary to what most people think, have been designed to learn much more from lessons learned... from what didn't work; from conflicts; from situations that were everything but successful; from what would force us to re-think what we've just done and do it better, trying harder next time around," says Luis Suarez, an IBM knowledge management consultant.

Testing and adapting is a more effective way to create sales.

Forget about "perfect" practices that can be applied broadly. And remember to always be solving customers' problems. Effective

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How to sell books ... *continued*

“content marketing” demands more than grabbing customers’ attention. You’ve got to do something with it.

Good luck and let me know how it turns out for you. 

Jeff Molander is a self-published author of *Off the Hook Marketing: How to Make Social Media Sell for You* and adjunct faculty at Loyola University Business School. He blogs at www.offthehookblog.com and can be reached at www.jeffmolander.com.

Preparing for your first interview as a published author

by Roger C. Parker

Preparing for your first interview as a published, or self-published, author is an important step in promoting your book and building your personal brand. It’s an event worth preparing for.

When you prepare for your first interview, you’re also making an investment in your long-term personal branding success. As your online visibility and your personal brand grow, it’s likely that you’ll be contacted for more and more interviews.

Preparation is the key to successful interviews; preparation reduces stress and puts you in charge, making it easy to sell your book and communicate your personal branding message.

It’s never too early to begin preparing to be interviewed by the media, experts in your field, your peers, or potential employers.

Preparing for interviews

There are two ways to prepare for interviews—whether they’re scheduled a long time in advance, or you’re contacted at the last minute:

1. Prepare the basic facts. Start by preparing answers for the background questions most likely to be asked. These “softball” questions are often formalities, asked to establish your credentials, create rapport with the interviewer, and set the stage for the more important questions to follow. By anticipating these questions, and being comfortable responding to them, you can get through them faster, increasing the time you can spend on the more important questions to follow.
2. Opinions, perspectives, and promoting your book. Next, plan for the types of opinion and perspective questions the interviewer is likely to ask you. Knowing that “hardball” questions are likely to follow the set of questions helps you prepare responses that can be used as opportunities to promote your book and your personal brand.

Getting the easy questions out of the way

Start by making a list of the questions you would ask if you were interviewing yourself, and preparing answers that reinforce the key characteristics of your personal brand.

Prepare answers that give you an opportunity to reference your book and relate to your personal brand and the key message, or position, you want callers to remember after the interview.

Don’t attempt to “script,” or memorize, your responses to the basic questions about your education, interests, and employment (or self-employment), history.

Instead, prepare a mind map or fact sheet listing the background questions you’re likely to be asked, along with the key ideas and connections you want to make between your background, your book, and your personal brand. Use a large type size so you can glance at it during the interview.

Never “read” your answers! Instead, review your mind map of fact sheet before the interview, and have it handy for a quick glance during the interview.

I find it’s a good idea to avoid using full sentences when organizing my ideas before an interview. Instead, just jot down the main ideas and phrases you want to include in your answers. Sentences take too much space. They also encourage you to read your responses, rather than responding in a confident and enthusiastic tone.

By the way, if you’re worried about not being able to recall important ideas, try copying your list of anticipated questions and responses in longhand. Writing ideas out by hand often improves enhances your ability to recall the key ideas at a later date.

Anticipating unexpected questions

The best way you can avoid being surprised by unexpected questions during your interview is to constantly monitor the news and trends effecting your corner of the world, i.e., those who are interested in the area where you’re building your brand. This helps you prepare appropriate responses ahead of time.

As you prepare for your interview, ask yourself questions like:

- What are the latest changes, challenges, and trends? What’s happening in my field? What are the implications of these changes? What types of businesses and associations are most affected? What are the political, economic, or social changes you recommend your clients and prospects monitor? Which of these challenges and trends are most important, and what do you recommend your clients and prospects do? How are you preparing to make changes in the way you do business?
- What are the positive changes are taking place in your field? What does the latest research indicate? What progress, or

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Preparing for your first interview ... *continued*

research, shows the most promise? How can others in your field apply and leverage their changes to their businesses and lives?

- How are you helping others in your field? As you discuss positive changes, be sure to reference what you're doing to improve the overall state of affairs. What are the steps you're taking, and what steps do you wish others were taking, that would benefit everyone concerned? Look for ways to position yourself as an activist leader in your field, on the cutting edge of solutions.

The last question, of course, permits you to reference specific topics in your book as a way you're serving your market.

How you say versus what you say

It's not just your message that improves when you anticipate and prepare to be interviewed. The more you prepare, the more comfortable you'll be during the interview...and your comfort instantly communicate itself to your interviewer as well as those reading, viewing, or listening to your interview.

With anticipation and preparation, your responses to the interview questions you're asked will not only be on-point and relevant, but your delivery will also communicate your confidence, likability, and enthusiasm for your topic.

With a little anticipation and preparation, you'll emerge as not only as expert, but as a likeable expert!

The ultimate preparation

I've found that the best way to prepare for an interview is to create your own interview questions and submit them ahead of time to the interviewer.

Preparing your own questions is a great confidence helps you rehearse your responses, increasing the likelihood that you'll be able to insert "hooks" to your book and your personal brand.

There's a high likelihood that your interviewer will ask some, or all, of the questions you submit in advance. It saves them preparation time and provides a structure for the interview.

It's never too early to prepare to be interviewed

No matter young or old you are, or where you are in your publishing and personal branding journey, it's never too early to prepare for your first interview.

Spend a few minutes each day anticipating the questions you're likely to be asked and want to be asked during upcoming interviews, and jot down the key ideas and points you want to include in your answers. When the time comes to be interviewed,

you'll be able to respond with the words and the attitude that communicates your expertise, sells your book, and enhances your personal brand. 

Roger C. Parker is a book coach whose www.publishedandprofitable.com site shares what he learned writing 40 nonfiction books, including *#Book Title Tweet: 140 Bite-sized Ideas for Compelling Article, Book, and Event Titles*.

Before you start to write your next book, download a free proof copy of his do-it-yourself workbook, *99 Questions to Ask Before You Write or Self-publish a Brand-building Book*.

Book distributors: what's in it for publishers?

by Dave Bricker

There is a direct relationship between the number of sales you can expect from a book distributor and the value-added services they provide to publishers and readers. Publishers are best served to ally themselves with book distributors that do the most to *earn* their sales commissions and inspire customer loyalty. What do they offer in exchange for their cut?

Brick and mortar retailers generally demand 50% or higher commissions from publishers and therefore offer decreasing value. The idea that book retailers should make more money than writers and publishers do for wedging a tiny piece of merchandise spine-out on a shelf full of competing products is absurd, but the state of retail bookstores tells its own story. Publishers and readers have already switched en masse to online book distributors. Some physical retailers do sell eBooks, but it's hard to justify going to a physical bookstore to buy one when you can sample books, read reviews and purchase them online. Selling eBooks at a bookstore is like selling DVDs of a stage performance at the box office.

Moreover, bookstores' 50% commission structure prices the majority of independent publishers out of the market. Physical bookstores may be able to survive for a while on the offerings of big publishers, but only at the expense of becoming increasingly irrelevant to what's really happening in the world of books. Most likely, it will be the big publishers who jump ship first to leverage the advantages and decreased risks of print-on-demand (POD) production and self-distribution.

Notably, in the online space, there is little difference between book *distributors* and book *retailers*; the terms are used interchangeably. Behaviorally, some vendors favor traditional distribution—keeping shelves supplied with product—while others have adapted and become effective salesmen. Welcome to the world of the *distributailer*. Can you hear Charles Darwin laughing?

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Book distributors... *continued*

An analysis of the changed publishing ecosystem offers insights into why some book distributors are more effective than others.

Shipping and Sales Tax directly affect prices. Buying a physical book from a physical bookstore means the transaction is subject to local sales tax, but not to shipping costs. Online sales are subject to shipping costs but not to tax. In the case of a low-cost item like a single book, the tax will cost less than the shipping (if we don't factor in the costs of fuel and time to go buy the book), but online retailers have been clever about reducing or hiding shipping fees, closing the gap on their brick and mortar competitors.

Paper Books are not dead, in spite of production and shipping costs. The ability to sell physical books at competitive prices gives online retailers a definite advantage because there are still large audiences for paper books. Bookstores that can't serve this audience are handicapped. Importantly, this suggests a viable examination of the publishing ecosystem must include books made of both pixels and paper.

Book reviews are important sales generators. In this respect, one advantage eBooks have is a direct connection between the point of purchase and the means of consumption. In other words, you can finish an eBook and click directly to where you bought it to post a review. Readers of paper books must switch media to post their comments, something many of them simply won't get around to.

Selection is another important criterion. Amazon offers over seven million unique book products. The average big bookstore carries 80,000 books—and that's the total quantity, not the number of unique volumes.

Sales results provide the most cogent criteria for judging distributors. Amazon sells the most of my books, followed by Barnes and Noble. I get a trickle of royalties from Google. In the year or so I've been listed with them, the Apple iBookstore has never sold a single copy of any of my three eBooks.

Online book distributors all provide comparable ease-of-shopping, but the auxiliary marketing services they offer correlate clearly with the sales results they achieve.

Comparing Book Distributors

I distribute both paper books and eBooks through Amazon and Barnes and Noble, and eBooks through the Apple iBookstore and Google Books. These vendors take 30% sales commissions for eBook sales (though Amazon does take 70% commissions in some regions). Online sales commissions for paper books range from 20%-50% of the cover price. As a wholesaler, what I get in

exchange for giving up almost a third of my pie is an important consideration.

Amazon.com offers, by far, the most robust set of value-added features for publishers and readers. Readers can choose between eBooks and paper books with options to purchase used copies as they're available. Uniquely, Amazon provides publishers with "author pages" where they can add photos, notes about their books (and other offerings), a professional biography and an RSS feed from their blogs. A "look inside this book" option allows readers to peruse a limited number of pages of a book based on a publisher-uploaded PDF. Amazon Prime allows users to elect free two-day shipping for a flat \$79 annual fee (or one-day shipping for \$3.95), and that service comes bundled with a huge selection of free video content. That gives Amazon an edge with paper book costs, and allows consumers to buy anything else they want under the same terms. Amazon's "all you can eat" menu challenges consumers to get the most out of their annual fee; once it's paid, shipping is "free." Because they're the world's most popular bookseller, Amazon listings also attract the highest number of customer reviews.

Barnes and Noble's Nook Store performs second on my list of book distributors. It offers both physical books and eBooks, and a place for reader reviews, but in spite of large numbers of reviews of my books being posted on Amazon, nobody has bothered to post a single one on the B&N site. There are no author pages. There's no "look inside this book" option. As a source for physical books, B&N does attract non-eBook readers who won't likely shop with Google or Apple, but the lack of a book preview and scarcity of reviews make it more difficult to evaluate books before making a purchase.

The Google EBookstore sells less than one of my eBooks per month. They do offer book previews and a place for user reviews. They don't offer author pages or other perks provided by Amazon. I suspect many readers are more interested in Google's free offerings than in actually shopping there. Amazon has already gotten competitive by developing their own library of over two million free, out-of-copyright books.

The Apple iBookstore offers an attractive interface and a place for user reviews, but little more. It's functionality is roughly equivalent to that of Google Books. Any computer with iTunes can search the iBookstore. Abridged sample books can be sent to iOS devices, but viewing iBooks on your computer or on anything other than an iPhone, iPad or iPod is not allowed. It's difficult to say whether the majority of eBook consumers are locked out of Apple's private media Universe or if Apple users are locked in, but both the platform and the retail channel have serious restrictions attached to their use. If you want in, you have to buy one of Apple's mobile devices.

Book distributors... *continued*

Though all these book distributors take the same 30% sales commission, only Amazon has made any real effort to cultivate relationships with publishers of all sizes, including indie publishers, and Amazon has taken pains to ensure the relationship isn't all about them. They realize that providing tools for publishers to promote their books and tools for readers to explore them benefits everyone in the distribution chain from writer to retailer.

With millions of paper books still being produced, eBook-only retailers are early in the game. The ability to sell physical books still provides an important competitive advantage, and the jury is out on whether long-term interest in paper books will ever decline below a certain level.

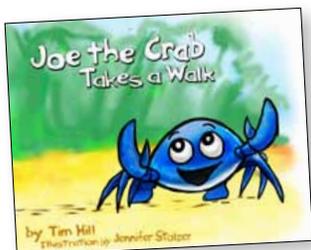
The old model where retailers win commissions simply by stocking products has failed. It might have made some sense back when physical books had to compete for bookstore shelf-space, but given the ease and negligible cost with which a book can be added to an online catalog, paying 30% of cover price for a simple listing is a bad deal for authors and publishers. In a world where the publishing climate has already changed, only those distributors willing to work for sales commissions will be perceived as valuable business partners.



Dave Bricker produces and designs his own books and publishes them through his private Essential Absurdities Press. He writes about self-publishing at <http://onehourselfpub.com/>.

Members in the news

St. Louis Publishers Association member Tim Hill is the author of the children's book series *Joe the Crab*, the little blue crab with a big heart. The idea for the series came from Tim improvising bedtime stories for his children. Every night, his boys wanted to know what happened with *Joe the Crab* that day.



The first book in the series, *Joe the Crab Takes a Walk*, finds Joe taking a walk on the beach where he finds out that not everyone appreciates who and what he is.

Released in October of 2011, the book is available locally at Pudd'nhead Books in Webster Groves or online at www.joethecrab.com.

	Amazon	Barnes & Noble	Google Books	Apple iBookstore
Paper Book Commission	20-50%	20-50%	eBooks only	eBooks only
eBook Commission	30% (70% in some regions)	30%	30%	30%
Book Previews	yes	no	yes	Only on iOS devices
Reviews	yes	yes	yes	yes
Author Pages	yes	no	no	no
Offers non-media items	yes	no	no	no
Offers used books and alternate vendors	yes	yes	Yes, but only for book searches outside of the Google eBookstore	no

Book learning

“What will you take away from tonight’s meeting?”

Members and guests of SLPA were asked this question following the October presentation with Lethia Owens. Here's what a few folks had to say:



“I gained inspiration into who my peeps are going to be.”
– Dan Grizzle



“Things are not always what they seem – look beyond the obvious.”
– Joel Erlichson



“Google Alerts is a different way to learn about who’s putting out content.”
– James Ross

What’s ahead? December 14, 2011

Join us at the December meeting and celebrate the holiday season with fellow authors and publishers.

This year we're bringing back the Five-Minute Networking Blitz. It's sort of like a business version of speed dating, where everyone has five minutes each to get to know other SLPA members and guests.

SLPA News & Views is edited by: SLPA Communications Manager Kim Wolterman, kimwolterman@gmail.com and designed by Peggy Nehmen: pnehen@n-kcreative.com