PLATEFORM: 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.

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http://writershelpingwriters.net
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:

--Keep posts shorter rather than longer whenever possible
--Add a photo with each post that ties into the content (only ones you have permission to use!)
--Encourage readers to comment by asking questions or opinions
--Create helpful lists or ‘Top 5’ type posts which 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
Getting the Most Out of Twitter: NETWORKING and PROMO

**Be Present**: Twitter is about interacting. Make it part of your routine and send out a few tweets each day. If you can't do this each day, create and keep a tweet schedule that works for you, just like you would with a blog.

**Be Social**: Share a bit about yourself in tweets and get to know people on a more personal level. Have a sense of humour and reply to tweets that are relevant to you. The way you interact with others will turn acquaintances into supporters.

**Share with Others**: Your twitter followers are your audience, both for you and your passions. What do they want? What content would they find relevant? Share links that align with your followers' needs and interests and they will check your twitterfeed more often.

**Use RT (Retweet) and Mentions**: RTs are the lifeblood of Twitter, allowing your tweets to reach beyond the scope of your own followers. Encourage others to RT you by offering strong linking content and by retweeting others in kind. Mentioning others via #follow hashtags, general shout outs and thanking people who support you is a great way to show your appreciation.

**Be Professional While Being Personal**: Twitter is global, and FOREVER. Never tweet anything you wouldn't want your grandmother, agent, or industry professionals to see. Anyone can search your tweets--the editor considering your book, the kid in fourth grade wanting to find out more about his favourite author, teachers, family...your tweets are open to all.

**Avoid Faux Pas**: If most of your tweets are about how and where to buy your book, this is a huge turn off to your followers. **Treating followers like customers is a giant mistake**. Tweeting about yourself and your books is fine, if it is only a portion of your tweets. Most of your tweets should NOT be self-promoting.

**Tweet Links**: If you have a guest post up on another site, a new blog post to share, or something that relates to you and your books, **do post a link**! Use keywords that will get the most attention, triggering topics that your audience likes to read about. If you've done a good job about getting involved in the Twitter community, these will often be retweeted by followers. Just make sure to keep in mind the above tip and minimize your self-promotion overall.

**Cross-Promote**: The key to Twitter is to **use your relationships with others to reach audiences beyond your own**. Find others who can use your support in promoting them and start doing so. The writing community is wonderful for paying it forward. If you do your best to promote others who have a similar audience, chances are it will come back to you as well. Just be careful to not saturate your tweet feed with promotions. Create a balance between interactions with others, sharing content that will interest your audience, and promo.

**Use Hashtags**: **Hashtags are your friend!** Often people search for information on Twitter by searching a hashtag like #writing or #amwriting. If you use a hashtag to tweet content that directly applies to a topic, people looking for information on that topic will check out your profile, and possibly begin to follow you. More followers means a bigger audience to share your tweets with, and a stronger twitter reach. There are dozens of blog posts on hashtags, so I won't reinvent the wheel here. Run a Google
search for hashtags and pair it with topics that will reach your audience—writers, teachers, librarians. Using hashtags and offering good content will make these gatekeepers aware of you and increase the power of your network.

**Get Involved with Chats:** Writer or author, you have insight to give, and lessons to learn. We never stop growing and evolving. There are many different chats daily on the areas of writing and publishing—some are spontaneous, others are scheduled. Again, a simple search in Google will show you the #hashtag used for chats (#writechat #litchat #scriptchat, etc). **These events can offer you exposure to agents, editors, and other professionals who often participate.** Want to add librarians and teachers to your network? Find out their chat #hashtags and sit in on a chat. You'll learn more about their needs, and may be able to offer something that can help them. Chats are not a place to PROMOTE, they are a place to LEARN and SHARE. Chats are all about community, so think of how you can add to it through what you know, or ask questions to encourage learning opportunities for everyone.

**Find a Triberr group:** Triberr is a great way to make sure your posts are being tweeted to new audiences and increase the chance of them being seen. You can find out more about Triberr [HERE](#), but it basically sorts your tweets into a stream that makes them very easy to share by other members of your tribe. You tweet their links, and they tweet yours...that sort of thing. The key to Triberr increasing your reach is to find bloggers who have similar audiences as you, people who will be posting similar content as you do on your blog. This ensures that the posts they share of yours will interest their readers, and vice versa.

**Avoid Automation:** Twitter is about building meaningful connections, and that means talking to people and getting to know them. Take the time to do this rather than relying on automation programs—trust me. Auto responders that tell new followers a rendition of “Hi, thanks for following, you can find out about my book here *link***” are not going to win you new readers, but they will annoy followers. Also, using auto tweeters to tweet the same messages over and over will encourage people to block you, because that gets annoying day after day.

**Be Genuine:** Being yourself by offering support, friendship, and value is the best thing you can do on Twitter. It is a great place for finding useful information and making connections!
Be Aware: By opening up your Facebook to other writers, readers, and industry professionals, what you share from your personal life is now viewable by all. Those photos of you drinking from a keg at New Years? Yep, on Facebook. That rant you posted with all the #@$$& in it? Yeah, that can be seen too.

Facebook is no longer your personal page to razz family or flirt with new friends or complain about life; these things are viewed by everyone in your circle and now become part of your professional image.

Beware: All that stuff above? Well, that goes for the people you associate with, too. Do you want a friend's expletive rant showing up on YOUR wall, or your brother's drunken video to show up in YOUR news feed? If you have personal connections that might hurt your rep, take care to change your setting so their content never shows up in your feed, or remove them from your Social Networking Profile and create a 'Family and Friend Only' one.

Be a Window: Facebook more than anywhere else allows us to open the window to our personal side. This is where we learn that Writer friend X has a daughter graduating, and that Writer friend Y has posted pics of her new black lab puppy. The relationships you've built on Twitter and Blogs become “more intimate” on Facebook because of this personal layering. So be a window and share a bit of your world, your family, your life—whatever you're comfortable with. Let people get to know you a bit more.

Outsmart Facebook: When you want to socialize a bit, turn your news feed to 'most recent'. FB likes to choose what you see in your feed by showing you only the most popular posts by THEIR metrics. The ”most recent” setting allows you to keep up-to-date with what's happening as it happens.

Be Open to Friendining: If your goal is to build writing contacts, then be open to friendining other writers/authors/editors/agents on Facebook. NEVER spam people to gain contacts; instead, interact with them when they comment on friend's pages and in that way, you'll find other writers. Check out the 'Who you may know' section because often there will be people on FB that you know from other socials sites.

Minimize Promo: Just like Twitter and blogging, promoting yourself aggressively on FB can be a death knell. Be balanced in your updates and keep it more fun or interesting than promotional. Use a page to release updated information about yourself or your book to stay connected to fans and readers.

Pages: Creating a page for yourself as an author or for one of your books can be a great way to keep in touch with fans. People who are interested in your professional side can 'like' your page, providing you with a way to keep them up-to-date with your progress and book events. Be careful not to spam your page with link upon link of how to buy your book. Instead, add other links and updates that might also interest them—news items that tie into an element of your book, large events where you are attending/presenting so you can invite people out to meet you, snippets of behind-the-scenes book stuff that average readers don't normally hear about. Ask questions, try to engage your readers, and thank them for your support.

Groups: Groups can be another way to gather people interested in your book or yourself into one place where you can share updates and news. Or, you can participate in groups that target your audience or allow you to network with other professionals, spreading your reach. The same rules apply for groups as they do Twitter chats: focus on how you can add to the group and what you can offer rather than
leaning too heavily on self-promotion. If the group is one you created, you can have a balance of both, but be aware that too many emails to all members can become tedious and cause people to hit delete rather than engage with you further.

**OVERALL:** Be fun, friendly, and genuine. Facebook is one of the best places to transform acquaintances into friends. Remember: you’re on a world stage, and never act in a way that you’ll regret later. You may feel passionate about heavy topics like religion and politics, but think before you post, making sure that what you want to say won’t alienate your Facebook contacts.

Need more Social Media help? Visit our new home at [Writers Helping Writers](http://writershelpingwriters.net), and find us online:

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