

Emarketing and Social Media



Harvey Stanbrough

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a Writing the World publication

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Disclaimer

This is a work of nonfiction based on best practices discovered through long experience. However, it is provided only to entertain and inform. Nothing in this work is meant to guarantee your success as a writer. (I mean seriously, think about it: how do we know? You might just be an old grump from whom nobody wants to buy a book. Hey, we've been there. So we're just saying, this book isn't intended to correct personality defects.

It's just a collection of really good advice. Okay, back to the boring stuff.) Nothing in this book is meant to offend or to replace valid professional legal advice or supplant your own experience except as you yourself deem that it does so. Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that there are no errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or inconsistencies herein, any slights of people, places, or organizations are unintentional. You know, probably.

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Credits

Editing, formatting cover photo and cover design by [Harvey Stanbrough](#)

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This book is dedicated to the Realities and the "Secret" of Great (e)Marketing

Emarketing & Social Media

Preparation

Today you will learn how to market your books, but I urge you to offer only your best effort and then be ready to market it:

1. **Prepare your book**—write and polish so well that the buyer will come back for more.
 - Don't rush. If you're settling for "good enough," it isn't.
 - Never stop studying and improving your craft.
 - Never succumb to "the reader will know what I mean."
2. **Prepare yourself** so when the time comes you can make the sale.
 - Know your book inside and out, backwards, and from side to side.
 - Sum up your book in one sentence. This is the "elevator pitch."

- Sum up your book in 400 characters or fewer, including spaces. This is the Smashwords short description.
 - Write an excellent long description and synopsis. Introduce each major character and touch on each major plot point or turning point, but do not give away twists. Be careful not to make this a spoiler.
3. ***Establish your brand*** (publisher will help) ***and your platform*** (publisher *might* help, some). I put this one in the Preparation segment, but this is ongoing. It's never too early or too late to establish your brand and your platform.
- Your brand is a combination of things that makes your books instantly recognizable. It might consist of the layout of your book covers (titling, how your name is presented, certain graphics, etc.) and a particular publicity photo (my POW hat photo), for example.
 - Your platform is the totality of your online presence—usually consisting of your website, your author pages at various sales and publicity venues, and your social media outlets—and the persona you present to the public in presentations, etc.

Rationale

Marketing n. 1. Creating and maintaining an audience for an author and his books with the goal of making the books available to that audience when the audience is ready to buy.

The key to any kind of marketing is to make your product as available as possible to potential buyers. So you have to answer a few questions:

- What is the product?
- Who are the potential buyers?
- How do I make the product available to potential buyers?

What Is the Product?

If you believe your books are the product, you're only half-right. Actually, You are the product. If people feel they know you, they'll be more prone to buying your books.

If you want to sell books, first you must sell your persona and the most valuable commodity you have—time—and it's always been that way.

In the “old days” (a scant 20 years ago) if your work sold well it's because you spent a great deal of time on the road. If you were a real go-getter, the publisher might actually send you on tour. That meant lumping you with a few other authors (whom you've probably never met) in a van and shuttling you city to city and book signing to book signing in a certain region. Your spouse was not allowed to come along. You would sleep in cheap hotels, sometimes two in a room, eat together, be shuttled from the hotel to the various signings around town, then get up the next day and either hit the remaining signings in that town or head for the next one. Such tours were set up by the publishing company's publicist.

If you happen to be an informative or interesting or entertaining speaker, you might also strike out on your own and solicit invitations to speak at SF or horror or mystery or romance conventions (depending on your genre) and even at writers' conferences. At each signing and convention or conference appearance, you would give away bookmarks and flyers and brochures and cards (sometimes created by the publisher and sometimes created by you) in hopes that those handouts eventually would cause others who were not in attendance to learn about and buy your books. You would carry boxes of books with you from one appearance to the next.

Today some authors still hit the road, but most of their marketing is done online.

Again, it's all about Time. On the road after your presentation or during a book signing, your potential readers will expect you to spend time with them, at least a few minutes per person, chatting about your latest book (or their latest book or whatever else they want to talk about). There are dinner invitations and invitations to continue the chat in the bar. And saying No is a potential loss of sales.

On the Internet, you can communicate in a friendly, personable way with literally thousands of potential buyers, often in less time than you might spend talking with only one after a presentation.

So You are the product. You and your time and your books.

Who Are the Potential Buyers?

As you might imagine, defining your potential market isn't as easy as it sounds. It's readers, of course, but which readers?

If your work is nonfiction "how-to," your market is automatic and built-in. For example, writers are the market for my nonfiction books on the craft of writing and peripheral topics.

Fiction markets for the broad genres generally run along the lines of demographics. To generalize

- Any kind of Romance sells better to women of all ages
- Any kind of Action/Adventure/Thriller/Suspense/Science Fantasy sells better to men
- Science fiction sells better to those with at least a passing interest in science
- Psychological Suspense/Horror/Mystery sells across genders
- Urban Fantasy (vampires, werewolves in contemporary settings) sell to youth

The point is to think about who should be included in your potential target market and seek them out. If you write and enjoy Mystery, what else do you enjoy that ties-in with your interest in Mystery and that a broad range of others might enjoy also? Investigate Mystery Writers of America, not to sell to members, but to sell to those readers who attend MWA conventions, for example. You might even join MWA to see what sort of marketing opportunities are available through them. Does your city or state have a Detectives Association or something similar? Don't you suppose they might like a good mystery? If your mystery has a tie-in to airports or an airline, perhaps it would sell at airports. Think.

How Do I Make the Product (Myself and My Books) Available to Potential Buyers?

This question is complex. In fact, it's going to morph.

First, simply making your books available isn't enough. You can't just publish a book and then forget about it, and actually you never could if you wanted it to sell. So assuming the book is already published, the answer to this first question is deceptively easy: Be Present with potential buyers. When? Always. Where? Wherever they are. How? Well, we'll get into that next. For now, just remember that the goal is to have that whole product both available and *up front in the buyer's mind when the buyer is ready to buy*. Therefore,

- the more contacts you make and maintain, the greater the potential for sales, and
- the more visible you and your books are, the more likely the buyer is to purchase your book when the time comes (Central Ave Publishing experience—WRD&FF and PFW vs. Strunk & White et al).

Each time you make a contact of any kind, it's a potential book sale right now, later today, next week or three months from now. The more contacts you make, and the more times you mention your book, and the more personable you are (no hard sells, please!) the greater the chance your contact (prospective buyer) will become part of your loyal readership.

Consider, if during the month of May five thousand people meet you as an author, you have the potential to sell far more books than if only one hundred people meet you as an author during that time. So then the question becomes *How do I meet five thousand people as an author in a month?* You certainly can't do it by touring and making presentations and sitting at book signings—but you can do it online.

Remember, marketing is creating *and maintaining* an audience for you and your books so the books are available when the audience is ready to buy. And the “secret” I mentioned in the subtitle? Trite as it sounds, marketing is a journey rather than a destination. Nothing happens all at once. It builds over time. Now the question has become

How Do I Make Potential Buyers Aware of Myself and My Books?

Emarketing is all about contacts, and that includes impressions, contacts that others make on your behalf. Each time you make a contact of any kind, it's a potential book sale right now, later today, next week or three months from now. The more contacts you make, and the more times you or others mention your book, and the more personable you are (no hard sells, please!) the greater the chance the prospective buyer will become part of your loyal readership.

There are only two ways to make potential buyers aware of yourself and your books. One is to engage in the actual physical activities I listed earlier (touring, book signings, presentations, attendance at conventions and conferences, etc.) and the other is to build a web presence.

Physical Marketing Activities

If you don't mind getting out of town every now and then, look for writers' conferences and genre conventions (all the major genres have them) that might interest you. Often such events will have self-hosted tables where you can sell your books. Of course, you can also spend a lot of time networking with other attendees, not only talking about your books but about other events where you might be able to sell them. If you have a lot of time and enjoy this sort of thing, create a calendar and make conventions part of your routine.

If you speak well (are informative or entertaining) explore the possibility of landing speaking engagements at conferences and conventions that interest you. Caution: Be sure to speak only on topics you know, not those on which you merely have an opinion. If you're part of a Search and Rescue (SAR) team, for example, you can arrange to talk on SAR in general and on your particular field of expertise as well. If you're a writer and a retired police officer, perhaps you can talk about weapons or police procedures or *The 10 Traits Most Bad Guys Share*. The point is, if you establish yourself as an expert, you will sell more books, including novels. A note of caution—when presenting as an expert, be certain of your facts. One slip can cost your credibility.

Set up book signings (or talks) at the local Barnes & Noble or Hastings or Books A Million or Bookmans or any independent bookstores in your area or even in other cities. Be sure to set them well enough in advance (a couple of months) so you can create some publicity for them.

Mention your books and your website, your publisher, etc. everywhere you go.

Emarketing—Your Web Presence

Your web presence consists of your website, your author pages at various sales and publicity venues, and your social media outlets. I'll talk about them in that order.

Your Website—This is your online home, your base of operations. It's the first perception many would-be readers see of you, so it should reflect your public persona and it should look professional.

- The domain name (address) should be <http://yourname.com> (or .org or some other domain if you wish).
- There should be no pop-up ads.

- The design should be roomy so the content doesn't appear "squashed."
- The layout should be clean and easy to read and navigate.

By the same token, you don't have to spend thousands of dollars for glitz. Few things are more annoying than clicking on a link and being taken to a "splash page" that opens slowly. Many readers will wait only a few seconds before going on to another website. You don't need flash; you need substance. Your website is the portal to your persona, your books, your appearances (if necessary), and your blog.

I recommend at least the following pages for a good, clean, professional website for a writer:

- **Welcome/About**—Here you welcome folks to your site much as you might welcome them to your home when you first greet them on the porch. This page typically includes a promo photo and whatever information you believe will help tie yourself to your work. This should be the "hook" that makes them want to come inside and look around.
- **Blog**—Purists will tell you this isn't actually a page and they're right. Each time you post new content, the previous post moves farther down the page or is archived so it's still available for viewing. However, your blog has a particular subdomain just like any page, so for simplicity we'll call it a page. On your blog, you write as if you're talking personally to the reader.
- **Books**—This is a page about your book or books. Subpages to this one might be Reviews or Publicity, and you might even want a separate subpage for each title.
- **Contact Me**—This page would contain contact information. I recommend a blind contact form (one that delivers mail to your regular email address without divulging that email address), but you can also add another layer by creating email@yourname.com. Many authors include both options on their contact page. If you want to include a physical mailing address, I suggest you make it a PO box.
- **Other Pages**—If you schedule speaking engagements, you might include a page for Upcoming Appearances, for example. If your personal biography has a lot to do with why or what you write, you might have a full page set aside for your full bio.

Questions

How many websites do I need? Most people need only one. You don't need a website for each title, for example, or even one for your mystery titles and one for your SF titles. Some authors have a different website for different personas (as indicated by pen names), but even that isn't really necessary unless you need to maintain anonymity. For example, if you write pious stories and novels with a strong religious slant but under a different name you write SF Psychological Suspense Thriller Mysteries and under yet another you write bawdy tales for strictly adult consumption, you might want to consider a different domain name and website for each pseudonym.

What's the difference between a blog and a website? Essentially, none. The blog most often is either located at the main <http://yourname.com> or at <http://yourname.com/blog> or <http://yourname.com/news>. This is something you set up when you create your website.

Can't I get a free website from WordPress.com or Blogger.com? Yes, but I recommend against them. Right now, for example, my website is at <http://harveystanbrough.com>. If it were free through WordPress.com the URL would be <http://stanbrough.wordpress.com>. That "wordpress.com" on the end tells the world it isn't a professional site. The same holds true for Blogger.

If I choose to use a free site, which service would you recommend? If you insist on using a free site, I would strongly recommend either WordPress.com or Blogger.com. All of the others use various methods to upsell you on additional products. Before you know it, your "free" unprofessional website has cost more

than a professionally designed one would cost. Of course, if potential readers perceive your site as less than professional, the cost will be greater than just the cost of your website anyway.

To set up a professional website, you can have one built or you can build one yourself. If you're going to have someone build one for you, I suggest you shop around and compare prices. My own web design service is located at <http://harveystanbrough.com/web>. Before you decide either way, read the following:

If you want to build a website for yourself, I recommend this process. It isn't overly technical, but it is time consuming and involved:

1. Visit <http://www.namecheap.com> (I recommend *against* GoDaddy.com) to research and purchase your domain name. It's easy to do, and the domain name will cost you about \$15 per year for a .com address. Caution: Don't search for the domain name you want unless you're ready to buy it. If you wait, when you go back to buy it later, you might find someone else has bought it and is offering it for sale.
2. Once you've procured your domain name, you'll have to purchase a hosting plan. You can purchase hosting at any of several places. I recommend using a host that uses cPanel technology. (If they do, they'll say so.) My sites are hosted at JustHost.com. Its sister company is BlueHost.com. They're essentially the same. I've heard nothing but good things about HostGator.com. Note: Despite their excellent commercials, I recommend *against* using GoDaddy.com because they have some odd policies (suspending or freezing or locking or closing accounts, etc.).
3. After you've bought the hosting service, you'll need to go back to NameCheap.com (your "registrar") to "point" your domain name servers (DNS) to your hosting service so your website will actually show up online. (They will explain what to do and how to do it.)
4. Whatever host you use, I recommend you look around on the cPanel (your control panel) for a one-click install application and install WordPress.org (this is different than WordPress.com). WordPress.org is for professional websites. I use it exclusively.
5. Once WordPress.org is installed, you can begin actually building your website. Refer to WordPress.org documentation for instructions on installing a theme, creating pages and blog posts, adding plugins (to add functionality to your site), adding links and photos etc.
6. I've always said if you're gonna be a bear, you should be a grizzly. Instead of fiddling around with all the free themes available on WordPress, I recommend going for a premium theme. In order of preference, I recommend the Thesis theme, available at [DIYThemes](#); the Genesis framework and the Quattro theme (or any of their other excellent themes) available at [Studio Press](#); or, if you know some CSS, pretty much anything from [Elegant Themes](#).

If you choose to use [my web design service](#) for your website, I provide the domain name, free hosting on my servers, WordPress.org installation, professional installation of the Thesis theme (see above), your blog, pages, links, photos, plugins for additional functionality, and other services, all of course in collaboration with you. You get exactly what you want without the hassle of learning a new craft. I also provide you with detailed, preprinted instructions on WordPress.org and the theme. For your convenience in making comparisons with other web design companies, I've added a fee schedule on the last page of this handout.

If you decide you would like to create your own website but want to learn to do it right, I recommend Rick Anderson's [BYOBWebsite](#) (Build Your Own Business). If you choose to check out BYOBWebsite, please use this particular link and I'll get credit as an affiliate. Among many other things, Rick specializes in teaching (in depth) how to create websites with the Thesis and Genesis themes.

Uses for Your Website

The main use for your website is to put a face on your public persona and give that persona a home, someplace

where your readers can catch up with you. Some authors set up their website to sell their books too, and that's fine. I personally recommend against it because your site serves better to direct traffic to Amazon, Smashwords and other sales venues. The more titles you sell through them, the higher your rankings. Also, Amazon receives probably fifty-billion hits per day whereas your website, for awhile at least, will be lucky to see ten. However, if you would prefer to sell books directly from your website, of course you can do so.

Some authors also choose to showcase their work on their website. Not their book covers, but actual writing. That's fine too, as long as you limit it to a short story (from a collection) or to the first 20 pages or so of your latest novel. Then redirect the reader to a sales venue to purchase the book.

Uses for Your Blog

A lot of recently minted authors take it upon themselves to attempt to teach other writers how to write. If you've written an award-winning nonfiction book on some aspect of writing and if that book is what you're marketing, by all means teach others how to write. But if you're a novelist, you should be talking with your *readers*, not with other writers.

I most often recommend authors use their blog to write about their characters and the situations in which those characters find themselves. If your novel is set in Bali, in your blog you can give readers a virtual tour of the island and some of the places your characters visit in your novel. If you've written a western, you might use your blog to discuss famous lawmen of the west or famous bad guys who make William Bonney look like a slacker. You can even write fictional scenes in a blog: how an argument between siblings might have turned out instead of how it actually turned out, for example. You might even allow one or more of your characters to step out of your novel and write a blog post or two themselves. One of my characters, Juan Carlos Salazar, even has his own email address. I translate of course.

I recommend blogging from a few times a week to a few times a month. It's always a good idea to invite comments and to ask readers to share your blog with others. It's also a good idea to have your blog automatically posted to your Facebook and/or LinkedIn and/or Twitter accounts.

Nothing presents a better first impression than a professional website. Whatever you choose to do in that regard, you'll also want to link your website to your various sales and publicity venues, and to your social media.

Sales Venues—Some online sales venues offer authors varying levels of interaction with readers.

- [Smashwords](http://www.smashwords.com) (<http://www.smashwords.com>) offers a place for an author photo and bio. You can also tie your Twitter account to Smashwords so that whenever you Tweet something it will pop up on your author page at Smashwords.
- [Amazon](https://kdp.amazon.com) (<https://kdp.amazon.com>) offers an author page, including a blog where you can actually interact with readers if you want to. You can also tie your Twitter account to your Amazon account.
- [XinXii](http://www.xinxii.com/) (*pronounced Zin Zee*) is self-billed as “Europe’s Leading eBook Distributor for Indie Authors and Self-Publishers.” There is no author/customer interaction that I could find, but as a sales venue this one might be worth looking into. Click the link or visit <http://www.xinxii.com/>.
- Other online sales venues (available through Smashwords as your distributor) include Apple, Baker & Taylor (both Blio and Axis360), Diesel, Flipkart, Kobo (the last remnant of Borders), Library Direct, Oyster, PageFoundry and Sony. Some will accept titles directly from author/publishers, but most will accept titles only from a distributor. If you're going to self-publish ebooks and you want to distribute to more than Amazon, I strongly recommend using Smashwords as your distributor. If you choose to self-publish a print book, I most strongly recommend CreateSpace.

Publicity Venues

Some venues exist primarily to connect readers to authors and vice versa:

- [GoodReads](#)—From the site: “The Goodreads Author Program is a completely free feature designed to help authors reach their target audience—passionate readers. This is the perfect place for new and established authors to promote their books.” For complete information, click the link or visit <http://www.goodreads.com/author/program>.
- [Nothing Binding](#)—Nothing Binding is billed as a “Launch Marketing Site for Writers.” Click the link or visit <http://www.nothingbinding.com/>.
- [Scribd](#)—I have an account at Scribd but I don’t really recommend it as a sales venue. I’ve found it to be more useful as a portal. I do offer a few titles for sale there, but more importantly I offer readers some free reading and then invite them to purchase at Amazon or Smashwords (my two best sales venues). Click the link or visit <http://scribd.com/>.
- [Free-eBooks.net](#)—You can upload your books here, receive and monitor comments from readers, and other benefits. I haven’t tested this one personally.

Especially when you use a lesser-known venue, please be sure to read their Terms of Service just to be sure you aren’t granting them all rights to your book and your first-born great-grandchild.

Social Media

Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com> is a great social network on which contacts seem to expand almost exponentially. The point here is to be social, to interact with potential readers. If you are personable, you’ll do well. If you don’t play well with others, you’ll attract a bunch of grouches as friends. Seriously, another good thing about Facebook is that they have special-interest groups. Again, you don’t want to focus on writer groups but on *reader* groups, folks who are interested in things you believe your readers probably are interested in.

Twitter at <https://twitter.com> is my favorite social media. I have an account for myself [@hstanbrough](#), one for StoneThread Publishing [@stonethread](#) and a third one that isn’t fully established yet. I pop off occasionally on Twitter (like you’re supposed to) but mostly I have a set of recurring tweets regarding my books and services, my authors’ books, and so on.

LinkedIn is at <https://www.linkedin.com>. I have an account there as well but I don’t use it nearly as much as I use Twitter or Facebook. LinkedIn also has specialized groups. I recommend you investigate this one. I recommend [Google+](#) and I’ve heard good things about [Pinterest](#).

If you go to [eBiz|MBA](http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites) (<http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites>) you will find a list of the 15 most popular social networking sites. Remember that not all of them will be as valuable from a networking and business standpoint as strictly from a social standpoint.

Those listed (other than Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Google+) are [MySpace](#) (a lot of kids here), [DeviantArt](#), [LiveJournal](#), [Tagged](#), [Orkut](#), [CafeMom](#), [Ning](#), [Meetup](#), [MyLife](#), and [Ask.fm](#). Of course, many writers also have accounts at [YouTube](#) (probably for the ever popular book trailers) and [Flickr](#) where “Everyone gets a free terabyte,” though I’m not sure of the value of those venues.

Putting It All Together

In the Preparation section I advised you to prepare your book to make it the best it could possibly be, prepare yourself so can make the sale when the time comes, and then establish your brand so readers will instantly recognize your work. I also advised you to establish your platform, and up to this point, that’s what the rest of the seminar has been about.

When you've created your website and chosen your sales and publicity venues and which social media you'll use, all that remains is to

4. **Work your platform as if you're in business...** because you are. If you're good at keeping schedules, you might establish one by which you spend up to an hour (total) adding comments to on your social media on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, post a blog every tenth day, etc. When marketing, getting into a routine is a good thing.

Finally, speaking of working your platform, I recommend *90 Days of Promoting Your Book Online*, a book by Angela Hoy and Richard Hoy. It's 160 pages and available in both paperback (\$24.95) and ebook (\$19.95). You can find it at <http://booklocker.com/books/5948.html>.

Special Tools to Combine or Manage Your Social Media include the following. Some work with only social media, and some enable you to manage instant messaging, email and social networks as well:

- HootSuite (www.HootSuite.com)
- Digsby (www.digsby.com)
- TweetDeck by Twitter (www.tweetdeck.com/)
- Vertical Response (www.VerticalResponse.com)
- Social Oomph (www.socialoomph.com)
- TweetAdder (www.tweetadder.com)

And there are others. Key "Social media management apps" into a search engine. In particular, if you're good at analyzing data, you might check out Spredfast.com, "a tool that excels at data feature integration. Manage and measure data gathered from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr to see how many people you are reaching and whether or not your target audience is being engaged by your content. The data is presented in formatted graphs, which you can use to compare and benchmark campaigns against other strategies. With SpredFast, the analytical possibilities are virtually endless."

~ Ends ~

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For examples of some of the live websites I've designed, please visit these:

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About the Author

Harvey Stanbrough was born in New Mexico, seasoned in Texas, and baked in Arizona. He spent most of his early life in the home of his heart, the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona. After graduating from a 21-year civilian-appreciation course in the U.S. Marine Corps, he attended Eastern New Mexico University where he managed to sneak up on a bachelors degree. His works have been nominated for the Frankfurt eBook Award, a Pushcart Prize, and the National Book Award. He writes and works as an editor and writing instructor from his home in southeast Arizona. Contact Harvey at h_stanbrough@yahoo.com. Visit his website at <http://HarveyStanbrough.com> or visit him on [Facebook](#).