

*Marketing For  
Writers*

*Written by Award-Winning  
Australian Writer  
Cheryl Wright*

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## Marketing For Writers

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It's a cold hard fact that most writers don't want to market themselves, they want to write.

But what if you don't market, what then?

I can tell you from experience that's it not nice. No one knows who you are, and if nobody knows you, why would they buy your stuff?

Simple. They wouldn't.

It took me a long time to realise that fact, and even longer to do something about it. But almost as soon as I did, people began to notice me.

February 2003 I was a total unknown. By June of that same year I had a regular column in a US magazine.

I'd made the decision to write full-time due to health reasons; to do that, people (read as editors) needed to know who I was, to give them a reason to take a chance on me.

This first thing I did was create a website. That was a huge effort for me, since back then I was the biggest Internet Dummy you would ever come across. These days I create and maintain websites for businesses and other authors. I can whip up a website or blog in just a few hours!

Except for a six year stint as editor of a large staff newsletter for a large corporation, I had only been published in either incidental newsletters or non-paying markets. And very few of those.

To get some exposure, I began to hang out on forums and in egroups. If an opportunity arose where I would be highlighted, I took it. And I made sure that every chance I got, I stuck my head up and answered a question.

I've found this to be one of the best (and easiest) ways to have yourself branded as an 'expert'.

Make sure the forums and groups you hang out on are relevant to your books. For instance, if you write Christmas Recipe books, hang out on Christmas forums.

If you write books for writers, hang out on writer forums, if it's romance you write, then you need to go to romance reader (or other fiction) forums.

Be warned; never, ever, join a group and blatantly promote yourself. By this I mean don't join then continuously advertise your books.

Over time I've found that the best promo is the one where it's not a blatant promo. For example, instead of placing a promo ad on an egroup, just mention the item in question in passing. Perhaps mix it in with the topic at hand - but only if it's relevant.

Instead of constantly mentioning your book etc in your messages (which is a no-no on most egroups), make sure you have a signature line with your book's name, and the website address where further information can be obtained.

I've done loads of marketing over the past ten years, but have paid out less than US\$250 in advertising. So how did I do it?

Here's a list of methods I've used to get free or near-free advertising:

- Give away something that is relevant to either your book or website.
- Offer to be a guest writer (at no charge)
- Offer yourself as an interviewee
- Give away a copy of your book or product for a contest. Choose carefully though - the aim is to find a new audience, so make sure that audience is part of your targeted market.
- And speaking of targeted markets, do you know what that is? Let's say you've written a book about gardening. Then your targeted audience will be gardeners. If you've written a book of romance fiction, then romance readers are your targeted audience. If your book is about writing, then writers are your target audience. Understand your niche, and you will know who your targeted audience will be.
- Start a free ezine (electronic magazine or newsletter). Make it applicable to your target audience. Make sure you issue it on a regular basis. (I began my newsletter just over ten years ago and started off with ten

subscribers. I've moved email providers several times, but have never lost anyone from my list. Currently I have just over 8,000 subscribers!!!)

- Mention an ezine that is owned by a writing friend; more often than not they'll return the favour. (Remember what I said earlier about non-blatant promos? Doing this will work equally well.)
- Write articles and ensure your bio points to your product or website. Offer the articles for free to websites and ezines that will reach your targeted audience. \*This is called viral marketing, and won't cost a cent!
- Give away free gifts to your subscribers now and then. Don't give away rubbish - make the gifts worthwhile. There are a lot of good books available with resale rights, but you do need to check you can give them away. Some books come with certain conditions - often these will state no give aways.
- Ad swaps: do any of your friends write about the same things as you? Ask them to do an ad swap. You will both most likely end up with new subscribers, and it costs you nothing.
- To gain additional subscribers, offer a relevant or useful freebie on joining - if at all possible. I've found making your own ebook is the most popular. It's not available elsewhere, so it's a good incentive to join your list! (Make it worthwhile for the recipient to read!)
- Run a subscriber-only contest.
- For extra exposure for your published book, seek book reviews. The reviews themselves are free (if they want payment - run as quick as possible!), but some review sites are now requesting hard copies of books. This adds to your costs, but ebooks are much more difficult to read while reviewing.
  - Never send a book for review without querying first. Why? Firstly, it's pushy and overbearing. Secondly, many sites don't have the woman-power available to review all the books that need reviewing, and thirdly, it's downright rude and presumptuous.
  - If your book is reviewed, the site will often offer to interview you as well. This provides additional exposure.

- Even if you're not 100% happy with the resulting review, always send a note of thanks to either the website owner, or the person who did the review. I generally do both.
- For your published book, put together a pdf of the first chapter, or first few pages. Make sure you include details such as the name of the publisher, and don't forget the purchase details! (Always make it easy for potential buyers to purchase your product/s.) [Click here to view mine.](#)
- Run a free contest. Don't give away YOUR book or product as a prize if possible. In my experience, people won't buy the product in the hope they'll win it instead.
- Take out advertising in ezines that will reach your targeted audience. For instance, I advertise my ebooks for writers in other ezines for writers. (This works equally well for websites.)
- Update your website regularly. The more often you change your 'welcome message' the higher the ranking you will get in search engines.
- Swap URL's with other website owners. Ensure their subject is related to yours - this also helps with search engine rankings. Linking with unrelated sites will do nothing for your rankings.
- Research and use relevant and related 'keywords' and metatags for your website. All websites - even free ones - have a place to add 'keywords'. Use that function to your best advantage; don't waste it.
- Make flyers, bookmarks and business cards. I make most of my stationery using Publisher, except for the business cards, which I can buy very cheaply online.
- I have a brochure that highlights all my books, including snippets of reviews and links to the full reviews. Readers are also given the link to my free sample chapter. When I was doing copywriting and freelance articles, I had separate brochures for each of those too.
  - Make sure you update information in your brochures regularly - if applicable.
- Bookmarks - I do these in Microsoft Word using a free template I downloaded from [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com). I print the bookmarks on a colour printer, then laminate them. Very effective, very cheap to make. \*I have a duplex printer, but you can easily double side your printing with a printer that doesn't have this function.

- Depending on how many books you have published, you may decide to do one bookmark per book. Or you might feel it's better to put them all on one bookmark. Making them yourself lends itself to a lot of leeway.
- Organise some speaking engagements in your local area. Libraries are a good place to speak, as are schools. Places large groups of people hang out are always worth investigating. Again, think about your target audience and work from there. There are plenty of community groups around, and most of them are constantly looking for guest speakers. Some pay, some don't, but most of the time, your book sales will make it all worthwhile anyway. On average, I've sold to at least 50% of the audience with every speaking engagement or workshop presented. (Libraries included.)
- Enter your books into contests. Winning entries (and entrants) generally get a lot of media attention. This works equally well for ezines and websites.
- Join egroups specifically for writers promoting themselves. There are a ton available, and the majority are worthwhile - they'll help you learn the ropes. It may take a few goes before you find one that's a good fit, but you'll quickly realise it's worth the effort.
- Contact your local or community newspaper. Let them know you're a local author. Give them an angle if possible - this helps clinch the deal.
- Offer yourself for 'chats'. If possible supply a give away as well. Preferably an ebook version; it costs you nothing, but is still worthwhile for the recipient.

Always remember - where ever possible, promote you *the author*, not a single book. A particular book title may be long gone while you will still be well and truly around.

It's called 'name recognition' and is extremely important to your writing business.

**About the author:** Cheryl Wright is an award-winning Australian author and freelance writer. In addition to an array of other projects, she is the owner of the [Writer2Writer.com](http://Writer2Writer.com) website and the *Writer to Writer* monthly ezine for writers. Her publications include novels, non-fiction books, short stories, and articles. To keep up to date with her publications and new releases, visit Cheryl's website [www.cheryl-wright.com](http://www.cheryl-wright.com)

## GETTING BOOK REVIEWS DOESN'T REQUIRE MAGIC BUT SEVEN LUCKY TIPS MIGHT HELP

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

Award-winning author of

THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T

I've never met an author who didn't bemoan that "getting reviews" is nigh on impossible. It makes no difference what genre they write or how big and famous their publisher is, I hear the wails. In my college extension classes. In my critique groups. At the seminars and workshops I do at conferences, and expos.

You may think you need a magic wand to get reviews, but it doesn't require Voodoo; it's all about networking and knowing the ropes. Here are the seven most important steps:

1. Know about promotion and networking long before you publish. My how-to book, *THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T*, would be a good start.
2. Get to know the media. Pay attentions to directories of editors every time you're on the web or read a newspaper, magazine or review journal. Make a point of reading everything you see--even the throwaways you find in racks as you enter Denny's, Borders and Starbucks.
3. Enter the names of editors and reviewers in a data base. Include e-mail addresses; it may take a phone call to get them. Pay special attention to editors who might be interested in the kinds of books you want to write. If yours is a business book, as an example, you'll want to collect the names of business editors as well as calendar, book, entertainment and feature editors. Read what they publish and research their guidelines.
4. Abide by reviewers' rules. The most desirable review journals usually require a galley or ARC sent at least 12 weeks before the release date. Send a media kit and a query letter. (Yes, *FRUGAL* shows you how to do this, step by step!)
5. Approach individual reviewers with query letters, not media releases. Tell them who you are, a bit about your book and don't bother a reviewer with a query to review your science fiction if she appears to prefer mysteries.
6. Follow up with personal contact whenever possible.
7. Know that there are many ways other than reviews to drum up exposure for your book. *FRUGAL* lists hundreds of ways for readers to learn about your book, on the Web and off.

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Carolyn Howard-Johnson's *This is the Place*, and *Harkening: A Collection of Stories Remembered* are both award-winners. Her fiction, nonfiction and poems have appeared in national magazines, anthologies and review journals. She is an instructor for UCLA Extension's Writers' Program and has shared her expertise on publishing and writing at venues like San Diego State's world renowned Writers' Conference and Call to Arts! EXPO. She was recently awarded Woman of the Year in Arts and Entertainment by the California Legislature and her book, *THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER* won USA Book News' "Best Professional Book 2004." You'll find information on the author and a free cookbook on her site at: <http://carolynhowardjohnson.com>



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