PLATFORM: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF BLOGGING

**Know Your Audience:** This is the most important advice I can give. To get the most from a blog, focus the content so it reaches a SPECIFIC audience. Knowing up front who you want your ideal audience to be will help you create a blog that will attract and keep readers. You can blog about several things, but make sure the greater portion of posts relate to your interests and tie into topics that you commonly cover in your fiction.

**Understand Their Needs:** Knowing the needs of your audience allows you to focus your content to suit. This is why understanding your audience is critical. Providing what people need or want most will make your blog a success.

**Generate Compelling Content:** For many bloggers, this is a struggle. Take some time off from posting to better understand who you are blogging for and what they are interested in seeing most. Visit other blogs that you admire. Which ones pull at you the most? Chances are, these have an audience similar to yours or fill a need you yourself have. HINT: This might be the area where you could focus your own blog because you can strongly relate to this need.

If you are questioning your abilities to offer advice because you are in a stage of learning yourself, don't let doubt stop you. **If you are passionate about a topic, it shows!** Too, being a learner is something your audience can relate to. You can share what you learn in your posts, and readers will feel you are both walking the path together.

**Interact:** Blogging is community-minded. You cannot have a successful blog unless you are willing to reciprocate. This means visiting other blogs and supporting other bloggers that cater to similar audiences as your own. Comment on posts, use Twitter to retweet other people's content and get to know the people who comment on your posts. Do what you can to raise the profile of bloggers whom you admire. Do this right and you will have a network of people passionate to help you grow as well.

**See Blogging as Giving, not Getting:** This one is really key. If you focus your blog mostly on promoting your books, your blog will never become what it could be. Readers may feel like you don't really care about them and only see them as a potential buyer. Value the fact that they are sharing time with you when they could be elsewhere.

**Pay Attention to the Details:** View your blog from a reader's standpoint: is it friendly on the eyes (font, color scheme, etc)? Is your sidebar easy to navigate—can readers find older posts? Is there a subject index? Do you link to resources that will wow your readers? Do you have a share bar so people can tweet/share your content? Have you minimized distractions—flashy graphics and blog awards, ads, etc? Most importantly, make sure readers can find out more about you, your books, and other places you can be found online.

**Blog Promo Balance:** Blogs are excellent vehicles to promote your books...in moderation. Cross linking and promoting with other authors, hosting guest posts and offering guest posts in turn, creating a blog tour during a book launch, etc. are all options. **Whatever you choose, always remember your readership's core needs/wants.** If your blog becomes a swarm of guest posts, interviews, or book promos instead of the content that brought them in the first place, you will lose readers.
Pay attention to What Other Authors are Doing to Promote: What is successful and what isn't? Always try to think innovatively rather than only doing what has been done before. To break out and be noticed, sometimes you need to take risks. There is nothing better than coming up with a fresh idea and having your promotion go viral because of the buzz it creates.

Quick and Dirty Posting Tips:

--Whenever possible, keep posts shorter rather than longer
--Add a photo (only ones you have permission to use!) with each post that ties into the content
--Encourage readers to comment by asking questions or opinions
--Create helpful lists or ‘Top 5’ type posts that are fast and easy reads
--Post consistently. Create a schedule that works for you, and stick to it
--Utilize blog challenges and blog rolls to kick-start a following
--Share milestones. This helps your audience feel connected to your goals and your journey
--Create contests and giveaways to draw an audience
--Blog stats can tell you a lot about your readership's needs, so use them
--Use bold to highlight information you want readers to notice most
--Respond to comments either individually, as a group, or by visiting the owners’ blogs
--Have fun. Show your personality and be genuine!

Further Reading:

Rise of The Machines: Human Authors in a Digital World - Kristen Lamb

*HINT* Search “Blogging Tips” at The Bookshelf Muse
PRAISE FOR THE EMOTION THESAURUS

“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, best-selling author of Deceived and Plot & Structure

PRAISE FOR THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE TRAIT THESAURUS BOOKS

“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 and Selling Your Story in 60 Seconds: The Guaranteed Way to Get Your Screenplay or Novel Read

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