



**The Little Book of
UNCONVENTIONAL
MARKETING IDEAS
for Self-published Authors**
*Or How to Sell Books with
Little to No Marketing Savvy*

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Disclaimer: This book is a compilation of the author's personal marketing tactics used to sell her own books and does not represent time-tested, best practices of marketing.

Please also excuse the amateur photos. The author has included them to help illustrate different tactics outlined in the book.

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The Little Book of UNCONVENTIONAL MARKETING IDEAS for Self-published Authors

“Opportunity dances with those on the dance floor.”

—Anonymous

Self-publishing has taken off like the superhero from a Marvel comic. And thankfully so. It’s what has allowed me to publish eleven paranormal mystery novels, two short story books, and three nonfiction books, all while building a small but loyal fan base and earning enough money to not make me rich but make it worthwhile.

I suspect that like many of you, I spent years attempting to publish traditionally and came remarkably close to landing an agent. The agent (well, her staff) read my first book three separate times over six months, each time sending it back and asking me to change something. After three lengthy revisions to meet their requests, the agent finally rejected me. That was a very frustrating experience, and I almost quit writing. That is... until my brother suggested I check out self-publishing. That was over sixteen years ago. I did what he suggested and eventually decided to self-publish.

I’ve never looked back.

What I hear from soon-to-be authors is that self-publishing intimidates them because they would have to do everything on their own. Especially the marketing.

What they don't realize is that even when you publish through a traditional publisher, you will be responsible for a large part of the marketing. Either way, there are a myriad of resources for you to lean on. I hope this book is one of them.

I don't claim to be a book marketing expert. In fact, the whole point of this book is that I rarely advertise, don't track anything, and don't work from a well-thought-out strategy. So, if you picked up this book because you're looking for intricate details on SEO keyword searches, sales funnels, lead nurturing, churn rates, customer acquisition, click rates, read-through percentage, or how to calculate your ROI when you do an ad buy, you're in the wrong place. I don't do any of that, nor do I want to.

That doesn't mean I haven't consumed formal marketing advice over the years, because I have. In fact, I recently read a book where the author said she tracks her advertising buys, book sales, and ROI seven days a week, 52-weeks a year. *Really?* That makes my head hurt.

Here's the deal: I don't have the patience or the mind set for that kind of marketing. It's not that I don't know how to read a spread sheet; I do. I ran a multi-million-dollar charitable foundation for years and dealt with spreadsheets throughout my professional career. I just don't care if I ever see one again. As an author, I rely on sporadic, more unconventional, creative, and simple ways to market, which makes me happier and has worked well for me in the long run. I believe my approach could work for you, too.

Why did I choose this unconventional route?

Because although I want to have as many people read my books as possible, I needed a marketing strategy that fits with my personality. Anyone who knows me would understand what that means. I'm a person who doesn't exercise much patience. In fact, a psychic once told me that the lesson I was learning in this lifetime *was* patience. She then added, "So far, you're not doing so good."

I couldn't agree more.

As further illustration of that fact, when it comes to writing my novels, I'm a pantster not a plotter, meaning I don't outline my books in advance. Why? You guessed it. I don't have the patience. I approach marketing the same way.

That doesn't mean I don't write good books. I do. My approach to writing is simple. I know the overall concept for the book, how the book will begin, and I have a good idea how it will end. Then I start writing.

Look, I'd be lying if I said I didn't care what readers think of my books. I love getting good reviews. In fact, I feel like Sally Fields who famously said in her Academy Award speech, "They like me!" Yes, selling books and getting good reviews is important to me.

I also recognize that I would sell more books if I buckled down and focused on the *business* side of selling books. For that reason, I don't want to dissuade you from using a business approach to selling your books. After all, it's best practice.

It's just that following a detailed marketing plan, complete with analytics and metrics, just isn't for me. And yet, I made enough money through book sales to help my daughter with her college expenses. I'm not implying that I paid for her entire college education, but at the time, the money I made on book sales made her college life much more comfortable. She now has her Ph.D. in psychology, and I'm proud to have been a part of that. But when I'm gone, I also hope the continued sale of my books will be a legacy for her.

Am I Stephen King? No. Nor am I James Patterson, David Baldacci, or John Grisham. Not even close. Do I want to be as big as those guys? Not really. I like my privacy.

So, although I never made enough money to quit my day job (I'm now retired), I'm happy with where I am. In addition to the modest amount of money I've earned, all but one of my books enjoy an average of a 4.5-star rating or above on Amazon, garnering me a very loyal fanbase. I even have readers who nudge me to find out when my next book is coming out.

What are my credentials? Do I even have any?

Damn straight.

I have a master's degree in Theater, which gave me a great foundation for storytelling. I also spent 35+ years as an executive in the nonprofit world writing everything from fundraising appeals to grants to brochures and website copy. I taught "Crafting the Story" through Green River College for 10+ years and now own my own freelance writing company, giving me the opportunity to write for nonprofits and individuals all over the world. I have also been a featured speaker in many online writing summits.

So, you might ask... do I know how to write? Yes.

Do I know how to write a novel? Yes.

And you should too.

But that's not what this book is about.

There are plenty of great resources out there that can show you *how* to turn your best-selling idea into a book, whether it's fiction or nonfiction. You can also find tons of resources that can teach you how to launch that book into a potential best seller. There are even more resources, including consultants, ready and willing to help you treat marketing and the sales of your book like a business (for a pretty penny), giving you the opportunity to potentially achieve your dream of making hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.

But that's not what this book is about.

Nope.

This book is for those of us who don't choose to sign our lives away to the endless, nitty-gritty details of the *business* of book selling. This book is for those of us who want to spend more time writing and less time selling. This book is for those of us who are okay with moderate book sales and having a small but loyal fan base.

In the end, this book is for those of us who want, more than anything else, to spend the bulk of our time writing and producing stories people love to read *or* writing nonfiction books that inform and inspire.

Why Did I Write This Book?

Do you believe in serendipity? The motivation to write this book came when I was asked by several other writers over the course

of a few weeks as to how I marketed my books. Each time, I offered several of my more unconventional tactics. People seemed genuinely interested, and a few people even messaged me later to say they had tried some of my ideas and found the experience empowering.

I felt validated.

The serendipity of those conversations happening so closely together made me wonder if I could help others with my approach to marketing.

The result was this book.

Disclaimer: While you will probably recognize a number of the marketing methods I talk about in this book, hang tight, because in many (or most) cases I offer a twist on the idea and/or might give you a different way to look at it. And I guarantee there will be many ideas in this book you haven't thought of or haven't added to your list of go-to marketing strategies.

***“In this environment, it’s your passion, persistence,
and pluck that will sell your book, and those
are all within your control.”***

—Joel Friedlander

INTRODUCTION

***“Don’t be afraid to get creative and experiment
with your marketing.”***

—Mike Volpe, Startup Advisor

BOTTOM LINE

Not everyone can be a bestselling author whose book sales multiply like fat cells in your body. (I’m talking about my body, not yours.) But here’s the bottom line—to hit even a moderate level of success you’ll need to do *something*.

It's not enough to just upload your book to Amazon, Smashwords, Barnes & Noble, Lulu, or any of the other sites, sit back, and expect to start selling books like gangbusters. Why? Because unless you already enjoy a certain level of name recognition, no one will know your book even exists. Plus, you’re competing against thousands of other authors doing the same thing, especially now that AI has become so easy to use.

The hard truth is that as of 2026, Amazon alone sees between 250,000 – 320,000 new titles published every month, and the number keeps growing. The competition is great, and depending on what you’re writing, it’s easy to get lost in the crowd.

On the other hand, this book may be for you if:

- 1) You are unpublished and don’t know a thing about marketing.
- 2) You’re intimidated to do things like book signings or podcasts.
- 3) You want to market without spending too much time or money.
- 4) You’re more interested in writing than marketing.
- 5) You’ve studied up on the latest book marketing trends but get lost in the maze of terminology, metrics, and analytics.
- 6) You’d like step-by-step pointers on how to earn name recognition.

- 7) You'd like an *easy* way to market your books that won't interfere with your busy life.
- 8) You do all the traditional marketing but might be looking for a few new ways to add to your arsenal.

If one or more of those things resonate with you, then this book should help. And here is a promise—if you come away with just one actionable tip you can deploy, this book will be worth the few dollars you paid for it.

Why am I so confident this book can help you?

Because I'm the perfect example of someone who didn't want to jump through hoops to market my books or spend thousands of dollars doing it. And yet, I do enjoy success.

There is a caveat, though.

Besides having a good book (yes, you'll need to know how to produce a good book), you'll need to clarify what your definition of success is. If you genuinely want the kind of success Stephen King enjoys, buy a different book on marketing.

What's my bottom line? I've earned almost \$60,000 across all my books over the course of the past sixteen years. It's not a fortune, I know. But if you have one or more books self-published already and haven't earned anything to speak of yet, keep reading. Because the money I've earned really did help with my daughter's education and now provides extra money for my retirement. And if I only earn \$100-\$150 a month, that helps to pay for my addiction to new clothes, Wizard of Oz memorabilia, and miniature Dachshunds.

So, if you aren't happy with less than best-seller status, then you might want to return this book and buy a different book, because this book won't do that for you. But if your goals fall somewhere between selling nothing and selling something, then your next step will be to decide whether you have the wherewithal to do ***something more than nothing*** when it comes to marketing. Because I won't lie; it will take a little time, a bit of creativity, and some hutzpah on your part.

Frankly, though, my way is much more fun, and the payoff can be just as sweet.

Here's the good news. You won't have to sell your soul or tell your kids you won't see them again before Christmas because you're knee deep in marketing. You won't lose sleep, hair, or your sanity because you're hunched over your computer agonizing over creating a step-by-step plan to optimize your conversion rate. And the joy you feel will be related to more than just the number of books you sell.

What do I mean by that?

I'm talking about things like the tingle you'll feel every time a fan leaves a 5-star review. The pride that swells in your chest when you're asked to speak at a conference. Or the honest to goodness joy you'll experience when someone asks you to autograph the paperback copy of your book.

If you're okay with that type of reward, along with the few thousands of dollars that might come with it, then you're in the right place.

Okay, let's get started.

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten."

— Tony Robbins

THE BARE ESSENTIALS

*“If dogs don’t like your dog food, then
packaging doesn’t matter.”*

—Stephen Denny, author

THE BOOK ITSELF

(Fiction or Nonfiction)

Let’s face it, your book is the biggest part of your marketing package. The better the book, the more likely it will sell. I say that knowing there are bestselling books out there that are mediocre at best.

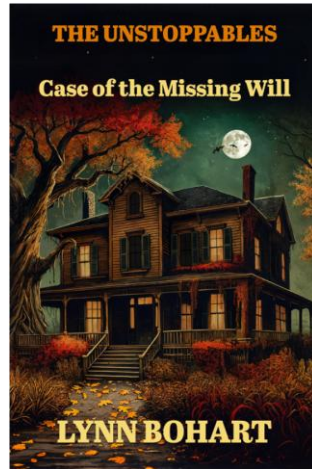
But there’s the rub.

Writing, like all creative art, is subjective. The book you might stand in line to buy, I might think is trash. For instance, millions of readers drool over romance novels. Me, not so much. But give me a good whodunnit, and I’m glued to my seat. What that means is that even if you have a trashy idea, if you execute it well, you just might become a superstar.

How you execute telling your story, though, is subjective. How you compose a sentence, a paragraph, or a chapter can make the difference between the reader consuming everything you write like Taco Tuesday or putting the book aside as if it’s Fasting Friday. One keeps them in their seat when they should be going to bed, while the other has them putting the book down, thinking they may never pick it up again.

There are countless ways to write and/or structure a book. And how you navigate that comes down to personal style. If you don’t know how to put the story together in a way that keeps the reader reading, however, you’ve already missed the boat. (God, I love clichés.) So, whether you structure your story by following the hero’s journey, *Save the Cat* beat sheet, 7-Point Story Structure, or three-act play structure, think it through and do it well.

That doesn't mean you have to follow a specific formula to be successful. But it's good to study the formulas and understand how and why they work. Then, even if you stray from the norm, hopefully you'll build in the kind of plot points for fiction and/or action points for nonfiction that will inspire the reader to keep reading.



Be Sure Your Book is Ready to Publish: Like any product, it's critical you make sure your book is ready for consumption. And trust me, I've seen a lot that aren't. That means that you need to have eyes on your manuscript long before you publish. You need to have it edited. Then, you need to double-check it once it's uploaded to your publishing site.

As an example, I just glanced at a book on Amazon by a self-published author. Unfortunately, she had somehow lost her formatting so that none of the paragraphs were indented, which meant all paragraphs ran into each other. It left the copy looking very weird and hard to read.

My process starts with my critique group which picks apart my entire book chapter by chapter over the course of ten months to a year (we meet twice a month). They catch everything from info dumps, to changes in point-of-view, to excessive 'telling vs showing,' to confusing chapters, weak characters, grammatical errors, and more.

After I've incorporated their suggestions and gone over it several more times myself, I hand it off to my beta readers. I have anywhere from 3-5 friends and/or fellow writers who go through the manuscript looking for things like consistency, believability, and pacing. Then, it goes to my editor, who gives the final draft a thorough going over. I then incorporate her suggestions and/or corrections and go through it once more before uploading it to Amazon. But I don't stop there. Once I've uploaded it, I use Amazon's 'previewer' to go through the book page by page to make sure all my formatting is the way I want it. (This is the step that author must have skipped.)

IMPORTANT MARKETING TERMS TO KNOW

It's important to define marketing so that we're all on the same page. As a concept, marketing is the process used to convince someone to buy whatever you're selling even if you don't need it. (Cynical, I know.) In this case, you're selling your books. Amazon won't do that for you. Nor will any of the other self-publishing sites. Amazon does offer sales tools through Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), but we'll cover that in another section. And there are many online book sources now that help to drive readers your way, often for a price.

If you're serious about the business of book sales, however, and want to optimize sales (in other words, make as much money as possible) then I suggest you invest in a marketing or PR company that will help you do that. At the very least, research the many books, webinars, and classes out there that will teach you how to identify your market, test your market, advertise, track everything from clicks to sales, develop sales funnels, clarify your longtail keywords and categories, and much, much more. (I have a headache now.) Udemy is a great place to access inexpensive online classes for this.

Passive vs Active Marketing: I do think it will help to understand the distinct types of marketing: active, passive, and indirect.

Active marketing happens in real time and means someone is trying to sell **directly to you**.

Active marketing takes the form of things like TV commercials, those annoying emails in your inbox, or those guys at the state fair demonstrating their awesome cookware. These are people in your face telling you why you should buy their product.

Passive marketing means the product or item has been placed somewhere and exists on its own for the buyer to find.

Passive marketing is much more subtle. It includes things like promoting your books on your website, launching a book trailer on YouTube, posting an instructional video on the skill outlined in your self-help book, or writing a blog post. Once those things are posted online, they stay there passively promoting you and/or your books.

Don't let the word passive fool you, though. Passive marketing can be very effective. And because I know some of the people reading this book may not care to actively market, many of the tips I'll outline are passive in nature.

Indirect Marketing is when you're promoting something other than your book but will eventually point to you as the author and/or your book.

Indirect Marketing: Indirect marketing is used a lot in the nonprofit world. For instance, every time nonprofits stage a special event (auction, fun run, golf tournament) they are 'selling' the event. By virtue of their close proximity to the event, however, they benefit from a halo effect. People come to the fun run and learn about how the charity helps kids learn to read.

Special event fundraising is one of the best ways for a charity to **build name recognition** while they raise money at the same time. It can work that way for you, too.

Indirect marketing for book sales might include things like:

- Creating a sales funnel for something besides your book. When the individual accesses this item, they are offered your book at a discount.
- Posting an instructional video on the skill outlined in your self-help book. People watch the video, get to know you, and see that you've also written a book.
- Writing a blog post and the byline says Joe Schmoe, author/freelance writer. They read the blog post and see that you're also an author.
- Creating an online contest with something related to your book as the prize. I did this using a poster I created of the main characters in my Old Maids of Mercer Island series (see below). I collected emails, and the winner walked away with the poster.



MARKETING BEGINS WITH YOU

Knowing how to describe or pitch your book is critical to getting people to pay attention to you. You've heard of elevator speeches in business. An elevator speech is very short (30-60 seconds) and persuasive introduction to yourself, your product, or your service.

The goal is to pique someone's interest in what you do or what you're selling. In the case of selling something, it's also meant to effectively communicate the value.

Know How to Describe Your Book: Just like an elevator speech, your marketing strategy needs to include **how** you describe and/or talk about your book. Fiction books fit into genres and sub-genres, while nonfiction books fit into categories. So, first, study up and know where your book fits in the market.

Why?

Because it's important to be able to describe it in a way that people understand immediately. Is it a YA novel or an urban fantasy? Is it a memoir, historical biography, or self-help book?

Second, know how to describe the book *quickly and succinctly*. No one wants to listen to you blab on and on as you describe what the book is *about*. When someone asks you what you write, they're not expecting the entire plot (or complete outline) in excruciating detail. And yet, that's what people often do.

Here's an example. On the first night of my writing class, I used to ask students to share what they were writing with the rest of the class. What I often got back was something like, "I'm writing a novel, and my protagonist is an angry thirteen-year-old girl who has lost her parents and is forced to go live with her kooky grandmother who grows pot and dresses in the seventies and, Melody, that's my protagonist, keeps getting kicked out of school and in arguments with her grandmother, so..."

I was already asleep. So was the rest of the class.

No. What that person was writing was a coming-of-age story about a young girl who's lost everything and yet finds a path forward with her free-spirited grandmother who still listens to the Beatles and smokes pot.

There. Done.

Or... if we're talking about this marketing book, it outlines little known tips to help market self-published books using techniques that don't cost much time or money.

Done and done.

Lastly, if I were to describe My Old Maids of Mercer Island books, I'd say, "This series follows a group of whacky sixty-something best friends who fearlessly step forward to save the world one murder mystery at a time."

Get the point?

Screenwriters call this a logline. If you don't know what a logline is, go to my website at **www.lynnbohart-author.com** and click on Author Tools. I offer a free eBook on how to write a logline.

The point is that you don't want to bore people with a lengthy description of your book. Your whole goal is to entice them to go look it up and buy it. So, master a short pitch to accomplish that.

SIMPLE, LOW-COST PROMOTIONAL TIPS

*“The moment you doubt whether you can fly,
you cease for ever to be able to do it.”*

— J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*

Okay, let's get started with the actual marketing techniques. Some of the tips outlined here are probably familiar to you. That doesn't mean that every author does them. The good news is that most of them are free and/or inexpensive and passive, so you may want to figure out which ones would be easy for you to incorporate into your marketing plan.

BUILD NAME RECOGNITION

First and foremost, you need to let people know who you are, what you write, and where they can find your book(s). Part of this is building a brand, which I'll go into more detail later. Suffice it to say, though, that there are two sides to the marketing piece: *you and your book(s)*. And I'd go so far as to say that they are equally important.

Why?

Because people will often see your posts online, meet you in person, listen to you on a podcast, or sit in on a presentation you're making, and then decide to check out your book. Perhaps they are intrigued by you or feel you have something of value to offer.

Whether you like it or not, that means you are part of the marketing package. That doesn't mean you have to make TED talks if you're a bona fide introvert, but you need to have a writer's 'presence' out in the world.

Here are some simple ways to build name recognition without having to stand in front of a camera or a crowd:

Let People Know You're an Author: It's time to get serious about letting people know that you're a writer. I purposely used the phrase – letting people know – because some writers are truly scared of the word marketing and what it entails. So don't think of this as marketing, if that helps. Just think of it the same as designing a cover for your book. It's a necessary part of publishing.

You don't have to get bogged down in tons of market research to get traction with this. Here are four simple ways to let people know that besides whatever other life you lead, you are also an author.

1. ***Change your email signature:*** This is an incredibly simple way to remind people that you're a writer. I recognize that you probably can't do this for your business email, but you can for any personal emails you have. List credentials, add a link to your book, add a meaningful quote, or anything else that helps people know the depth and breadth of who you are. The goal is twofold: every time someone receives an email *from* you, they are reminded that you're a writer, AND every time you *send* an email, you remind yourself that you're a writer. Win-win.

Here's mine:

Lynn Bohart, FAHP

Author, Writing Instructor, Mystery Coach

(Fellow, Assn. for Healthcare Philanthropy)

www.lynnbohart-author.com

"I write mysteries, interview experts in murder investigations, and help other writers create believable murder mysteries readers love."

2. ***Business Cards:*** I have known many authors who use business cards. While I have had them in the past, I honestly rarely used them. You might be different, however, and have more opportunities. The cards should include your name (or pen name), name of the book (or series), and the location where readers can purchase the book. You can also add

personal touches such as a writing logo, quote, bullet points if it's a nonfiction book, etc.

3. **Author Page/Author Bio:** Be sure to take advantage of anytime you have an opportunity to lay out your bio, such as your author page on Amazon or wherever you choose to publish, and places like Goodreads BookFunnel and others. Also, pay close attention to the bio on your website or anywhere else where you might have a profile yourself: LinkedIn, Fiverr, and the back of your book. You can tell a lot about an author by how they write their own bio, and readers will often check these in advance of buying your book. This is especially true if you are a nonfiction author because they'll want to know what your credentials are.

Don't be afraid to let a little bit of your personality shine through when you write these. You don't want to sound like every other author, and you want readers to like you. I occasionally use humor in mine, add pictures of my dogs, and so forth. This gives readers a snapshot into me.

4. **Social Media:** You may be thinking, "Duh!" And yet, I know a number of authors who barely use social media. I will talk later about using social media to market your books later, but right now I'm encouraging you to use social media to build name recognition.

Facebook: I have two Facebook accounts: a personal one and one for my writing. I don't use the writing account as much as I should, but it gives me two visible faces on the platform. And frankly, it gives me two locations to post things about me and/or my books.

LinkedIn: If you're treating your writing as a business, you should have a presence on LinkedIn and places like Alignable. Both have author subsets you can get involved with.

Goodreads: One you've published a book, make sure to create a Goodreads presence. People use Goodreads a lot, and Amazon even posts your Goodreads review status on their site, along with their own.

Instagram, Pinterest, Substack, YouTube, TikTok and others: The list of possible social media sites just keeps growing, so pick the ones that are right for you AND that you feel you will be somewhat consistent on.

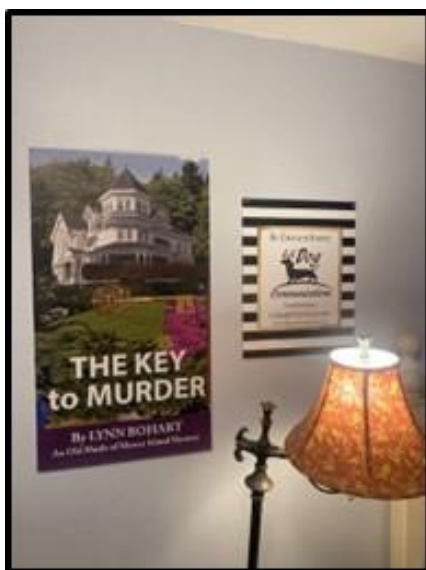
Okay, I could go on and on about social media sites, so I won't. The point is that social media can definitely help you build your name recognition as an author. Therefore, do your research and decide which ones you are most likely to stick with and try those.

USE BACKGROUND VISUALS

During Covid, I noticed something that I hadn't thought to include in my marketing—the background when you're on a Zoom call. I watched a lot of news shows during that time, and all the political pundits had their books displayed prominently on bookshelves behind them. Even though the pandemic is over, Zoom calls have become a way of life for many of us, so why not copy the pundits. I have now organized my bookshelf with copies of my books facing forward.



Posters: I also had posters printed using a couple of my book covers and my freelance writing logo and put them on the wall behind me if I conducted the Zoom in the corner of my bedroom where I work. Since I often conduct online calls for my writing clients, I've had a number of people see the book poster and say, "I didn't realize you were an author?" Several have then said they were going to download my book as soon as they got off the call. Easy-peasey. No sales pitch necessary.



For those of us who find ourselves on video calls, this kind of passive marketing is an easy but often-overlooked opportunity. And if you're on a budget, never fear. I suggest you go to an online printing company like Vista Print. I get all my book cards, business cards, and posters done through them. And here's a side note: the first poster I made was a regular 16" X 20" laminated poster. I made the second one as a vinyl banner, which came out beautifully and was cheaper. It will also last longer, and I can use it for book signings, even if I'm outdoors. See below how you can use Vista Print.

Go to Vistaprint.com and look for the heading ‘signs & banners.’ Then go to either the section on posters or banners to design what you want. Above is the vinyl banner for my book and a laminated poster for my freelance writing business.

BOOK GIVEAWAYS

You may think, “Why would I want to give my books away?” I thought that same thing when I learned about Kindle Select’s free books program on Amazon. But then, if you’re a first-time author, you’re an unknown quantity, and anytime you can get someone to read one of your books, whether for free or not, it’s a win.

Once I got comfortable with the idea of giving books away on Amazon, I generated more ways to do it to find new readers. Here are a few.

Auction Baskets: I spent 35+ years as a nonprofit executive. As part of that experience, I spent a good part of my life staging and attending auctions and/or fundraisers. Think about your own experience. How many times have you been asked to donate something to a local charity auction or fundraiser? Perhaps you donated something to a raffle at work, a collaborative get-well-soon basket, or PTA/school activity. Whether it’s a coupon for a haircut, a bottle of wine, or your free CPA services, these types of donations items are a sought-after commodity.

For years, I was an active Rotarian, and Rotary clubs are fundraising machines. My Rotary club held a large annual auction, and members provided all the auction items. I struggled with what to donate because I didn’t want to buy stuff. Once I became an author, however, I quickly learned I had something that no one else had.

My go-to auction item as a mystery writer is to put together a *cozy mystery basket*, which includes anywhere from one to four of my books, coffee mugs, boxes of tea and coffee, candy, and a scented candle. This has been a wonderful way to not only help meet my fundraising obligations but promote myself and get a tax write off at the same time!

Donations like this are a fantastic way to get your name out there as well. Just imagine a basket with your books sitting on the auction table next to a placard that might have your picture, the book cover, and a short book blurb, and then 300-400 people scrolling past. Look around your community for nonprofits you might like to support, or search for service clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, Lion's Club) in your area. They are always looking for ways to make money.

Here are a few more ideas for charity auctions:

- 1) ***Name a Character:*** I've also offered an auction item that allows the winner to have a character in my next book named after them. I'm not talking about 'Tuckerizing' here, which creates a character after someone you know as an in-joke.

I offer to name an existing character in my next book after the winner of the item. I am careful to clarify that it will be up to me to decide whether the character is a good guy, the bad guy, or the dead guy. I also stress that the character will in no way resemble them physically or emotionally. It will just be a character of my choice utilizing their full name. And the individual must be over the age of 18. (I require this now because the first time I offered to name a character, I was writing a gruesome short story that I would later publish, and the winner wanted her twelve-year-old daughter named in the book. Oops!)

When I offer to name a character, I also require the item to be part of the 'live' auction because that's where it would make the most money for the charity and also get the most attention. If it's an event I'm attending, I've also offered to stand up and make a pitch for the item. At the same time, I give a basket filled with some of my books to the winner. This item has gone for as much as \$500. There are downsides to this which I'm happy to share if you want to shoot me an email, but it has been a great way to gain name recognition.

- 2) ***Lunch with the Author:*** To increase the value of the auction baskets, I've sometimes tacked on lunch with the author. There is obviously a cost to this, but again, I can write it off. I stipulate that I will choose the location and the date must be mutually agreeable. I also stipulate the number of people allowed. That way I can control the cost. This has been fun, and the buyers usually bring the books from the book basket for me to autograph. It's also a great way to get a photo for your newsletter or social media.

Presentations: If you're in a career where you make presentations outside the office, consider using the presentation as an opportunity to let people know you're an author. Over the course of my career, I gave dozens of presentations at fundraising conferences, chambers of commerce, service clubs, and so forth. Once I became an author, I began to use those opportunities whenever I could for marketing purposes.

Before the talk began, I told the audience that I was also an author and passed around a sign-up sheet, asking for people's emails in return to be eligible for a drawing at the end of the talk for one of my books. Not every presentation would be a good fit for this, but audiences seemed to love it. It was not only good promotion for me, but a way to collect emails.

Free Books to Friends and Acquaintances: I remember early in my writing career I took a class from Elizabeth Engstrom who was nominated for a 1992 Bram Stoker Award for her book *Nightmare Flower*. Liz is a terrific writer and we became friends. Before I had read any of her books, however, I asked if she could give me one of hers to read. I blush now remembering the hubris of that. She frowned and said something like, "Or... you could buy the book." And she was right. I was completely taking her talent for granted and went out and bought the book I had in mind.

Today, however, as a self-published author, I do give books away, but I do it carefully and thoughtfully. I sometimes give them as Christmas or birthday gifts to friends and family. I occasionally offer them to people I meet who seem genuinely interested in me as

an author and who I think might talk about the book to others. A number of these people have gone on to buy the entire series.

And of course, I've given them away to people who offer to interview me for podcasts or articles. As an example, Wendy Kendall, who writes a popular cozy mystery series, invited me onto her podcast and offered to have her and her co-host each read one of my Detective Giorgio Salvatori mysteries before the podcast. I sent them the second and third books in the series in preparation for the interview. Wendy was not only generous with her praise during the interview but gave me an excellent published review. Afterwards, I was able to not only use her review in future promotions but insert the link to the podcast in my newsletter and in Facebook posts as additional promotion. Feel free to check out Wendy's website: <https://sites.google.com/site/wendywriteshere/>.

Used Book Stores: A friend paid me to write a mystery game for her event company, and I stopped at a used bookstore to buy a large, old dictionary I could hollow out so that I could hide a fake necklace inside. (Yes, I live that kind of life.) As I waited for the girl behind the counter, I perused the mystery section in the store and thought to myself, "What if I gave her a couple of my books?"

Although I haven't yet executed this plan, my goal is to offer the store three different books if they will feature one of the books at the front of the store for a few days. Seems like a painless way to get my book into a bookstore. Of course, I'd also leave behind my promotional book cards to be placed on the counter (keep reading for those).

Social Media Book Giveaways: You can also conduct book giveaways on sites like Goodreads, Library Thing, and Bookbuzzr. Even on your social media sites.

"Not all marketing people are writers, but all writers must learn to be marketers."

—Joanne Kraft, author & podcaster

BOOK SIGNINGS

Book signings are common marketing tools for authors. But since I don't have a resale license, I needed a way to legally sell books when I did one. Since I come from the nonprofit world, I leaned heavily in that direction. With their nonprofit status, the nonprofit can sell the books without charging tax. (Check in your own state to make sure this applies.) It allowed me to support the nonprofits I care about while also promoting my books.

Here's how it worked.

I bought my books at my cost through Amazon and then had the nonprofit reimburse me. While I didn't make any money on this, it didn't cost me anything either. The nonprofit set up the event, promoted it, and sold tickets at a nominal cost as a fundraiser. They usually offered snacks, desserts, and/or wine for refreshments to justify the cost of the ticket.

As part of the event, I would give a short talk on how I wrote the book, read a chapter, and then answer questions. Afterwards, I'd sit at a back table and sign books, while the nonprofit staff and volunteers took care of sales. They always established a price that allowed them to make a minimum of ten dollars or more on each book.

I really enjoyed holding these. They are not only great fun, they are good promotion, provide an opportunity to get up close and personal with readers, and benefit the community. I also made sure I had a sign-up list there for anyone who wanted to join my newsletter mailing list. At two of the events, I even donated books for a book basket the nonprofit used as a raffle item. (Again, check your state's requirements for raffle requirements.)

When I launched my third Giorgio Salvatori detective novel in 2019, I participated in a local podcast to talk about my book. On the podcast, I met a woman who had just opened a wine and cheese shop in town, and I asked her later if she'd be interested in doing a book signing in her shop. I thought that it would bring attention to her new shop, and we could partner with a nonprofit to manage the book sales. A win-win-win.

She was all over the idea until... COVID hit. Yep. That idea went down the tubes. I offer this, however, as an example of how

you can suggest ideas for marketing to someone you normally wouldn't think of. There's an entire world of opportunities out there if you just look. You could even approach local bookstores and/or libraries and offer to collaborate with them on a book signing event. If you have a college or university close by, talk with their bookstore manager and see if they'd partner with you. Once again, I set one up through University of Washington's bookstore, but because of COVID, it never happened.

BOOK TRAILERS

I'm sure you're familiar with a movie trailer—that 45-second video clip designed to motivate you to go see the movie. A book trailer is similar.

Book trailers, like movie trailers, are a snapshot of your book. The trailer should illustrate a *very brief* version of your story. In other words, name(s) of the main characters, the conflict, and the theme.

I haven't seen many book trailers for self-published authors and yet, they can be fun, effective, and inexpensive. I've done six of them. They are one more way to help potential readers to visualize my stories and get the word out. I not only post the book trailers on my website, but I've used them on social media posts and in Facebook ads.

What about nonfiction books?

A book trailer can even help nonfiction writers. In most nonfiction books, especially self-help books, you're offering advice or specific tactics on how someone can solve a problem or live a better life. The cover blurb and the book trailer should put your reader 'into' the book—visualizing how they can lose weight, become a more powerful speaker, overcome their anxiety, or whatever it is you're helping them do.

How much does it cost?

You can spend lots of money on making a book trailer, but you don't have to. Are you familiar with Fiverr? I was a freelance writer on Fiverr for years, and it's a great place to find musicians, artists, ghost writers, and people who do videos.

I had three of my book trailers done by someone on Fiverr. The most I paid was \$150. I browsed through the sellers who offered what I was looking for, viewed their examples, and then wrote my own script (because no one knows my books better than me) and sent them free images on Pixabay to help illustrate the story.

When working with someone on Fiverr, it's important to let the seller know exactly what you want. If you give them the script and images, their job will then be to animate everything, put music behind it, and add graphics or video.

For two of my trailers, I selected my own royalty free images as well as samples of the music I wanted and gave them to my Fiverr contractor. They didn't have to use either, because they have their own sources for the music, action video, and the rest. But I wanted to make sure they got the gist of what I wanted. So, it will be up to you whether you choose to let them do everything or supply them with some of the things they'll need.

Both gentlemen I worked with were generous with their time, (I was very fussy about what I wanted). I even went back to the seller who did my freelance company trailer when I had to update it. He was kind enough to do it for free.

Can you make a book trailer by yourself?

Yes.

Several years ago, I did the trailer for my book *The Key to Murder* myself with a program called EasyVSL. It wasn't terribly sophisticated at the time (although I'm sure they've evolved quite a bit by now), but it allowed me to create slides with the images and text I wanted plus add background music. The software also allowed me to time the slides to my script. If you use this program, you'll need some patience as you work out the details, but the results can be surprisingly good, and it's not terribly difficult to navigate. There are many more software programs available now that you could use; you'll just have to do your research.

Then, I did the trailer for my YA mystery *Case of the Missing Will* by using PowerPoint. I happen to live with a musician who did the music, but you can get music online for free. I encourage you to go to my list of books on my website to view this one because it just happens to be my favorite.

As I said, there are also other video software programs out there. Some of them now offer their own voice overs. Anyway, be sure to check out Fiverr as well. And look around the internet; there are plenty of online services and/or software you can buy that will give you the tools to do book trailers on your own.

LIBRARIES

I was surprised to find that several of my books are in the King County Library (second largest library system in the country). I believe that most libraries will add books to their collections when enough people ask for them. I think you can also pitch your book to the Library Manager.

I honestly don't know how my books ended up in the library, but I do know that copies of my books are often on wait lists because so many people are waiting to read them. Whoo-hoo!

All of my paperback books, however, have ISBNs (International Standard Book Number), which allows the library to catalogue them. The ISBN serves as an inventory tool (print book only) and helps to identify where libraries and retailers can purchase the book.

So, how could you orchestrate this for yourself? You might be able to motivate enough of your family and friends to stop in at your local library (not all at once, mind you) and ask for your book. If enough people do that, the library might order copies.

You can also sign up for Draft2Digital, a publishing, distribution, and print-on-demand source. Draft2Digital can send your books to places like Overdrive and Hoopla, who connect users to public libraries. All their services are free for people with a valid library card.

Secondly, use this link to search for libraries throughout the world - <https://librarytechnology.org/libraries/>. Then, research the name of the local library director or manager and pitch your book to be included in their collection. Be sure to include information about you as the author, the subject matter, a blurb about the book, and the ISBN number.

Don't overlook The Little Free Libraries popping up in communities all over the country, too. Yes, you'd be giving up free

books, but people who take books from these thoughtful locations are readers! And isn't that what you want? You can always put a book card in there from one of your other books or a note to the reader asking them to leave a review.

“Social media is about the people. Not about your business. Provide for the people and the people will provide for you.”

—Matt Goulart

SOCIAL MEDIA

I'm far from an expert on how to make the most of social media, but if you're not on social media as an author, you should be to some extent. Even authors who hope to land a traditional publisher need a social media platform. Publishers will ask about that because it's an indication of your social 'reach.'

I promote my books on different platforms, including Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Goodreads, LinkedIn, and Alignable, although I'm mostly active on Facebook.

How do I use social media? I will:

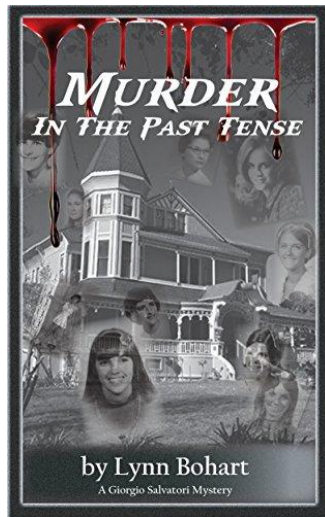
- Occasionally post a great review.
- Post announcements of my book launches.
- Post announcements when I do Amazon free downloads.
- Ask for feedback on a potential book cover or title.
- Post interviews from my newsletter.
- Use social media to recruit my street team.
- Promote group author promos I participate in.
- Post my book trailer.
- Post blog posts I've written.
- Announce when I'll be speaking at an online writing summit.
- And, yes, sometimes I pay to advertise.

Here are additional ideas:

- 1) I follow several writing groups on Facebook, including a couple of self-published author groups. Some will allow authors to promote their books on specific days, while others won't. Be sure to read their requirements. But do participate. It's a good way to meet other authors and get your name out there.
- 2) Because my books all include dogs as main characters, I joined a couple of dog groups on Facebook—namely a Dachshund group (because of the two miniature Dachshunds in my *Old Maids of Mercer Island* books) and Basset Hound groups (Detective Giorgio Salvatori mysteries). Although I mostly participate strictly for dog reasons, occasionally I am able to post something about one of my books. An example would be if someone posts a picture of their Dachshund, and the dog looks like one of the Doxies in my *Old Maids of Mercer Island* books, I'll make a comment that their dog looks just like Minnie or Mickey with a link to the book.
- 3) My Detective Giorgio Salvatori series is set in my hometown of Sierra Madre, California. As a result, I belong to a Sierra Madre group on Facebook. Whenever I launch a new book in that series, I let them know about it. Also, last year someone in that group posted a picture of the Pinney House, which is a Victorian landmark in Sierra Madre. The Pinney House figures prominently in my book *Murder in the Past Tense*. I even used a picture of it on the book cover. So, you can be sure that I made mention of that in a Facebook post and put a link to the book.

Another time, someone posted an old photo of the Mater Dolorosa Passionate Retreat center in Sierra Madre. This just happens to be the setting for my book *Mass Murder*. The house where I grew up also happens to be just down the hill from the monastery. Of course, I posted a picture of the monastery from when I was a kid and made sure I mentioned that my book was set on the monastery grounds.

Check out the book cover below:



- 4) I also belong to a Facebook group made up of people I graduated from Pasadena High School with. It just so happens that *Murder in the Past Tense* is about a young girl from Pasadena High killed on prom night in 1967. That was also the year I graduated. (I know. I'm old.) I told my friends on Facebook that I was using our alma mater as a critical element in the story. And because my story was about a serial killer who tortured and killed young women, I asked if any of my female friends would be willing to have their graduation photos on the cover of my book to represent the faces of the victims in the story. Bingo! Not only did they all agree, but I added my photo to the cover as well. And you can bet they all bought the book.
- 5) TikTok & BookTok: I don't personally use either one of these platforms, but they ARE being used successfully by many authors. The whole idea is to create a short, hook type of video about your book. They aren't necessarily book trailers, though. Instead, the video might be of you opening the box of books that just arrived from Amazon and then holding up the book for the viewers to see. Believe it or not, there are people now who offer to do this for you (at a cost). If you are really shy, this might be something to consider.

To position your video specifically for book lovers, you'll need to use the hashtag #booktok (or so I'm told). You can also interact with other book lovers through things called 'stitching' and 'duetting.' Sorry I can't be more help. You'll have to do your own research. But... there is an entire book loving community on TikTok, so it may be worth your time to investigate, and I'm going to give you a resource for that in the next section.

6) YouTube: YouTube is another video platform where you can post things that will help build your credibility as an author and also sell books. You can find author podcasts posted on YouTube. I also know an author who is planning on posting a monthly "Writing tips" on YouTube.

Once again, there is a subculture of authors on YouTube called 'Authortube,' so be sure to do your research on the best way to get involved and use the platform effectively as an author. A good resource for both TikTok and YouTube is Dave Chesson from <https://kindlepreneur.com/youtube-sell-books/>. Dave is the founder of Kindlepreneur and has articles that walk you through how to use both platforms.

My point is to be creative when you're looking for how to use social media to promote your books. The goal with any of the social media sites is to participate in more ways than just promoting yourself. No one likes having their group co-opted for pure promotion. But once you're an active member, you can slip in something about your book(s) when it fits into the ongoing conversation.

Becoming active on social media takes time, so I'd be picky so that you can make it work in your favor. I stick to just a few. Once again, it comes down to the time you have available to devote to this type of activity.

"One of the best marketing tips I can give you is simply building relationships—well that and publishing more books."

—Heather Hart

NETWORKING

Networking is critical to any profession. It's all about building relationships, and if you don't network, you are missing one of the greatest opportunities you have for selling yourself, your products, your services, or your books on a shoestring.

My roommate is an aspiring (and talented) music producer. A direct quote from him is, "Putting your work out and not networking is equivalent to shouting your genius idea to an empty room." (*Crystalskin* on Spotify).

You can read a hundred articles, books, and blog posts on the importance of networking and the right way to do it. You can use online sources like LinkedIn or Alignable. You can take classes, attend conferences, sit in on webinars, join meetup groups, and so much more. I'll focus on unconventional ways here that I've successfully used networking, giving you specific examples of how they have helped me.

"You can't buy engagement. You have to build engagement."

**—Tara-Nicholle Nelson,
Founder, ReThink Media**

Volunteering: In general, volunteering is a wonderful way to network and meet a variety of interesting people. For instance, in 2018, I met the man who stages a local Comic-con and asked him if he needed volunteers. I hadn't really thought through what I wanted to do, but it sounded like fun. I handed him my card (yes, at that time I had business cards) and offered to write press releases for him. His answer surprised me. Not only did he say yes, but he also invited me to an organizing committee that night! I worked with the Comic-Con people for two years writing everything from letters to email blasts to promotional copy.

The organizer also approached me to write a comic book based on a concept he'd created. I had never written a comic book before nor was I a comic book fan. After the queasiness in my stomach dissipated, I said yes and soldiered on. He loved it and

began looking for an illustrator. Once again, COVID got in the way, and the comic book never materialized. I still had the chance to write one, however.

Through this same event, I met the founder of the Seattle Film Summit. He also recruited me to their PR team. I'm telling you this because volunteering with these two groups has paid off in several ways. Through the film summit, I have been fortunate to meet and work alongside wonderful people, including screenwriters, musicians, film producers, and actors. All of whom know now I'm an author.

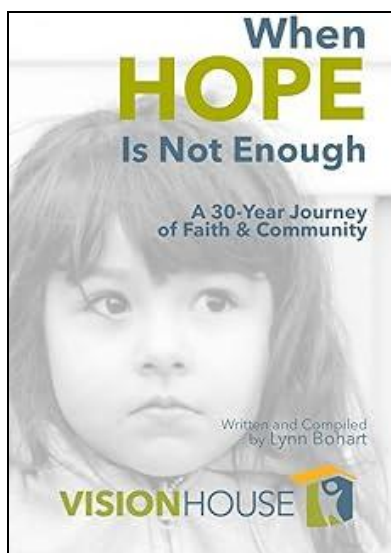
Not only was I able to give two presentations at the film summit, but in 2020, the summit had to go virtual. During a virtual *networking* session, I met a woman who owns her own film production company. I messaged her through the chat room. We connected later, and she expressed interest in my books. Hallelujah! I sent her one of my cozy mysteries. (Remember, I give them away when I feel it might be worth it.) She loved the book and asked if I wanted to brainstorm about how to make it into a film. *Are you kidding?* Of course I did.

Since then, she has read a second book in the series and had me put together a pitch deck. She and her PR person have pitched the series to several companies like Lifetime and Hallmark. Although nothing has come of this yet, the moral of the story is that I never would have met her if I hadn't volunteered with the film summit and chatted her up during the virtual networking session. Remember when I said you have to do *something* to market your books? Even if nothing comes of this, I've gained one more fan.

As I said, the film summit also afforded me an opportunity to be a presenter two years in a row. Although I'm not a screenwriter, building characters and crafting mystery plots is the same for both mediums. And that's what I taught. My name and bio not only showed up on the film summit website and on the program, but I spoke to about fifty interested attendees each time. And you can bet, I passed around an email sign up list and gave away a couple of books at the in-person session. Not only that, but during both presentations, I used excerpts from my books to illustrate examples of what I was teaching.

I also met a woman through the summit who owns her own event company. We became friends, and she hired me to craft a mystery game for one of her corporate clients. The pandemic stalled the event, but either way, I was paid \$500 to write the game.

Lastly, a nonprofit I've worked with paid me \$1,5000 to write a book memorializing the organization's founders. Although I don't get any of the royalties, this book sits on Amazon with my name on it.



Look, I know not all of you have time to volunteer. But don't ever underestimate what a single volunteer action will bring you. Volunteering can provide networking opportunities, give you a platform, offer ways to advertise your books, and meet exceptional people. Think about charities, local public events, or local writing conferences. Keep your eyes/minds/ears open for any volunteering opportunities. You'll be surprised who you'll meet along the way as you help an organization be all that it can be.

Writers Groups: I have belonged to a writing critique group for over twelve years. I couldn't survive without them. However, I have also belonged to other writing communities, including Pitch to Published, Scribophile, Goodreads, Pacific Northwest Writers

Association, and Writing Mastery Academy. These groups offer classes, webinars, contests, online critiques of query letters and first five pages, and networking groups. If you don't belong to one or more groups like this, I'd encourage you to do so.

Here's an example of how this can pay off.

It was during an online membership meeting for the Pacific Northwest Writers Association (PNWA) that I met Wendy Kendall, the cozy mystery writer I mentioned who has a podcast. She gave the program that night. I messaged her through the virtual chat room during the meeting and gave her my email, asking if she'd be interested in interviewing me on her podcast. (That's where a little bit of hutzpah comes in.) And she did.

I have also met other authors through Pitch to Published (an online group). It's because of this group that I decided to write this book. One gentleman in the group offered to beta read one of my books and then emailed me that he thought his wife would enjoy my cozy mystery series. She bought the first book in the series. Less than a week later, he emailed me again to tell me that she'd finished the first book, left a review, and had bought the second book.

That's the epitome of how networking can make a difference in your life. The lesson here is that if you don't put yourself out there, you may just remain in the shadows. And you can't sell books from the shadows.

Meetups: I've been looking for a local writing meetup group to join. You can access meetups in your area by going to www.meetup.com. You can find everything from dog walking groups to discussion groups to political groups. And of course, writing groups.

I've seen some that are strictly for quiet time writing, in other words you meet on Zoom, do a few introductions, and then do writing sprints. Others are for copywriting, some are book clubs, and still others are for authors of certain genres. If you don't see one you like, you could start one of your own.

BOOK CLUBS

I've been fortunate to have five different local book clubs read one of my books and then invite me to their next meeting to discuss it (I did one virtually). The group buys the books (or gets them from the library), so I'm not out any money. It's great promotion if they enjoy the book because they'll tell others. And, of course, it's fun to have people who like to read pepper you with questions about how you generate ideas, plot clues, hide the killer, and so forth. Be prepared, though, because they'll be honest in their reviews. Book club members are individuals and don't all like the same kind of books.

The best way to get your book read by a book club is to know a member. If you don't know anyone in a book club, you could certainly query clubs in your area. But first, it would be good to find out what kind of books they read, just to make sure your book is a good fit.

“Marketing is first and foremost about connecting.”
—Wendy Paine Miller, author

STREET TEAMS

Street teams have become a common means of marketing self-published books. The concept is to recruit as many as 10-15 people who agree to help you get the word out about your book when you launch it. (I believe Mark Dawson, a bestselling self-published author, uses over 100 people on his street team.)

When I launched the first book in the Old Maids of Mercer Island books back in 2013 (OMG, that was a long time ago!) I recruited my first street team.

I recruited ten of my friends from various parts of the country who I'm in contact with through social media and asked them if they'd be willing to pass out book cards to friends and neighbors who liked to read. The first time I did this, I had key chains made up displaying the cover of the book and sent each person ten cards and

ten key chains. People happily helped me out and one of those friends just recently mentioned they still had the key chain.

I don't use the key chains anymore, but I still send book cards for them to disperse. Recently, I was pleased to get a note from a woman on the team who lives on the other side of the country. She belongs to an AAUW (American Association of University Women) book club and said she showed one of the cards around at the club meeting, and everyone wanted to get the book.

I truly believe my street teams help get the word out. Once, when I did a pre-order for one of my books, the street team helped to sell forty-eight books through pre-order. That wouldn't be a big sales number for someone like John Grisham or Gillian Flynn, but it was far better than most of my other launches.

If I haven't said it before, let me say it now: most of the marketing tips I'm giving you will be hard if not impossible to quantify. In other words, they'll be tough to measure the outcomes. But that doesn't mean they don't work. Street teams fall into that category.

TEACH

This is easy for me. I love to talk. But I know teaching won't be for everyone. Truth be told, however, I began teaching fiction writing partly to promote myself as an author and partly to stay current with what I needed to know to be a good writer. Over ten plus years, I taught 'Novel Writing,' 'Crafting the Story,' 'How to Write a Mystery,' and 'How to Self-publish.'

While teaching doesn't allow me to promote to the masses, you can bet I use my books to illustrate numerous topics during the class. Additionally, the college mailed a class catalogue out to all homeowners in the area, meaning my name and class would be visible to thousands of people.

Where can you go to teach?

Your local community college. Many of them have Continuing Education Programs and rely on local experts to teach things like jewelry making, astronomy for the beginner, financial planning, and

writing. I've also taught through the local Community Parks and Recreation Department.

You'll have to put a proposal together outlining the topic and curriculum and a suggestion as to how many times the class would meet. While not everyone can teach, you might be surprised at what you could offer. Once again, try it; you might like it.

MAKE PRESENTATIONS



Writing Summits: I know many of you will shy away from this, but if you're adept at all on a few writing techniques or topics, pay attention. There are a million online writing summits now. Over the past few years, I have been a speaker for several of them, giving workshops on everything from how to beat imposter syndrome to how to write a mystery and how to market your books even if you hate marketing. (Those presentations have been based on this book.)

If you're interested, Google writing summits (or attend some) and reach out to the author who organizes it. Take note of the kind of topics the summit offers and then pitch something close to that for the next year.

Service Clubs: Here's the good news. Every Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions club meet weekly, and they are always looking for speakers. If you don't know club members in your area, you can usually find the name and email of the Program Chair on their website.

Presentations are typically 20-25 minutes long and having a PowerPoint adds to the enjoyment. While they won't let you sell your books there, you can have copies of your book(s) to show off and use photos of your book in the PowerPoint slides. I also make sure to have copies of my rack cards to put out at all the tables.



What can you talk about? Here are a few ideas:

- Talk about your journey as a writer and what it takes to finish a book.
- If you wrote a historical novel, talk about how you did your research.
- If you wrote a memoir, give them a glimpse of what your life was like while leaving enough out that they'll want to buy the book.
- If you write fantasy, tell them how you created a whole new world.
- If you write horror, talk about things that go bump in the night or how to scare the bejesus out of someone.
- If you're a self-help writer, give three of the ten to twelve points in your book as a teaser.

You can probably find something in your book that would lend itself to an interesting topic. Especially if you are a nonfiction writer.

One of my go-to topics is how to do research. Let's face it, even though I'm a mystery writer, I've never actually killed someone. It's important for me to research everything from forensics to how a

body decays to how fast poison can kill someone. People find that fascinating.

I've also talked about how secondary characters can help develop main characters and how to plot clues or hide the killer. In fact, I was asked recently to talk to a group of drama kids about how to write a mystery. That was great fun.

The great news here is that service clubs are everywhere! If you live in an urban area, so much the better. Look beyond your own city. I live in the Seattle area, and I'll guarantee that I could hit at least twenty Rotary clubs within a 20–45-minute drive. It would probably be the same for Lions and Kiwanis clubs. Can you see how many opportunities you might have to get your name and your books out there?

Listen. Making presentations is a no-brainer when it comes to marketing. It not only promotes your book(s) but you as the author. Unfortunately, traditional marketing gurus will tell you to work towards a TV interview, but they are hard to get. Speaking at your local Rotary club is easy pickings since service clubs are looking for good speakers on a weekly basis. In fact, that's how I met Robert Dugoni, bestselling author of books like *My Sister's Grave*. He was speaking to a local Rotary Club.

Other locations: Once again, look around you. Are there professional organization affiliates in your area, like AAUW? Talk to your local library. They often will host writers, especially if you write kids books. Talk to your parks and recreation department or community college. I was asked to be part of a speakers' series at Renton Technical College many years ago. The point is, if this is something you think you'd be good at, hit the road.

PODCASTS

I recognize that podcasts are becoming more common, so you're probably pretty familiar with them, but it might be something you're unsure of. Fortunately, there are plenty of writing related podcasts out there for you to connect with. I've had the privilege to be the guest on many of them, even for the nonfiction book I wrote to help nonprofits raise more money through better messaging (see below).

Podcasts are really great fun. The hosts have always been incredibly friendly and generous, and it's a wonderful way to get yourself known.



If you don't know where to begin, you can hire a company to help you hone your pitch and even identify the right kind of podcast for what you'd like to talk about. But you can also check the internet for writing podcasts by topic or genre.

Will they offer to schedule you as a guest? I have no idea. But you won't know until you try. Look for podcasts that cater to readers or podcasts by topic. For instance, if your book is a historical romance, see if you can find a history podcast. If you've written a memoir about your life surviving abuse, look for mental health podcasts. If your book is about vegan cooking, look for a nutrition podcast.

If this is something you really want to do, you'll need to craft a pitch to the producers of the show. Yes, you'll have to pitch the book. But also pitch a topic about or from the book. What makes you or your book interesting or different? I often pitch the fact that since I spent 35+ years in the nonprofit world, I weave in social justice issues in many of my murder mysteries. That's not a topic many authors talk about.

Unless you want to make this a priority, however, I'd just make a commitment (as I have) to keep your ears open for opportunities and to be ready when they arrive. As an example, I was chatting with one of my freelance writing clients and mentioned the podcast I was on with Wendy Kendall. My client is an expert on LinkedIn and suddenly said, "Oh, I have an author friend who does a podcast on writing. She lives in Norway." And, boom, Kitty Bucholz invited me onto her Podcast *Writers in the Gig Economy*.

If you haven't noticed it yet, one of the biggest tips I'll give you is, 'Don't be afraid to talk about the fact that you're an author.' It's networking at its finest.

LOCAL EVENTS

Most communities have a variety of local events you might be able to participate in as an author. Think of 4th of July, Christmas holidays, cultural events, farmer's markets, and annual festivals. I live in the Northwest, and Tacoma has a huge holiday bazaar at the Tacoma Dome each year. Thousands of people attend, and I've not only seen a couple of individual authors there, but I have also seen book companies. If you have a book or books that you think someone might buy as a gift, an event like this might be perfect for you.

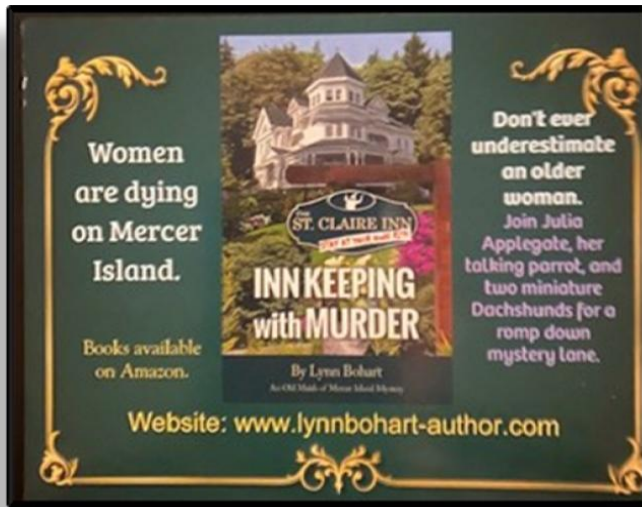
At most of these types of events, you will most likely have to rent a table if want to sell books. The cost may be worth, however, if hundreds (or thousands) of people pass by your table over the course of a day or two.

RACK CARDS

Printing up rack cards or bookmarks for your books is customary practice, but how I have used mine isn't.

I have book cards for each of my novels and always keep a few in my purse. That way, when I'm out and about at the nail salon, hairdresser, or doctor's office I'm poised and ready to whip out a card in case reading or being an author comes up in conversation. And believe it or not, it often does. Okay, sometimes I've been

known to find a way to bring it into the conversation; but I don't bang people over the head with it.



People are always pleased to get them, and I'm quite sure I've sold a bunch of books this way. I don't do bookmarks because, a) they don't allow as much space to display your book cover or text, and b) most people don't use bookmarks anymore.

Besides carrying book cards in my purse, I've also left them at places I frequent. Case in point: I left about five cards with my hairdresser who keeps them on a small shelf in front of her station. When I was there recently, she pointed to the cards and told me two of her clients had bought my book and one came back to say, "She's a damn good writer!" My heart soared.

The most unconventional marketing tactic I've used, however, was what I did with my book cards when I was just starting out. In fact, my daughter would tell you how I embarrassed her by going into the book sections at Target, Walmart, or Fred Meyer and wandering over to the mystery section and then slip a book card into similar books on the shelf. I also did this at libraries.

You can imagine a thirteen-year-old rolling her eyes and escaping to another part of the store, while her mother stealthily

stuffed cards into books by Janet Evanovich or Sue Grafton, all the while looking over her shoulder to make sure the salesclerk didn't see her. Yep, I did that. My logic was that whoever bought one of those books obviously already liked mysteries and just might check mine out when they found the card inside.

I didn't stop there, though. I mean, why would I?

I have often left cards on tables at restaurants, figuring that someone would pick them up, even the wait staff. Yes, there is a cost to that. The cost of the book card. But I was a complete nobody at the time. It was a cheap way to get my name out there. Also, because mysteries are so popular, I figured I had a good chance that at least a few people might take the card home.

Another way I have distributed my cards has been at writing conferences. I've never felt I could afford to pay for a spot to display my books for sale, but that doesn't mean it was below me to stealthily leave a small stack of cards on the table amongst other people's books. I have also been known to leave them on chairs after I got up to leave an educational session.

I mean, you do what you gotta do. Right?

PROMOTIONAL LOCATIONS

If you have rack cards, bookmarks, or business cards, look for locations to place them. Once again, people are good about this, especially if you are a regular customer. As an example, early in my writing career, my then hairdresser agreed to place a stack of post cards at her salon station. I have also put cards out at my local chamber of commerce since they saw me as a small, local business. And I often put a small stack out at my nail salon.

Again, you might be able to think of other locations such as your barber, dry cleaners, libraries, bookstores, university/college bookstores, or creative businesses. The point is that you need to ask. All they can say is no.

FIVERR (or other freelance ‘gig’ sites)

I mentioned Fiverr before, but it’s an online marketplace for freelance services. I don’t use Fiverr much anymore, but at one time I was Level Two seller there as a freelance copywriter.

How do I use Fiverr for marketing?

In my bio in Fiverr, I reference the fact that I’m a mystery writer. And when I worked with clients who hired me off of Fiverr, I often found a way to mention my books. I’ve recruited new fans that way. In fact, clients often mention that they’ve come to me because of my bio and tell me later that they bought one of my books. Remember the LinkedIn gal I mentioned in the last section? She was my first Fiverr client and has since read every one of my books.

Can you become a seller on Fiverr? Possibly.

Would you be willing to ghost write a book for someone? Are you good at writing promotional copy? Could you sell yourself as an editor or proofreader? Could you write a children’s story for someone? Or a short story?

There are sellers on Fiverr offering all those things and more. Heck, there’s even a guy on Fiverr who says he’ll write *a really great paragraph for any purpose*. I mean, who knew that was a thing?

There are other platforms like this. Upwork and Freelancer are just two. They all function a bit differently. And, yes, you’d be writing *away* from your book(s). But you’d be getting paid to write, and all writing is good practice, as well as just one more way to get your name out there as an author.

CONVENTIONAL MARKETING

With a Few Twists Thrown In

“The power of branding is usually one of the most misunderstood parts of a business, or worse, forgotten entirely.”
-Lucas Langen

YOUR BRAND

The purpose of branding is to create a presence or persona in the market that sets you apart from others and helps you to sell books and attract and retain loyal readers. Marketers often break a brand into the following components: name, visual identity, tone of voice, and brand values.

Branding for an author will look different than for a company that sells dishwashers. Jennifer Thompson says, *“When done successfully, author branding will establish your authority, improve your online visibility, and solidify your reputation as a known quantity.”* She goes on to say that it’s a promise authors make to readers so that they know what to expect every time they buy a book.

For an author, a brand is the impression readers have of you, the person. It’s what distinguishes you from other authors, especially in the same author space. What comes to mind when you think of Stephen King or J.K. Rowling?

Branding is not just your personality but how you present yourself to the world. Your writing style. The visual image your books create. Your author photo. Your social media presence. Even your personal values and what you stand for. (Remember how I often use social justice issues in my books?)

Following are essential components in branding broken down for authors.

Your Image: Most companies have a logo to help establish their brand. It's a visual representation of who they are. Authors don't necessarily need a logo, but how you design your book covers, your website, write your bios, print your book cards, and talk about your books contribute to your brand.

The goal is to be thoughtful in how you approach all of that. Create an image of yourself and then be consistent in presenting that image. Consistent colors, fonts, language, and images.

If what you present is sloppy, loud, and abrasive, or soft and infantile, then that's the image people will have of you. Take a few minutes and think about how you want your readers to see you in advance. Then, be methodical about building your brand.

You can see below what the main page of my author website looks like. Because I'm a mystery writer, my website reflects that.



Book Cover: Most professionals agree that one of your best marketing tools is your book cover. People who design magazine covers have known this for decades. They purposely design a cover that draws you in to not only pick up the magazine but open and read it.

Pay attention to your book cover. Make sure it fits within your genre and/or market niche and that it stands out. One way to do this is to study book covers for popular books in the same genre or niche.

How do you create a great book cover?

If you don't have a graphic artist in your circle of friends, you can hire one. Fiverr is a good place to start. I've listed resources for this at the end. You can also post a job on a site like Upwork to have designers bid on your project.

Website: Many self-published authors don't realize they can benefit from having a website. Having a website gives you the opportunity to present yourself to the world as an author. You can not only list your books with links to where readers can buy them, but post a photo, talk about yourself through your author bio, add blog posts about things you're interested in, list public appearances, and give your readers a chance to interact with you. A website also gives you credibility. And there are enough do-it-yourself platforms out there (I use Wix.com) that building a website also won't cost you a month's mortgage payment or a massive design fee.

Building a website is not the first thing you need to do, however. I'd wait until you have at least one book up with four or five reviews. Then decide how you will use your website to make it worthwhile. I not only list all my books on my website but some of my book trailers, along with free and low-cost books I've written on writing fiction. I also have a page for my blog posts and interviews from my newsletter. You can see my website at www.lynnboharta-author.com.

BOOK BLURBS

Everyone knows you need an engaging book blurb, which lets people know what the book is about. For fiction writers, it's important to identify the main character(s) and what conflict they face. For self-help nonfiction writers, you'll need to clarify not just what the book is about but how the reader will benefit. For a memoir, be sure to let readers know why telling your life's story is important or interesting.

How you write the blurb has everything to do with marketing. For many readers, it's what motivates them to buy the book. If they find your book blurb boring, they'll assume your book is boring.

Also, be short and concise. No one wants to read the entire synopsis of your book. For help, there are resources out there to draft a compelling book blurb, so get out the Google machine and have at it.

Note: Consider what you place immediately after the book blurb. You can use the space immediately following the blurb for testimonials and/or short reviews. I headline this section by saying ‘What Others Are Saying About (Name of book).’ Then, I list three outstanding reviews. It’s a simple way to enhance the blurb.

BOOK MOCKUPS

Book mockups can help you in all sorts of ways. A book mockup is an image of your book created in a realistic design to use for advertising and/or social media posts, even on your book cards. You could do it yourself if you’re good at things like Canva or Photo Shop. But there are several free and paid online sources that will help you create professional 3D renditions of your book by just uploading the book cover. You can find these resources at the end of this book.



ASK FOR REVIEWS

I know you're aware of having to get reviews, but it's that you don't just assume people will leave them if they like your book. Most people don't. You need to ask for them. I'm not talking about paid reviews. I have never personally paid for a review. But getting reviews is paramount to selling more books, and there are active and passive ways to do this.

As a self-published author, you cannot be shy. Well, you can be shy, but not a wall flower. You're going to have to put yourself out there a bit. Writing is generally a solitary activity. But marketing, at least for self-published authors, can't be. Here are some tips:

- 1) Put a paragraph in the back of your book asking people to please go back to wherever they bought the book and leave a review. Here's the basic text I use. Feel free to plagiarize.

Thank you so much for reading Mass Murder. If you enjoyed this book, I encourage you to go back to Amazon.com and leave an honest review. We indie authors thrive on reviews and word-of-mouth advertising. This will help position the book so that more people might also enjoy it. Thank you!

- 2) Remind people on social media when you launch your book how important it is to leave a review.
- 3) Do a book giveaway, asking those who get the book for free to be so kind as to leave a review.
- 4) If someone tells you in person how much they enjoyed your book, respond with a 'thank you' and then ask them to go back and leave a review.
- 5) Be sure to remind your family and friends who have read your book to leave reviews.

- 6) If you have a newsletter, include a standing box section that asks for reviews. (It took me forever to finally do this.)

I'm sure you could generate other ideas on how to receive unpaid reviews. Brainstorm with family or friends.

USE YOUR NEXT BOOK

If you are working on a second book, another great marketing technique is to add the first chapter of your next book after the end of your first book. This is a painless way to entice people to buy the next book. I've seen some authors put short stories in the back of the book. If you are a self-help author who also does webinars or provides other services, you can even list those in the back of the book.

PROVIDE A LIST OF YOUR BOOKS

If you have published more than one book, be sure to list them either in the front copy of your books or at the back. In the Kindle version, you can add an active link to your other books. In this way, you make it easy for readers to click and buy.

FREE DOWNLOADS

I only publish on Amazon, and so I'm mostly familiar with their promotional tools. Other publishing sites may also offer these kinds of things, but you'll have to research that on your own. If you publish on Amazon, however, you can offer the eBook version of your book for free or for a reduced price through KDP Select. Here's how it works.

If you enroll your book in KDP Select and leave it enrolled there exclusively for 90-days, you can take advantage of either the free download or Kindle Countdown Deal for 5-days out of every 90-day period. This means you cannot have your book on other sites during that period. But this is a good way to get new eyes on your book.

The first time I offered a book for free was back in 2013. I put up my first Detective Giorgio Salvatori book and was amazed by the results. Eighteen hundred people took advantage of the free download! And many of those were in the UK.

Things have changed since then. The competition for free downloads is fierce. But when you give free downloads or even reduced-price downloads, no matter how many people take advantage of the opportunity, remember that it 1) increases your chances for more reviews, 2) increases cross-promotion through Amazon, 3) increases the opportunity for expanded word-of-mouth, and 4) gives you a reason to promote your book through social media again. Hmmm, I'd call that a win-win-win-win.

Once again, there are resources out there that will help you promote the free download. If you don't have a social media presence, do a Google search, and see what you can find to help get the word out. For instance, you can post an ad on Bookbub about the free or discounted opportunity for a targeted list of readers.

Also, take a look at BookFunnel. There is an annual cost to belong, but it allows you to upload your books and participate in author swaps and group promotions.

NOMINATE YOUR BOOK

If you publish on Amazon, you can also nominate your book for their Kindle Deals and/or Prime Reading to get your book in front of their most engaged readers. Although I have nominated several of my books, they have yet to be picked up by Amazon. Not sure how they make their selections, but hey, I don't lose anything by nominating my books. Once you've published your book on Amazon, go back to KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing), and click on Marketing and then click on Nominate Your eBook for a Promotion. There you will find information on how to do it.

LEAD MAGNETS

Developing lead magnets is all the rage in conventional marketing these days. Briefly, a lead magnet is something you give

out for free in return for emails, to draw them to your website, *or* to give you the opportunity to pitch them a bigger and more expensive product (or all three). Remember? This is called indirect marketing.

Offering the first chapter of your next book at the end of your first book is a type of lead magnet. Offering the chance to win a free book at the end of a presentation in exchange for people's emails is a type of lead magnet. And for those who win the free books, they often will buy the next book.

I have offered things like detailed character profiles of the protagonists in each of my series as lead magnets. And because my book "The Key to Murder" deals with Jack the Ripper and suggests who he really was, I offer diary entries from the killer(s) in the back of that book as a thank you for reading the book.

Lead magnets are perfectly suited for nonfiction writers as well. Especially self-help or how-to books. If you can distill your content down to offer three important points from your book and put that into a PDF, you can offer that as a stepping-stone to reading the entire book. You could also offer an infographic, a survey, or a template on how to do something. The point is to pique their interest, so they buy the full book.

I've seen many nonfiction writers offer 30-to-60-minute free webinars on their expertise. Marketing gurus do this, as well. And then, at the end of the online seminar they hit you up for the whole enchilada, which usually costs anywhere from \$497 - \$1,497. It must work because a ton of people do it.

Get quiet with yourself for a minute and brainstorm what you could use as a lead magnet for your book(s). And then, figure out the best way to deploy it.

NEWSLETTER

Newsletters are great ways to communicate on a regular basis with your readers and to encourage more book sales. There are two problems with a newsletter, however. One is getting enough emails to make it worthwhile. The second is getting the time to write the newsletter on a regular basis. I have struggled with both.

“Aim for the moon; you may hit a star.”

—W. Clement Stone

But let’s face it. Out of this entire bag of tricks and tips I’m giving you, you will need to choose what works best for you. At least in the beginning. After all, I’m not Wonder Woman. Not only do I not have her cup size or tiny waist (who does?), but I also have other things I like to do in life besides write. Like play with my two miniature Dachshunds.

So, put a newsletter somewhere on your list, but be realistic about how often you’ll do it.



You’ll also have to decide what you want in your newsletter. Obviously, many authors mainly promote their work or the work of others. Many tell stories that then lead to tips about writing. Others will give you something like “The Five Best Ways to Grab a Reader’s Attention.”

As a mystery writer and true crime fan, I have chosen to use my newsletter to interview experts in the field of crime scene investigation, true crime podcasters, and bestselling mystery authors. I also occasionally write a blog post. Then, I fill in with podcasts or presentations I’m doing or upcoming book information.

BLOG POSTS

Speaking of blog posts.

As I said, I occasionally include a blog post in my newsletter. Sometimes it's on writing and sometimes it's on crime. For instance, I've written on cadaver dogs, women serial killers, using the dramatic pause, creating villains we love to hate, and more.

Once the newsletter goes out, I upload the blog post (or interview) to my website. I will often also post them on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Alignable.

If you have the time, you can also offer to write blog posts for other bloggers, especially writing blogs. Do your research, and you might find one right for you.

What do blog posts do for you?

It's one more way to connect with readers. The writing process is interesting to readers and writing blog posts not only gives them a window into how you think but offers them interesting content. If you're good at it, it can also lend to your credibility as a writer, people may follow your blog, and you could even make money at it. At the very least, if the reader likes your blog post, they may just go buy your book.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

It's a good idea to belong to a couple of professional writing organizations. There are genre-related ones (Horror Writers of America, Mystery Writers of America) and of course many local groups. I belong to the Pacific Northwest Writers Association, the Professional Writers Alliance, and the Northwest Independent Writers Association.

Depending on where you live, check out what groups might be close enough for you to participate in. Most of these groups offer member meetings, classes, conferences, networking opportunities, and promotional opportunities. And you can write off the membership fee.

Remember it was through PNWA that I met Wendy Kendall who invited me onto her podcast. PNWA also publishes a monthly newsletter, and on the first of the month, they promote ‘member books’ in the newsletter. NIWA does that as well. They also offer authors the opportunity to be interviewed. I’ve done both.

“You get in life what you have the courage to ask for.”
— Oprah Winfrey

CALL TO ACTION

In marketing as in fundraising, having a call to action (CTA) is imperative. What that means is you can’t just constantly tell people *about* your book; somewhere you need to invite them to *buy* it. Don’t just blurt it out the moment you meet someone. In fact, when I hand out my book cards, I don’t ask them to buy the book. But I might say something like, “I can promise you’ll get a laugh with this one,” or “If you like good mysteries, I think you’ll like this book.”

When you need to be more specific, like on your website or in your newsletter, you can do it in any number of ways, including “Get your copy today through Amazon,” or “Pick up your copy today,” or “Click here and buy it now.”

YOUR ATTITUDE COUNTS

*“Sometimes we are limited more by attitude
than by opportunities.”*

—Origin Unknown

Believe In Yourself – Overcome the Imposter Syndrome

If you genuinely believe you can’t do any of this marketing stuff—then you *won’t* do it. If you want to sell books, however, you will have to embrace stepping out of your comfort zone. When you do, you might be surprised at what comes your way. Here are examples of how I stepped out of mine and was rewarded:

Here’s a story that has stayed with me for almost two decades. My first novel was *Grave Doubts*, which takes place in the timber country of Oregon, and I wanted someone to die a horrible death in a sawmill. (Yes, that’s how murder mystery writers think.)

Through my organization, I met the owners of a couple of big sawmills in the area. I called them and told them I was writing a mystery novel and wanted to kill someone in a sawmill. Was I nervous when I called? Absolutely. But I did it anyway. I told them I only wanted a tour to scope out how the mill worked and to identify a location where the murder could happen.

Both owners set up appointments with their general managers. I was nervous when I arrived (imposter syndrome?), thinking of how I was taking up the time of these important people when I had never published anything in my life.

But guess what? Both men were incredibly generous, walking me through the entire plant operation. Not only that, but they introduced me to everyone we met by saying, “Lynn is an author writing a murder mystery set in a sawmill.” Damn! I have never forgotten how validating it was to have someone refer to me as an author.

The moral of the story is that you shouldn’t sell yourself short. Ninety-nine percent of the time, people will accept and respect who you tell them you are. If you don’t believe in yourself, no one else

will either. So, get out of your own way and become the author you were meant to be.

The bottom line is that when opportunities present themselves, do a quick assessment and then, if possible, say yes. I know it can be scary, even time consuming, but every chance you get to mingle with new people or write something you've never written before is just one more chance to promote yourself as an author, build a reputation, and sell more books.

***“True generosity is an offering; given freely and out of pure love.
No strings attached. No expectations.”***

—Suze Orman

BE GENEROUS

Be sure to give back more than you receive. I believe one of your best marketing tools is your willingness to collaborate and/or to help others. People remember kindness. People remember generosity. Especially when there are no strings attached.

We are a community of writers and authors. Our goals are the same—to entertain and engage fiction readers *or* to educate and inform nonfiction readers. To do those things successfully, we need a variety of tools in our toolbox, and one of the greatest tools you have is your reputation for being honest, dependable, and helpful.

As you look around the geographical community in which you live, ask yourself where you might lend a hand. Where could you volunteer your writing skills? When my daughter was in the fifth grade, I volunteered once a week to work with the stronger students in her class to hone their writing skills because the teacher didn't have the time. Other schools need reading mentors for kids who are behind in their reading. Nonprofits need help writing their newsletters.

What writing groups could you join where you can connect with like-minded writers? Is there another writer you could offer to beta read for? Whose street team could you join?

Sometimes it's just a matter of participating in writers' chat rooms and offering advice when someone asks for help. Sharing ways I market with other writers was the whole foundation for why I

authored this book. I hope that what I'm offering helps you to think about how you will approach marketing and how you can help others.

BE PERSISTENT

Never stop promoting yourself. As Beth Comstock, Former VP of GE said, *“Marketing’s job is never done. It’s about perpetual motion. We must continue to innovate every day.”*

Don’t think for one minute that just because you’ve published your book, it will now sell itself. It doesn’t work that way. The competition is too great, and the number of self-published books flooding the market every day makes it that much more difficult.

Accept the fact that along with the major effort it takes to write the book, you’re going to have to do a fair amount of marketing. But again, if you don’t really aspire to be Suzanne Collins (Hunger Games), dial it back a bit and make plans to do what you know in your heart you *can* do. More importantly, what you *will* do.

I wax and wane with my marketing efforts. I put effort into a launch, and then sometimes months go by before I think, “Hey, I need to do a free download.” The truth is... life happens.

You know yourself better than anyone what your life is like and what challenges you face. Ask yourself honestly what you’re willing to do and how often you’re willing to do it? Just remember that doing something more than nothing is better than nothing at all. (Feel free to quote me on that.)

“Success is a state of mind. If you want success, start thinking of yourself as a success.”

—Dr. Joyce Brothers

MANAGING YOUR MARKETING LIFE

“Managing your time without setting priorities is like shooting randomly and calling whatever you hit the target.”

—Peter Turla

Marketing can be overwhelming. And to be honest, as I read through everything I’ve just written, I realized that even the way I market can seem overwhelming.

So, here’s my advice.

Don’t try to do everything. Certainly not all at once. Set priorities. Make a list of the top three or four things you think you can do, and more importantly, will do. Even if all you do is print up book cards and put them in your pocket or purse and keep them with you to hand out, that’s the first step in the right direction. Now, pick a second and third step. And, just maybe, you’ll find that putting yourself out there isn’t so bad.

Here Are Six Concrete Steps to Give You a Great Start:

1) Identify Your Audience:

I used to teach nonprofits how to find their constituencies to raise money. It’s the same for selling books. First, you look to your ‘natural’ constituency, or people closest to the organization.

Start with your family and friends. They are your natural constituency. Be careful, however, and don’t try to monetize your friendships. Some of your friends and family aren’t going to be ‘readers.’ Others might not be interested in what you’ve written. So, don’t force it. My two older brothers have still never read one of my books, even though they are both avid readers. You might consider giving your book to these people as holiday or birthday presents just in case.

Once you get a few sales under your belt, move out from there to acquaintances and/or business associates. But if you start with the ‘universal’ constituency first, meaning the masses, it will be like using your teeny, tiny, unknown voice to call to the bottom of a large, empty well. No one will hear you. Besides, your inner circle is the most friendly and supportive audience you’ll find.

2) *Start building your network NOW!*

Pick two groups to join, whether that’s online writing groups, meetup groups, or professional writing groups in your area. And then make a commitment to participate and make friends.

3) *Build a street team:*

If you are getting close to publishing your book, build a street team so that you have them in place when you’re ready to launch. Tell them exactly what you want them to do in advance, ask them to loop back with you when they’ve completed the task(s), and then be sure to thank them profusely when they’re done. Also, list them in the acknowledgements of your book.

4) *Get your promotional materials together:*

Decide early on what promotional materials you want: business cards, book cards, posters, book trailers, and so forth. Once you have your book cover designed, you can get other materials designed and ordered using the cover of your book as the central image.

5) *Get on social media:*

If you’re not on social media, pick at least one social media platform and sign up. Decide whether you want to mix fans with friends in advance, though. I didn’t. I have a separate fan page and a personal page on Facebook and promote my books on both.

6) Write your bio/profile:

Write a shortened version of a bio for the back of your book and a longer version for your website and/or author page.

Pass it by friends and family and get their opinion.

If you still need a little help mapping out an approach to your marketing efforts, I've developed a basic marketing template you can get by going to my website and click on 'Author Tools.' You can download it for free.

“We're our own worst enemy. You doubt yourself more than anybody else ever will. If you can get past that, you can be successful.”

—Michael Strahan

DON'T SELF-SABOTAGE

You're not going to sell thousands of books overnight. This will be an ongoing process where you grow the size of your audience little by little over time.

For that reason, it's easy to self-sabotage when things aren't going as quickly as you'd like. Also, recognize how easy it is to set yourself up for failure. Sometimes, life gets in the way. Suddenly going to a movie or taking a nap sounds better than writing your promotional blurb. You might decide to get that poster designed right after lunch, but then your daughter wants you to take her to the park.

Saying no to ourselves is one of the easiest things we do. Saying no to others, not so much. So, how do you get this all done? Listed below are some ideas on how to be effective in managing your marketing efforts. Pick whichever ones resonate with you, your own personal style, and/or life.

Keep Your Goal in Mind

- Remember why you authored your book to begin with. Whether you did it to entertain, educate, inspire, or just earn more money, own the reason you are here. Then, set goals to get to where you want to be. Whether it's to get the book published by a certain date, get a certain number of reviews, or sell fifty books by the end of the year, write out your goal(s). It might help to print them in bold letters and tape them somewhere in your house where you'll see them multiple times a day. And then, every time you feel like NOT doing a marketing task, remind yourself of your goal(s) and why you're doing this. And if you don't understand the concept of 'why,' I suggest you read Simon Sinek's book *Start with Why*.

Manage Your Time

- Get a calendar and decide which days of the week you are willing to commit to doing *something* about marketing. Put a big X on those days. Then mark them off when you can honestly say you completed a task. (In this case, do what I say and not what I do. This is a task I have yet to accomplish, but that doesn't mean it's not a good idea.)
- Divide up your day to make sure you can fit in your marketing tasks. For instance, if you are a parent of little children, the only time you can write might be when your kids are in bed. Or you might choose to get up forty-five minutes early *one day* a week to complete a marketing task. Make the task reasonable, and you'll be more likely to do it.
- Eliminate distractions. Turn off your phone. Tell your kids you need one hour of quiet time. Tell your husband dinner will be an hour late. Put on headphones with your favorite music. Do whatever it takes to focus on the task at hand.

Create an Action Plan

- Take the list of actionable marketing tasks you created and put them in order of priority. Decide which ones are the most urgent or that may take the longest time. And then put them in the order that makes the most sense to you. Hey, it's even okay if you pick the one that sounds the most fun or exciting to do first.

And then, using an excel spreadsheet, a bulletin board, index cards, or project management software, chart everything out by assigning dates for when you want to have each task completed. Then, be sure to check them off as you go along. I'm lazy, so I just create a to-do list in Word. But, hey, it works.

- Break your list down into bite size components by dividing it up based on Projects and Tasks. Projects are broader actions, such as holding a book signing or making a book trailer. A task would be writing the script for the book trailer or making a list of potential partners for a book signing. By listing the tasks underneath the project heading, you're breaking it down into smaller, less time-consuming chunks. And checking off each one of those brings its own rewards.

Get Support

- Find a marketing buddy. Find someone in one of the groups you belong to and ask them to pair up so that you can keep each other on task. You could share your marketing plan with each other, agree to check in with each other on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis, and text each other when you've finished a task. It's good motivation.
- Share your priorities with your family so they know that if your goal is to get your book trailer done by Monday, they will need to give you the space to finish it over the weekend.
- Get feedback as you go along. Everyone responds well to positive feedback. It inspires us and keeps us motivated. Be sure to share your progress. Get comments from writing friends,

friends, or family on things like your book card design, book trailer script, music for the book trailer, book blurb for promotion, and more. It will make you feel more like you are a part of a community rather than going it alone.

Take Care of Yourself

- Reward yourself. I'm a list lover. I thrive on making lists so that I can check off things I've completed. When I've forgotten to add a task, I've often gone back and added it once I've completed it just so that I can check it off. Yes, it makes me feel that good.

You can use the calendar for this. You can also put marbles in a jar to represent the number of tasks you have to complete and then transfer a marble out each time you complete a task. Hey, if you love chocolate, put Hershey's Kisses into a bowl knowing you can eat one every time you check off a task on your list. Whatever works for you.

- Be flexible. Sometimes things won't go as planned. You can't get the software you bought to work. The person you hired to do something hasn't gotten back to you. Whatever it is, if it's not working, set it aside and pick up something else from the list. Don't let that one obstacle stall everything else.
- Be reasonable. If you have a list of five things to do in one day and you get frustrated, anxious, or even angry over something—stop! Take a breath. And then narrow that list down to just one thing you can accomplish and feel good about. Once that's done, you can choose to go back to the list or re-schedule it to another day. Don't beat yourself up. You should enjoy this process. If you don't, you won't do it.

“Anything's possible if you've got enough nerve.”

—J.K. Rowling

Get Comfortable Talking About Yourself as an Author

This may be one of the most important things I stress in this book. I think many new authors harbor imposter feelings when they start out writing. As I said earlier, I certainly did. This is especially true when we're just finishing our first book and thinking about promoting it.

Who me? I'm an author?

Look, do whatever you have to do to implant in your mind that you are a bona fide writer/author. If you don't, you might as well switch to making macrame instead. Here are just a few ideas of how to do this.

- Get a mug with "I'm an author!" printed across the side and make it your go-to coffee/tea mug.
- Put your book poster up so that you can see it in your house or office every day.
- Get your business cards printed and keep them in your wallet.
- Get at least one social media site set up with you as an author and start posting.
- Start sending your accomplishments out to friends and family through email or Facebook, i.e., pictures of your book cards, your book trailers, or just a notice saying that you've finished the first draft of your book.
- Find a group of authors to join, whether that's a professional writer's group, a critique group, or an online group. Being amongst other writers will naturally help you identify as a writer.
- Go to my website at www.lynnboharts-author.com and pick up my 'Author Affirmations' to help you remember how good you are.

Believe me, once you start talking about yourself as an author, it will make marketing yourself as one much easier.

IN CLOSING

"If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster."

—Isaac Asimov

There is magic to what we do as authors. And we all love to write. To that end, you need only to write the book to become an author. Technically, no one needs to read it. But we all know that's not why you wrote it. We all want people to read our book(s) and the more the better.

So... the second half of being an author in today's world is to also become a marketer (of sorts). And that's what I hope this book has given you: a way to be your own style of marketer.

Three Life Rules

- 1) If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it.***
- 2) If you don't ask, the answer will always be no.***
- 3) If you don't step forward, you will always be in the same place.***

—Unknown

Many of the tips I've offered here have been aimed at raising your name recognition. For self-published authors, this is critical because unless you're Michelle Obama, you're not starting out as a household name. That means that part of this marketing gig is to put yourself out there. That doesn't mean you have to join the speaking circuit. It does mean that you need to be more visible than you are, at least within your own circle/community.

I spent the last twenty years of my professional life here in the Seattle area. During that time, I belonged to my local Rotary Club, a local group of nonprofits, the Chamber of Commerce, and interfaced with other nonprofits as the executive director of a community

foundation. I also attended a lot of community events. In other words, because of my profession, I was visible. And it helped.

Believe me, I've noticed the difference now that I'm retired. I'm forced to rely increasingly on online networking. Either way, however, it's important to build name recognition, and so I find ways to do it.

So, if you're still working, brainstorm ways to become visible in the community in which you live. Or find opportunities to be visible in your profession. Attend conferences. Trade shows. Training sessions. If you're not working, join clubs, meetup groups, or volunteer.

Be a player in whatever way you can. When you do, keep those book cards and business cards handy. And DO NOT be afraid to mention to people that besides running your own CPA firm, dog walking service, or yoga studio, you are also an author.

In the end, no one is going to hand success to you. It was Arthur Ashe who said, "*Success is a journey, not a destination.*" So, keep moving, keep promoting, and keep believing in yourself.

And there you have it.

I titled this book *The Little Book of Unconventional Marketing Ideas* because I wanted it to be short and to the point. I hope it has given you at least a few actionable tips on how you can market your own self-published book(s) or even your traditionally published books.

It's my sincere hope that it has also inspired you to go out and be creative in your marketing efforts. As I said, don't try to do it all at once. Arm yourself with the right materials, decide on what to do pre-launch and then post launch of your book, and then pick other tasks to work on over the next six months or so. Believe me, it gets easier as you go along.

Then, be sure to always be on point. Look around you. Meet people. Find opportunities. Try new things. Even if they don't work. The goal is to get books into the hands of people who will read them.

For what it's worth, I still buy marketing books, sit in on free marketing webinars, and watch videos on marketing. I'm forever on the lookout for another uncomplicated way I can market my books

and not break the bank, my self-esteem, or my sanity. What I've outlined in this book isn't the end of the road for me. I'm always trying to learn more. You should, too.

So, thank you again for taking this short journey with me. I wish you the best of luck!

One More Thing

You might consider creating a one-page promotional kit/flyer you can use over and over. This would include your bio, information/blurbs on all your books, cover images of your books, where people can buy them, head shot of yourself, and testimonials if you have them. Once it's done, you can send it to potential podcast interviewers, newspapers, or libraries. Then, you just update it when you have another book or any of the information changes.

Okay, Two More Things

I'm including a quote by Ray Bradbury because I had the honor of working with him many years ago in Los Angeles. When I visited him in his office in Beverly Hills, it struck me how absolutely disorganized he appeared to be. There were stacks of books, papers, and collectibles everywhere. And yet the man was a creative genius as a writer.

“There's no one way to be creative.

Any old way will work.”

—Ray Bradbury

With his quote in mind, there really is no *one* way to be creative, and this book is not the be all and end all when it comes to creative marketing ideas.

If you have other creative ideas not listed here, I'd love to hear from you. And I'd really appreciate hearing if you feel this book helped you at all. And, of course, I'd love it if you'd leave a review.

Feel free to reach out to me through my website. Together, perhaps we can publish *The Second Little Book of Unconventional Marketing Ideas* and change the world of self-publishing.

Okay, now I'm really done. (At least until I get the next great idea.)

LIST OF RESOURCES

I'm listing additional resources that might help you in your quest to sell more books. I learned about a few of these through other self-published authors and have tried several myself. I cannot testify to the quality of all of them, but this list should give you a head start in finding resources to do effective marketing. And as of September 2026 (when I updated this book) they were all still active.

However, AI has changed everything and is evolving faster than you can decide what to have for breakfast. As a result, my guess is that there are a ton of new and sophisticated resources out there.

Fiverr

- Book Cover Design:
<https://www.fiverr.com/categories/graphics-design/book-design/cover>
- Book Mockups:
https://www.fiverr.com/gigs/book-mockup?page=10&use_single_query=&offset=0
- Book Trailers:
https://www.fiverr.com/search/gigs?query=book%20trailers&source=top-bar&search_in=everywhere&search-autocomplete-original-term=book%20trailers

Making Book Trailers:

- EasyVSL: <https://easyvsl.com/>
- Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com>

Making Book Mockups:

- Adazing: This site has free book trailer templates and a video on how to make a book trailer. www.adazing.com
- PowerPoint: With patience, you can make book trailers in PowerPoint. In fact, a while back, the examples given on the Adazing website were all made with PowerPoint.
- Book Brush: Check to see if they still have a free section.
<https://bookbrush.com/>
- DIY Book Design: <https://diybookcovers.com/3Dmockups/>

Making Book Cards and/or Bookmarks:

- Vista Print: <https://www.vistaprint.com>
- Adazing: This site has fitting examples of effective book cards. www.adazing.com

Royalty Free Image Sites:

- Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/>
- Unsplash: <https://unsplash.com/>
- Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/royalty-free-images/>

Royalty Free Music Sites:

- Pixaby Royalty Free music: <https://pixabay.com/music/>
- Take Tones: <https://taketones.com/>
- “15 Best FREE Websites to Find Royalty-Free Music”: This is an article listing royalty free music sites. It’s sponsored by the first site listed, but it will give you a list of potential places to find music for your book trailer: <https://wave.video/blog/royalty-free-music/>

Link to My Book Trailers

I encourage you to go to my website to take a look at the two book trailers I created myself through Powerpoint: *The Key to Murder* and *Case of the Missing Will*. I used free music. Go here to view:

<https://www.lynnbohmart-author.com/books>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & AUTHOR BIO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. Bohart is a storyteller at heart. She spent 35+ years as a nonprofit executive for three different hospital foundations and then a regional community foundation in the Northwest. She holds a master's degree in theater, has published in *Woman's World*, and has a story in *Dead on Demand*, an anthology of ghost stories that remained on the Library Journals bestseller list for six months. She taught writing through Green River College for 10+ years and also wrote columns for a short time for both the Renton Reporter and Patch.com. She has eleven full-length paranormal mystery novels, two short story books, and now three nonfiction books on Amazon.com.

Inn Keeping with Murder, the first book in the Old Maids of Mercer Island series remained in the list of top 100 ghost stories on Amazon for ten months. You can check out her other books, including the popular Detective Giorgio Salvatori mysteries on Amazon.com. If you would like more information about the author or would like to join her mailing list, please visit her website and sign up at: <https://www.lynnbohart-author.com/contact>.

REVIEWS ARE IMPORTANT

Thank you for reading *The Little Book of Unconventional Marketing Ideas*. I hope you found it helpful. If you did, you would honor me if you took a few minutes to go back to Amazon and leave a review. Self-published authors live and die on the number of positive reviews our books receive. Thanks again.

OTHER BOOKS BY LYNN BOHART

Available on Amazon.com

Detective Giorgio Salvatori Series

Mass Murder

Murder in the Past Tense

The Essence of Murder

Old Maids of Mercer Island Series

Inn Keeping with Murder

A Candidate for Murder

A History of Murder

All Roads Lead to Murder

The Key to Murder

No Place Like Home for a Murder

The Unstoppables

Case of the Missing Will (YA book)

Stand-Alone Books

Grave Doubts

Stand-alone mystery novel

Your Worst Nightmare

Anthology of short stories

Something Wicked

Single short story

Nonfiction Books

When Hope is Not Enough

The Little Book of Unconventional Marketing Ideas

Raise More Money Through Better Messaging

Free & Low-cost Books on Writing

Found on Lynn's website at:

<https://www.lynnbohmart-author.com/authortools>

- Show, Don't Tell
- Writing a Logline
- Before You Write
- Hook Readers From Page One
- Beat Imposter Syndrome & Claim the Title of Author
- From a Great Idea to a Great Story
- Make Setting Matter: It's More Powerful Than You Think
- Creating Characters Readers Can't Quit
- How to Grab & Hold a Reader's Attention
- Narrative Drive: The Engine That Fuels Your Story
- No Conflict, No Story

Coming Soon: Understanding Genres & Creating Authentic Dialogue

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