

Creative Book Event Ideas Using Social Media Platforms

A WORD ON AUDIENCE:

The smartest thing you can do before planning a marketing event is to understand what makes your book special. What is it about the book's topic, plot, theme and characters that stands out as unique? What is your brand?

If your book is a mystery, what sets it apart from other mysteries? Knowing what elements are unique about your book will help you then build themed events that will draw the attention of people most likely to be interested in reading your book.

It's important to know your audience, but even more important to understand what they want, need, and find interesting so you know exactly who you are trying to reach (and how!) with each marketing event.

Your goal is to create something memorable that stands out from all the promotional white noise. And remember that while writers are readers, they are only a small part of the audience you want to reach. Think about how to grab the attention of your specific audience.

TWITTER

The goal? Try and go viral. What can you tweet that will compel people to want to share it or participate in your event? You want each tweet (and your event #hashtag) to stand out in the feed so people take notice. Think about why people use twitter, and what need it fills in their lives. Then ask yourself how your event can entertain or add value.

- Can you tie your twitter event theme to a human emotion or desire (e.g. being a better person), something that has wide appeal (like humor) or even a current news item or world view (that fits with your book's topic)? These might help you grab attention and discover a potential audience.
- Can you get other influencers involved (a big name author in your genre, businesses that make products that tie into your book's genre/theme, or a website maven who provides material to her readers that is similar to your book)? Imagine pairing up with a popular homesteading blogger to discuss your historical fiction novel set in a homesteading environment. Her followers may be interested in your book. Your reading audience might be interested in her blog. Joining forces with someone who caters to a similar audience is a good opportunity to cross promote.

Specific to Twitter Chats:

A) host a chat on a specific topic of interest with your target audience using a #chat hashtag. Make it fun and themed to your book. In advance, prepare tweets to generate questions, links to interesting sites to share during dead spots, and occasional tweets asking people to join the discussion on your topic. You can do giveaways that only participants are eligible for. Tweet well in advance about the chat so people know when it is.

B) Host a chat that is universally appealing but ties in to your book in some way. For example, if your book is based around a big secret, then host a chat that uses the hashtag #mybigsecret. Encourage people to share their biggest secrets. If it's about a first romance, maybe use #myfirstcrush and prompt people to share who it was, where, when or why. There's something about sharing private details in the "Twitter void" that feels a bit like a confessional, which can be a bit exciting and universally appealing.

C) Run a live action role play event. If you've written an adventure book, host a "choose your own adventure" event that plays out in real time. Tweet lines of a scenario, ending with a choice to be made (Stay or leave? Open the box or not? Pull the trigger or walk away?) Let chat participants take turns to decide, then continue the tale. Not knowing how the story will go keeps people engaged. Try a horror movie theme for a horror book...which Twitter participant makes it through to the end of the twitter chat "alive" based on their decisions? Offer random prizes to participants. Use a hashtag in each tweet. Adapt this idea for your specific genre, but the goal here is to find a way to get people involved in a neat way.

FACEBOOK

The goal is building an event that ties in to your book's topic or genre with some WOW factor. Think about something you don't see other people do.

- Grab special aspects of your book, turn it into a theme, and run with it. Maybe your hero is a big risk taker. He pushes the limits on everything and the plot is one big thrill ride, and this is what makes your book special. Host a live game of "Truth or Dare." The dares can be things the person has to say or post online and then link back to the Facebook party, drawing more attention to it.
- Host a contest of some kind--something people can prepare for and share (a poem, an online picture, a recipe or anything else that ties into the book's theme.)
- Have fun with your genre. Write mystery? Host a Murder Mystery Party! Write Crime? Find a crime scene picture online and craft a story around it. Ask participants to try and solve the crime based on the clues. Write steampunk? Get everyone to create an invention or costume. Find ways to get people to participate and have fun.

GOOGLE+

Google plus is great for topic discussions, interviews, and hanging out. It isn't about "buy my book;" it's about inviting people to share your world, your time, and have some fun. This is what makes you memorable.

- Host a Google Hangout meet and greet, read deleted scenes or bloopers from your book, show people where you live and write. And don't forget, discussion goes two ways! The best chats are ones where everyone speaks up, shares ideas or stories and asks questions. Find ways to connect in a fun and genuine way.
- Throw a themed live event party that ties in to your book. Is your hero a show-off? Does she have a weird talent? Hold a "Strut your Stuff" event and invite people to come and show off their crazy or weird talents LIVE. The best one wins something awesome, and everyone shares a lot of laughs in the process. The ideas are endless, if you think outside the box.
- Invite several authors who write books like yours to be on a panel, answering questions about their books, the genre, and what is exciting about the books people are reading. Give fans a chance to ask questions of their favorite authors. A group event means everyone involved is notifying their fans about the event, fans who might just need another book or two to read!
- Use a hangout to post a virtual wine and cheese, pajama party, costume or "come as your favorite character" party. Invite your guests and enjoy an evening of party chatter from the comfort of your own home. You can run live giveaways and create fun party games. If you want an alternative "virtual room" that can also hold your event, do check out the fabulous and affordable virtual space at [Tech Surgeons](#).

PINTEREST

Pinterest is visual, so take advantage of that. Create boards that have items that will appeal to your ideal reader. This means knowing what makes your book special. If it's fantasy, would people who love dragons read it, or people who dig chicks with swords? Or does it play to people interested in magic? Roleplay? Elves? Something else entirely? Know what makes your book special and then hone in on topics that will appeal to this type of readership.

- Create a board that is full of interesting things that tie in to your book - themed pictures, websites, real world facts, recipes, weaponry...whatever fits best.
- Create a board of links to images that inspired your world building. Invite book fans to post link to images they have found that make them think of your world and characters.
- Fashion a board for your main character: things he loves, hates, his secret vices and fears, etc. (And do this for other standout characters too, like your antagonist!)
- Create a board for readers of "X" type books. There are books out there like yours--find them, read them and recommend the best ones. Put yours on that board too. People are always looking for books that are similar to ones they like to read and will follow and re-pin your board, giving you more exposure. You can tweet a link to this board, too.
- For a launch or event, create a Pinterest board of participants and use other networks to encourage people to follow the blogs and websites listed. This is a nice way to thank them by bringing traffic

their way. (It is also how you can keep a visual log of your biggest fans and supporters to contact the next time you launch a book!)

YOU TUBE

People love videos. In social media algorithms, they often get top billing, so get over your shyness of being on camera and do something awesome! Be funny or offer something interesting. Encourage people to participate by sending in viewer videos, voting on videos or just sharing your video. Then offer a prize to someone who comments!

- Create a compilation video of you and other authors doing something meaningful for a cause, such as raising money or awareness. (We had huge success with our [Random Acts of Kindness event](#) because it had huge emotional appeal. This could easily be adapted to be hosted on YouTube. If it is meaningful, people want to share it!)
- If it fits your genre (say YA or Romance) collect a bunch of fans or book bloggers/book celebrities holding up a handwritten note about your book--something they loved, who they crushed on, etc. Encourage readers to send in their own video or picture to win a special prize.
- Stage a contest. Nothing is better than a showdown. Find a few genre heavy hitters looking for exposure and video a contest--something that is fun or funny that you can all do. Or ask celebrity book bloggers! Get people involved. Make it unique and fun and the content will be shared everywhere. Speed reading the first page of their book? A donut-on-a-string eating contest? Maybe authors issuing double-dog-dare challenges to other authors & then those dares unfolding online? Pit one genre against another in author teams. Who knows! The more people you get involved, the more audience sharing possibilities there are, and the better your chances of going viral.
- Hone in on a popular theme that also ties in to your book. Is it about wilderness survival? Run a contest where viewers build a mini survival kit that can fit in an Altoids can, or a video of them lighting a fire with only flint and steel. Award a winner with a survival-themed prize. Write steampunk? Make and show off your steampunk outfit, and encourage viewers to send in videos with their own. Write horror? Ask viewers to post a video about their favorite horror book or film. There are a billion ways to incorporate YouTube into your launch plans.
- If you're feeling adventurous, create a spoof trailer about your book using Barbies, puppets or willing volunteers. Or pick a topic that will appeal to your audience—something that fits your brand and their sense of humor. Sites like [College Humor](#) are hugely popular for a reason. Take a risk or two, and your super funny and unique creation might just catapult your popularity.

BLOGGING

Blogs are an author's "home base", the one place you can point all of your followers to via social media. I encourage all authors to have a website with a blog and to make it the focal point for any launch. If you don't have a blog, find someone you know who is willing to host you for your event. Blogs take time, but the re-

wards are wonderful. Create an event that you can spread across many blogs (your street team of supporters) for maximum exposure. Traffic goes to each blogger involved and comes back to you, creating a win-win scenario. But of course, you need something unique. A big concept. Your book cover splashed everywhere isn't going to cut it.

Here are a few ideas.

- A treasure hunt. Choose something that ties in to your brand and create a fun treasure hunt out of it. Years ago we had a "[Crack the Code](#)" event where readers had to find our Crack the Code badges (hidden on different website pages on our blog) to enter. Winners were given a code, and if their code opened the vault on the last day of the contest, they followed that code to another blog to find their prize. This was hugely popular, because it was easy to participate in, and totally unique. Plus there was the universal appeal of the mystery...not knowing if your code would open the vault until you tried it.
- A shared "theme" of blog hop posts. Tie into your theme or genre, and choose a topic that is a real zinger. Look at what has been done, and up the ante. Be unique and stand out. There's lots of "Summer Beach Reads Hops" and "Try A New Indie Book Hop" stuff. Go somewhere different with your event. When Stina Lindenblatt's NA novel *Tell Me When* released, she chose to forgo book promo and focused on raising awareness about an important issue by asking willing volunteers [to share their stalking stories](#). This was a huge success because it made everyone involved realize just how much stalking affects both men and women, and it brought an important issue to light. Whatever topic you choose, make it compelling so people will notice and share it. This will increase your visibility and provide discoverability opportunities for you.
- Contests and giveaways that encourage participation. Sounds generic, but it isn't...if you come up with an amazingly fun concept that is all about providing entertainment. Think about how you can create an event that is so compelling, people can't help but join in. Draw on your audience's interests, fan the flames of a universal desire, or fill a need. And please, think beyond writers whenever you do an event like this! Writers are readers, but this is only a slice of your true audience. How can you pull in people who aren't writers? Go to websites, forums, Facebook, and Twitter, and start some conversations. Find out where people interested in X hang out, and ask if they want to get involved. Look at other types of businesses to see what they have done. Take a peek at Kickstarter campaigns, run searches for online promotions from retailers. Think outside of the book world and see what others are doing for fun to involve their customers and get them talking about a product. A few more ideas: look at tying YouTube video ideas in to the event, use photoshopped pictures to make it fun, [stage a blog takeover](#), ask participants to send in photoshopped pictures, answer a poll, or create a caption on a funny picture. Get crazy.
- Give back. Whatever event you do, make it about your audience and supporters, not about you. In our week-long [Random Acts of Kindness event](#), we mentioned our [Emotion Thesaurus](#) book releasing just once. That's right, once. Yet we ended up with over 10,000 visitors because people loved the concept of surprising someone they cared about with a RAOK. The event snowballed and more and more people joined in. Then, with our next release, we ran a [Writers Helping Writers Amazing Race](#), where for an entire week, our audience (writers) could get free feedback on first pages, queries, pitches and more. Our street team of supporters (over 80 people) raced with us, and we helped a ton of writers with free critiques. They also took turns posting about the race on their blogs, driving traffic

to the event. Each day we had cool prizes to be won, as well. These events succeeded because we lived our brand: *writers helping writers*. We made it about our audience, not about us.

ANGELA'S TOP 10 TIPS FOR RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL ONLINE BOOK EVENT

- 1) **Make it fun and entertaining for your audience.** Think big, and then bigger. Do something unique. Create a theme that naturally ties in to your book.
- 2) **Make it easy to participate** (both for the street team and your audience!)
- 3) **Plan everything well in advance.** Be organized every step of the way. Leave nothing to chance.
- 4) **Establish strong email communication with your street team helpers.** Make sure they understand their role and have everything they need. Provide any links, badges, and template posts for their sites in advance so all they have to do is cut and paste the content onto their blogs. Answer questions to alleviate confusion.
- 5) **Look for opportunities to share news of the event without being a promo machine.** Craft tweets in advance that make people want to click. Choose a great hashtag, and search for “theme topics” to see what established hashtags might also help you reach an audience interested in your event (but don’t go hashtag crazy!) Look to see if there are groups online (on Facebook, or other social networks and forums that contain possible readers who might be interested in your specific book) who might want to join the fun, but take care not to spam anyone.
- 6) **Offer something of value.** Know what your audience likes, wants, and need. Then provide it. Make it about them, not you.
- 7) **Avoid hoop jumping.** If your event requires too much work to join in, enter contests or the like, people will move on. Respect their time. In my experience, if I make a point of NOT forcing people to share/join my newsletter/like my Facebook page, etc. and instead simply ask them to share a post or spread the word, I get more social shares.
- 8) **Display incentives in your website or blog’s sidebar to join a newsletter or get on a book notification list.** Offer something free or something they will find helpful or interesting if they sign up. Many will, and it won’t feel “in your face.”
- 9) **Be present and interact.** Events don’t run themselves, so make sure you’re chatting in comments, tweeting, and starting up dialogues. Make it about your visitors, not you. Ask questions, and draw people into the conversation.

10) **Say thank you.** Always let the people involved know how much you appreciated their help. If you like, ask your visitors for feedback on how the event went. This will give you ideas of what was popular for future marketing events.

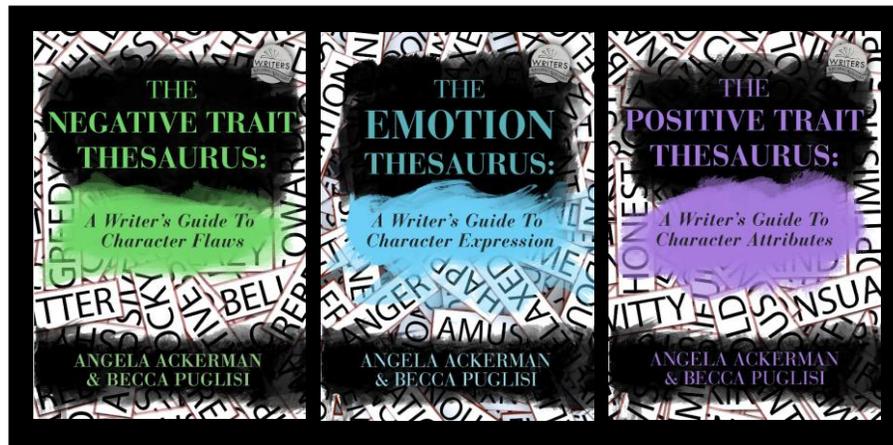


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Happy Writing and Marketing!

~ Angela Ackerman



*“One of the challenges a fiction writer faces, especially when prolific, is coming up with fresh ways to describe emotions. This handy compendium fills that need. It is both a reference and a brainstorming tool, and one of the resources I’ll be turning to most often as I write my own books.” ~ James Scott Bell, bestselling author of *Deceived* and *Plot & Structure**

*“In these brilliantly conceived, superbly organized and astonishingly thorough volumes, Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi have created an invaluable resource for writers and storytellers. Whether you are searching for new and unique ways to add and define characters, or brainstorming methods for revealing those characters without resorting to clichés, it is hard to imagine two more powerful tools for adding depth and dimension to your screenplays, novels or plays.” ~ Michael Hauge, Hollywood Script Consultant and Story Expert, author of *Writing Screenplays That Sell**