

Tips For Your Author Website

You've put in months and maybe years writing your book, polishing your prose, nit-picking every comma and quotation. Now that your manuscript shines and you're ready to publish, there is a whole new set of steps that will take you from manuscript to printed and bound book, ready to sell. Marketing is about to become your new pastime – maybe something you'll relish, maybe something you'll delegate to someone else - but either way it's essential if you want the world to know about your wonderful book.

Today, an author website or blog is a central part of that marketing effort. The format is not as important as the content and regular updating. Of course, you need to own the domain names (URLs) that people will use to find you. Those should include your name, your book's title, and even other versions of your name if it is often misspelled. For instance, if your name is Steven Sanderson, you might want to buy stevensanderson.com, stephensanderson.com, stevesanderson.com, etc. For a book title like *College Bound: The Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Choose the Right University*, you could try to buy collegebound.com, parentsguide.com, collegeboundguide.com, etc.

How do you get a domain name? I like GoDaddy.com; their prices are good and the support has always been excellent. They can also host your website, and if you are the do-it-yourself type, they have site-building software that can help you create a simple website. With millions of domain names already reserved, you may have to be creative about finding the right combination of words for yours. If building your own site is not something you want to take on, there are excellent developers who can create your author website; email me if you need a recommendation.

However you create it, your site needs to include some basics, all of which are aimed at letting people know more about you and your book, and encouraging them to buy!

1. **Book cover.** A good image of your book cover is a must. If your book will be on store shelves, let people know what to look for. Even if you will be selling direct or giving the book away, your attractive book cover helps build interest.
2. **Author bio.** Tell readers about yourself, your background, and what has influenced your writing. If your book is fiction, explain what inspired the story. If it's nonfiction, tell about your experience that builds credibility for your position as an expert. Be sure to include your photograph, and make it something other than a traditional portrait if you can. You're showcasing your personality here, and want everything you put on the site to create a coherent image of you as a fascinating person.
3. **Book excerpt.** Give your readers a taste of what's to come when they buy your wonderful book. The sample can be a few paragraphs of sparkling dialog that draw the reader in and make them want to know more about the characters. It can even be an entire short chapter that showcases your writing and subject matter expertise. Whatever you choose, make it a selection that will leave people wanting more.
4. **Ways to buy.** Make it easy for people to buy your book, whether through your own website or through online outlets such as B&N, Amazon, etc.
5. Promote the **sale of autographed copies** through your own site, too. (Be sure to abide by your state's sales tax laws.)

6. **Events and promotions.** Keep an updated calendar of appearances where people can meet you and buy your book on your website. When you have signings or you make presentations, take photos of the events and post them on your website.
7. **Media.** Always post your press releases and any press coverage you get on your website. When you have time, set up a "Media" section of the site and have materials available for journalists. These should include:
 - Author headshots, both color and black and white, in high resolution (300 dpi) and low resolution (72 dpi) versions.
 - Three versions of your biography – 50 words, 100 words, and 150 words. This makes it easy for a journalist to choose the length they need without editing.
 - Sell sheets for your book(s). These are single-page sheets in color that give the essential information about your book including title, subtitle, author photo, brief author bio, a great blurb if you have it, price, ISBN number, and where the book can be purchased.

Marketing your book takes planning and follow-through, and your website or blog is an important component. After all the hours you put in to the writing, plan to devote a few more to spotlighting the result. Your book!