



# Fun and fearless ways to market children's books

**Faiz Kermani** injects some fun into marketing his self-published children's books

**M**arketing a self-published book can be quite daunting, and if you do not have any previous experience you may feel quite stressed. This is not helped by the fact that many people believe that the only way to market a product is to use a professional agency or publicity expert.

The truth is that there is a lot you can do for yourself and you can learn a lot from the process involved. Based on my own experiences of self-publishing two children's books and publicising them both in Europe and the US, I believe that much can be achieved through having a relaxed attitude and open mind to marketing. View the process as another discipline to learn and master, as you did with writing your book, and you will have nothing to lose.

The major advantage you have, if you decide to do your own marketing, is that you are the author of the book. Therefore, anyone wishing to learn more about the book gets to deal with

the source behind it and not a faceless entity representing you. I have participated in various author events, and wherever I have been, it has been a lot of fun to meet people who were genuinely enthusiastic about my books. These interactions and experiences will keep you motivated when you run into critics!

Some people believe you need to have a defined marketing plan before you finish your book. While this might be desirable in an ideal world, as an individual there is a limit as to how many tasks you can take on. As long as you have a long-term vision for your book, there will always be marketing tactics you can employ, whether it is shortly after publication through to years down the line. Get to know your audience and experiment with ideas so that you end up with a flexible marketing plan that works for you over a long period of time.

I recommend that you keep several different marketing initiatives on the go, so that you are not solely

dependent on any one of them. Sadly, you will come across unhelpful and dismissive people while you try these out, but all you need is for one person to show interest in what you are doing and it can open several doors!

One of the fears most authors have about marketing comes from the fact that they have only witnessed marketing as carried out by large publishing companies. This means that many independent authors lack the confidence to carry out their own marketing and lose heart when a particular approach does not work. However, the world of publishing is undergoing great change and thanks to things such as the Internet there are a variety of tools you can use for your marketing at minimal cost. You may be surprised at just how widely you can publicise yourself for very little!

For starters, I would ensure that your book is available for sale at Amazon and similar sites. Amazon has a number of features to help independent authors connect with



their audience. These include the “search inside” feature, which allows people to read an extract from your book, and Author Central, where you can build a profile about yourself and your writing. Make use of free opportunities such as these as they are a good way to publicise your book internationally.

I would then suggest that you set up your own website, as it will become an easily accessible information source on your books for readers. You can find numerous website design agencies who are happy to work with clients on modest budgets. Take your time in selecting one that will give you what you want, but do not shut yourself off totally from their suggestions.

Once your website is up and running, you should consider producing a press release. Some

people believe that only professionally-written press releases succeed, but I am of the opinion that if you can write a book then you have the potential to write a perfectly suitable press release. I have had quite a good response from doing press releases myself and at virtually no cost. What is more important is that you distribute the press release to the right places, mixing traditional print media with and online media outlets. Try to look at other press releases for format, and think about your intended readers. What is the best way to tell them about your book in a snappy and appealing way?

Your local and regional media can be some of your best allies, so try

to look up the details of editors at newspapers and radio stations. Send them your press release as an attachment, with a short, friendly, introductory message. If you include a photo of yourself in the press release and a statement that you are happy to be interviewed you may be surprised at the results.

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Numerous book review websites abound on the Internet seeking news releases and interviews with new authors. Some will also review your book for you and

encourage you to use their write-ups as part of your publicity material. Through these approaches, you may find yourself making a name further afield than you imagined. In my experience, I have found editors of some of the

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US websites some of the friendliest I have encountered.

If your book is of a particular genre, you should think where else your press release might be applicable. For example, as I have written children's books, I have used my press releases to approach schools and libraries running literacy events or children's bookshops wanting to set up author signings. Sometimes I have worked with them to set up such events.

As your marketing campaign develops, you should consider writing additional press releases based on what you are doing. For example, if you do an author signing then that should become a topic for another press release that can be circulated more widely. This type of publicity material can also be featured on your website to keep people informed about what you are up to.

Although the Internet and electronic media have an important role to play in your marketing campaign, do not underestimate how much you can achieve through direct contact with people.

Word-of-mouth is one of the most powerful routes for book publicity; it can lead to some exciting opportunities. People are always interested in writing, and will be quite proud to know an author. You may find that friends and acquaintances get talking to other people and through a network of more distant conversations it results in you being invited to an author signing event or being introduced to an editor at magazines and radio shows.

Your normal network of contacts will naturally evolve into an integral part of your marketing campaign. Of course the more sociable you are as a person, then the more this will work for you. However, take care that you do not overdo it and flagrantly indulge in self promotion of your book otherwise you will bore people and drive them away!

If you are a self-published author, then you must be realistic about what you can achieve through a self-run marketing campaign. The

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mainstream publishing industry is highly competitive and often controlled by those who are more focused on what they think will be a commercial success than what is of literary value. This will depend on their analyses of audience wants and needs, and if your book does not fit their criteria then, rightly or wrongly, you will have a hard time becoming that overnight success you may have always dreamt of. Equally, the media is carrying thousands of new stories each day, so it may not necessarily pick up on news about your book.

However, this does not mean you should give up, but be focused more on what led you to write your book. Surely your main desire was to have an opportunity to express your creativity to others, rather than simply to make money? After all, if it was

primarily to become rich then there are much easier ways in life to go about making money quickly than writing a book!

If you can orientate the goals for your book around your passion for writing, then you will be able to enjoy the process of marketing your book and will develop a highly effective and targeted campaign that also maximises your commercial opportunities. However, if you have to scrutinise book sales after the implementation of every individual marketing tactic, you will subject yourself to unnecessary pressure and stifle your ability to be innovative in the future. Often it is not individual tactics that work best, but the blend of all the tactics that you end up employing and the interrelationships that develop over time. By concentrating on building a varied and sustainable marketing campaign, you will give yourself the greatest chance of success.

In summary, the barriers that used to stand in the way of independent authors to achieve publicity are being cast aside and so you should feel free to be as imaginative with your marketing campaign as you are with your writing!

Faiz Kermani is a British author, who has lived in the UK and the US and is now based in France. As a PhD-qualified immunologist, his day job is a world away from his fun hobby of writing children's fiction ([www.fazikermani.com](http://www.fazikermani.com)).

