**Free Book Marketing Plan Outline**

Continuing with this week's series on book marketing plans, it's time for a freebie. This is a book marketing plan outline that you can use

This book marketing plan outline is a short form "real" marketing plan for indie authors (meaning it goes beyond a simple, and often untargeted, list of tactics). While a simple list might be fine when pitching publishers, a list of marketing tactics is not a marketing plan. As an indie author you're a business owner. And as a business owner you owe it to yourself to have a comprehensive and thought-out plan in place.

This outline is meant to serve as a roadmap from the beginning of the writing process, where you'll evaluate demand and your target market, through post-launch promotion. You should have a separate book marketing plan for every book published, though you can also create a series marketing plan if you've already released multiple books in a series.

Preview the book marketing plan outline below or download the .pdf version at the end of this post. In the next several days, I'll release a premium version that goes far beyond this outline -- a full-fledged template, with an example plan filled out. That version will go into more depth with additional sections not included here. But consider this a place to start.

**Introduction / Summary**

This section is a short summary of more detailed information in your marketing plan. If it makes things easier, write this section last.

Describe your book.

Describe current market conditions.

Briefly summarize your target buyers and readers.

Briefly summarize your goals or objectives.

Summarize your marketing strategy.

**Your Target Market**

This section describes the ideal buyers of your book. Everything else will be tailored to them.

What are the demographics of your ideal readers (age, gender, education, location, etc.)?

Are there other groups of potential buyers you should target (such as a children's author targeting teachers and parents rather than just trying to appeal to their target readers)?

What are the primary needs of your target market (and how does your book satisfy those needs)?

What factors and emotions are likely to influence buying decisions within your target market? You'll want your marketing messages to appeal to those things.

In what ways, places, or media are your target buyers going to be easiest to reach?

**Market Analysis**

This section is where you explore larger market trends and issues that could influence your book sales (changes in technology, legislation related to your book's niche, trends in consumer behavior, etc.).

What are the critical issues facing you in reaching readers with your book?

What are your keys to success (where do you have the most opportunity to succeed)?

What distribution channels will you use?

What larger market forces could affect your book sales (genre trends, print book vs e-book buying habits, etc.)?

**Competitive Analysis**

This section of your book marketing plan is where you evaluate the competition and see how you stack up against them.

Who is your competition?

How are top-selling competitors pricing similar books?

How is the competition promoting and distributing their books?

What are your competitors doing well, or better than you?

Where are your competitors struggling (where can you do better than them)?

Marketing Objectives

This section is where you list your marketing goals or objectives. Use S.M.A.R.T. goals here -- they should be specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and time-sensitive (meaning they should have deadlines). Below are some examples, but you don't have to use all of them and you don't have to limit yourself to them.

How many books do you want to sell? (Your first month, 3 months, 6 months, a year, etc.)

How much do you have to earn to be profitable (cover your production and marketing expenses and the time invested), and by when do you want to hit that target?

How many reviews do you want, and by when? How many total versus 4-5 stars?

**Marketing Strategy**

This section explains, in broad terms, how you plan to meet your marketing objectives. Think of your objectives as problems that need to be solved, and think of your marketing strategy as your high-level solution. Leave the specific steps and tools for later.

How will branding play a role in helping you sell books?

How will you position yourself among the competition (selling low-priced books versus premium books for example)? What kind of reputation do you want this book to have, or how do you want it to be seen in relation to other books on the market?

Cover the 4 Ps of Marketing:

Product: Provide a detailed description of your book (synopsis) as well as a physical description (length, cover design plans, dimensions, etc.). Also include the benefits your book offers its target readers in comparison to competing titles.

Price: How will you price your book? Will you offer discounts or sales from time to time? What kind of payment methods can you accept (for direct sales)?

Promotion: Summarize your key marketing tactics and tools (will you focus mostly on public speaking, social media marketing, etc.)? You'll cover these in more detail in the next section.

Placement: What specific marketplaces will carry your book? Will you sell directly in-person? Where? Will you sell through your own website? On what page, and through what distribution services, if any? In other words, how and where will your book be accessible to readers?

Marketing Tactics / Action Plan

This section is where you get into the nitty gritty aspects of meeting your objectives. List all specific marketing tactics, tools, or actions that will help you successfully execute your marketing strategy. If a tactic doesn't do that, put that time or money into something that will.

What print tactics will you use (bookmarks, mailers, posters, etc.)?

How will you use your website or blog to promote your book and build relationships with readers?

Will you use speaking engagements to promote your books?

What about webinars or online courses?

What social networks will you use, and what will you do to promote your books on each of them?

What other online marketing tactics can you use?

What other offline marketing tactics can you use?

Create a marketing calendar (Gantt charts are a good option) so you know when each action or tactic will be scheduled. Some will be ongoing. Others will have deadlines. The idea is to make sure your tactics complement each other at any given time so you don't spread yourself too thin. Setting a marketing schedule up front also ensures that you won't wait until the last minute -- like launch day -- to start building visibility for your book.

Finances and Metrics (The Numbers)

This section is where you'll explore your marketing budget for this book and how you plan to spend it. It's important to be realistic here. Make sure your tactics reflect what your budget allows. And remember that "I don't have a budget" almost never works. You'll spend money on something, even if it's small. Account for everything. (Your website's domain registration, web hosting, a press release distribution service, a web template or custom design, a logo design, your cover design, travel costs for live events, webinar software or services, etc.)

What is your total marketing budget? How much during pre-launch? How much right around your launch date? How much in the first few months or a year?

Make a list of all of the tactics and tools you described in the previous section, and detail all costs involved. For example, if you set a yearly budget, your website hosting cost would be for only the current year of hosting. You would update your marketing plan at the end of that year. Include an expense forecast similar to your marketing schedule so you'll know what expenses will become due and when.

Include sales forecasts if at all possible. When should you expect to earn a profit? Justify these forecasts with data (such as from your competitive analysis). If you have a larger business plan, you can work these numbers in there instead.

How will you evaluate the success or failure of your marketing plan? What specific metrics will you measure to make sure you reach your goals (e.g. number of sales, total amount earned, number of reviews, number of free downloads, etc.)?