

## PUBLICIZE YOUR BOOK: PUBLICITY FOR AUTHORS

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Excerpt from **PUBLICIZE YOUR BOOK! An Insider's Guide to Getting Your Book the Attention It Deserves**, by Jacqueline Deval (Perigee, © 2003) [www.publicizeyourbook.com](http://www.publicizeyourbook.com).

You've spent many months, even years, working on your book and it's about to get published. You're hoping to see the book reviewed in the newspapers, and perhaps you're even imagining yourself being interviewed on television. But how do you make this dream happen?

The reality for most authors—whether published by a major publisher or self-published—is that you have to become actively involved in your book's marketing and publicity campaign in order to get exposure. Your publisher has too few resources to support every book. Some will get publicity campaigns and budgets while others will simply go without. Even if your publisher intends to put some muscle into marketing, you would still be wise to get involved and collaborate with your publicist's efforts. After all, you are the party most vested in the book's success, whereas your publicist is constrained by budgets, time, and other books competing for attention, and which may have more obvious opportunities in the marketplace.

And for authors who are looking to find a publisher or an agent, developing a marketing plan and publicity strategy can often help sell the book. The plan demonstrates the author's commitment to helping the book reach its target audience, and helps lay the foundation for the book's eventual marketing campaign.

Many authors grumble about their publishers not doing enough marketing for them. You have a choice: you can stew in your anger and frustration, as justified as it may be, or you can become an active marketer and prove yourself an asset to your publisher, preserving the all-important goodwill that you will most certainly need during your campaign.

The first question many authors have is how expensive is a publicity campaign. That depends, but an effective campaign doesn't have to be costly.

Is it hard to do? It's not rocket science, but be aware that a campaign requires a certain amount of dedication and nerve when it comes to cold calling reporters and producers. And it does require a lot of time. So if you're planning to get actively involved as your own book marketer, then plan on spending many hours on the effort. When you work pays off in the form of media exposure, you'll find the investment of time well worth your while.

But where should you start?

### Here's your action-plan checklist:

- Find out what your publisher's publicist is doing so that you don't duplicate any work, and find out, too, what support you might be able to get from your publisher in the form of freebies such as envelopes, mailing lists, and perhaps a small budget.
- Figure out how you will describe the book for the media and how you will reach your potential readers.
- Write a Press Release.
- Set your budget.
- Create a list of media targets and develop customized pitch letters for the most important press contacts.
- Send copies of your book and press release to the media.
- Make follow-up calls to arrange media interviews.

This list may seem a daunting one if you've never had to market or publicize anything before. But let's break it down so you can see how manageable it is.

**Find out what your publicist is doing** – Your publicist is most likely writing a letter to editors to send out with galleys of your books and a press release to send out to reviewers with the book. Read these materials before they are finalized to ensure that they reflect what your book is about. You may decide to use or adapt the press release in your own individual press outreach. Ask your publicist to give you a copy of the mailing list so you can supplement it with other media contacts that you may research.

**Figure out how you will describe the book for the media and how you will reach your readers** – This is the most important item on your agenda and the one that requires the most thoughtful consideration. The way you talk about the book in your written materials and press calls are the determining factors in capturing a reporter's interest. Ask yourself what one publicist asks all the authors he works with: Name the three reasons the media should interview you.

You will reach some of your readers through traditional publicity outlets, like radio, television and print media. But other vehicles to reach your readers abound. Here are some ideas and example of successful publicity strategies that you can draw on to develop your own. Not all examples will apply to every book, but they should serve to stimulate the marketing side of your brain and help you figure out how to position your book.

- **Does your book tie in to local or national political campaigns?** The publisher for a book called *Reinventing Government*, by David Osborne, sent staff to New Hampshire during the primaries. They put complimentary copies of the books in local bars where the national political reporters were hanging out, many of whom wrote about

the book. The subsequent coverage and sales launched the book onto the *New York Times* bestseller list.

- **Would your book interest policy makers?** Then send it to public opinion leaders and opinion columnists. For a promotion of *The Tenth Justice*, the bestselling thriller by Brad Meltzer about a group of fictional clerks at the Supreme Court, the publisher sent books to the clerks and other members of the Justice Department, knowing that this audience could help build interest in Washington, D.C.
- **Does your book contain a strong spiritual or social message?** Then send copies to church leaders (or leaders of other religious organizations) and invite them to share the message with their congregations.
- **Does your book have a niche readership and, if so, what media vehicles reach that readership?** For example, for a basic early childhood parenting book that targets first-time parents, you might approach parenting magazines, or offer free excerpts to parenting sections of newspapers (which often can't afford to pay for them). A sports book could be promoted to sportscasters who might mention the book during on air broadcasts of games. You might also contact the public relations people at local sports arenas to see if they will put copies of the book in the pressroom at game time.
- **Can your book tie in with a local or national event?** A book about the fashion industry called *Model*, by Michael Gross, coincided with Fashion Week in New York City, where the new collections are launched. Press packets were delivered to the hotel rooms of fashion reporters who were in town for the shows and the book was widely covered.
- **Can you link your book to events in the news?** Political campaigns, the latest crime statistics, teacher shortages, reading scores, teenage behaviors, caring for aging parents, the economy, and the environment—reporters cover all of these issues on a continuing basis and need to interview experts. Keep current with what's going on in the world, and if you see an opportunity to connect to news headlines, then call or email the appropriate reporters to let them know about your book. When First Lady Hillary Clinton professed an admiration for Eleanor Roosevelt, publishers reprinted works by and about Roosevelt, and positioned their authors as experts on First Ladies.
- **Can you create a trend story around your book by conducting informal surveys?** For *Funny You Don't Look Like a Grandmother*, author Lois Wyse had the idea to set up power breakfasts for grandmothers. The concept created a lot of buzz and print coverage and the book reached #1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Attention-getting events for your book could be a fashion show, a fundraiser for charity, a pet parade—anything out of the norm for your community.
- **Can you create an award?** When his novel, *Secrets*, was published, Kelvin Christopher James created an annual essay writing contest for New York City high school students on the topic: "Getting Along in New York." The award led to interviews on National Public Radio, the *New York Daily News*, and the *New York Times*. Another example: Novelist Rona Jaffe created a foundation through which she administers a

grant program for women writers in fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction. The award's presentation is frequently covered in the media.

- **Can you create a quiz around your book's theme?** A quiz can provide entertaining material for radio discussions about your book, and might be picked up by the local print press. A quiz can be serious or light entertainment depending on the nature and tone of your book. For example, the author of a first aid book created a quiz for a book to test the readers' first aid knowledge that was picked up in several publications. To promote *Don't Know Much About the Civil War*, author Kenneth Davis took the form of "Stump the Author" with callers to the shows asking tough questions about the Civil War.

Still having trouble figuring out your media strategy? Then, if possible, try some brainstorming with your editor and publicist. But don't stop there. Tackle your friends and family and colleagues to try out your marketing ideas on them. Try to locate a local writer's group. Or if there is none in your community, use the Internet to find an active online writer's group. The best ideas often come out of collaboration. Getting other people's point of view will help you shape your media pitch.

**Write a Press Release** – The written materials about your book should reflect the media strategy that you've come up with. To read the 20 rules of writing a press release, go to [www.publicizeyourbook.com](http://www.publicizeyourbook.com). If you feel competent to write the release yourself, share it with your publicist for a second opinion. Or you might hire a professional Public Relations writer to create one for you.

**Set Your Budget** – Your budget will be driven by the extent of the campaign. Your expenses will be affected by your access to resources like photocopying and fax machines. Shop around to find the most value for your money. In some instances, in order to reduce or eliminate costs, you might perform some of the tasks yourself.

Here's a list of typical costs:

- **Hiring a press release writer:** \$50-\$350 for a press release
- **Creating a Website:** Free-\$10,000
- **Fees for a freelance Publicist:**
  - \$1,700 - \$5,000 for a national media campaign
  - \$5,000 - \$30,000 for a ten-city tour
  - \$1,500 - \$7,500 for a three-city tour
  - \$500 - \$5,000 for consulting
- **Publication Party** \$250-\$1,500 for the basics
- **Mailing books to the Press:** \$2.00-\$4.50 per book for postage and jiffy bags (unless your publisher will mail them for you)

- **Photocopying Press Releases:** Free-\$2,500 (depending on your resources and the extent of your press materials)
- **Tour Travel Expenses:** \$1,200-\$2,500 per city if you are flying, staying in hotels and hiring media escorts to take you to interviews. \$2,500-\$3,500 per city for cookbook tours including food prep expenses.

**Create a list of Media Targets** – Use the Internet to read newspapers around the United States and Canada to track down reporters (and their contact information) who write about your subject area. Try to come up with media angles that will interest them and include them on your mailing list. Good links to newspaper websites include [www.newpaperlinks.com](http://www.newpaperlinks.com) and [www.usnewspapersabout.com](http://www.usnewspapersabout.com).

**Send books to the media and follow up to try and arrange interviews** – This part of the campaign can be unnerving if you've never made cold pitch calls before. Something that can help you through the process is preparing a script ahead of making the calls, and practicing the pitch on friends before calling the media. Also remind yourself that you are not pitching *you* (some people feel embarrassed about doing this), but rather you are pitching a book—which happens to be yours—that could be of service to the reporter's readers.

Is there more to publicity than the work encapsulated in these few pages? Of course, but these pointers are at the core of any publicity campaign and should give you a good idea about the basic steps you'll need to master to become an effective author marketer for you book.

## MARKETING PLAN OUTLINE

Adapted from **PUBLICIZE YOUR BOOK! An Insider's Guide to Getting Your Book the Attention it Deserves**, by Jacqueline Deval (Perigee, 2003)  
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1. **Book Title** – Must tell & sell.
2. **Your Name and Contact Info**
3. **Goals for the Book** – Do not push unrealistic expectations on your publisher!
4. **Book Description** – 2 to 3 tightly written paragraphs.
5. **Target Audience(s)** – Who will benefit most from reading your book? What other books do they read?
6. **Positioning Statement** – “Elevator Pitch” boiled down to one or two sentences, i.e. the way you would describe your book to someone on a short elevator ride. You have only a minute and you must explain your book in an interesting way. (For more on developing an Elevator Pitch, see Bella Stander’s Book Promotion 101 Workshop at [www.bookpromotion101.com](http://www.bookpromotion101.com).)
7. **Why You Wrote the Book** – Your background story. Avoid pomposity.
8. **Market Strategy & Campaign** – Brainstorm ideas with your editor, publicist, friends, family, colleagues.
9. **Sales Handle** – What’s new and different about your book, advantages over the competition, marketability?
10. **Media Angles** – What does your book offer consumers? If stumped, name the three reasons why the media should interview you.
11. **Biography** – 2 to 3 paragraphs. Sound accessible and appealing, not cutesy. Don’t mention pets or kids unless you’ve written a pet or parenting book.
12. **Competitive/Comparative Titles** – You must be able to explain what’s new, different, or better about your book.
13. **Personal & Professional Contacts** – Dig deep into past friendships, business and academic relationships to create a mailing list database. State your intent to send press releases to your database as soon as the book arrives in bookstores, to motivate a core audience to buy your book early.
14. **Other People Who Might Blurb Your Book** – Be imaginative: a novelist or filmmaker you admire might give you a quote if your work resonates with theirs.
15. **Your Prior Media Experience** – Print/Broadcast interviews, public speaking. Attach any significant press clips, as well as contact info for reporters and producers who

have interviewed you. If you have video or audiotape of interviews, state that you can make it available upon request.

16. **Sales Leads** – Special sales (mostly for nonfiction): e.g. catalogs, non-book retailers, psych conventions, academic conferences, etc.
17. **Your Top 10 Media & Marketing Wish List and Ideas How to Target Them** (optional) – *Must be realistic* to demonstrate that you understand the media market. Oprah isn't going to do a techno-thriller. *People* isn't going to review a parenting how-to.

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### About the Author

Jacqueline Deval is the author of **PUBLICIZE YOUR BOOK! An Insider's Guide to Getting Your Book the Attention It Deserves** (Perigee, 2003). Publishers Weekly calls it “easily the most incisive and expert guide to book publicity ever.” She is the publisher of Hearst Books and has been a director of publicity and marketing for several major publishing houses. She has created publicity and marketing campaigns for hundreds of authors of fiction and nonfiction including Isaac Asimov, Margaret Atwood, Lawrence Block, Tony Brown, Stephen J. Cannell, Wilt Chamberlain, John Feinstein, Bill Geist, Niki Giovanni, David Halberstram, Faye Kellerman, Dennis Lahane, Sidney Sheldon, and Alexandra Stoddard. To promote her novel, *Reckless Appetites* (Ecco), she appeared on the Today Show and Good Morning America. Contact her at [jdeval@yahoo.com](mailto:jdeval@yahoo.com). Or go to [www.publicizeyourbook.com](http://www.publicizeyourbook.com) for links to writers' publicity resources and to read an excerpt from PUBLICIZE YOUR BOOK!