

# 10 Lethal Marketing Mistakes Almost Everyone is Making

People always ask me what's the single biggest mistake authors make. I'm not sure it's just one mistake, though the truth is that one mistake can sink your entire book. Often when I tell a group of authors what I'm about to share with you, they shake their heads in disgust, yet so many authors continue to make mistakes that can be fatal to their book's success. Most of the time, though authors know that publishing a book is like starting a business, they're still shocked when their book is a failure, despite the fact that they didn't market it.

"I don't have the time," they'll say. Well, guess what? If you don't have the time to market, then don't spend the time to publish it. Unless it's just a "thing" you wanted to do, then fine. Publish away, but don't expect success beyond your immediate family and close friends. Most authors, however, seek to publish for other reasons, most of them tied to their platform, business, or speaking. If you fall into this category, here are ten things you should avoid like the plague:

**1. Waiting to see what happens:** Often authors will put stuff out there and wait. They'll wait to see if it works, wait to see what comes back, or wait to see what kind of sales they make. Authors often tell me this, too, when they hire us. "I'm going to wait till your work is done before I market." Why do they do this? Sometimes they want to measure the effectiveness of what we've done, which I totally get. But it's just not a good idea to wait, at least not in this climate. You should keep working, and do whatever you can do.

**2. Feeling like you have to do everything:** You don't. Yes, I know it often feels like you need to do everything. There are social media sites calling your name, blog posts to be written, book events to attend, blogs to read. There's a lot that you can be doing, but focus on what you should be doing and, to that end, make sure you're doing the right things. Spend your time wisely. Don't get distracted by the latest big social media craze. If you can't be on both Goodreads and Library Thing, then pick one. You're better off being in one place and having a solid presence there than just dabbling in networks. Dabblers typically don't make sales.

**3. Not putting out enough content:** The reason that it's important to pick your battles in social media and marketing is not just because of the "dabbling factor," but also because you have to create content. Lots of it. Blog posts, Twitter updates, YouTube videos, engaging pins on Pinterest -- the list goes on. Creating content can be a full time job if you let it, but there are hundreds of articles out there that can teach you simple ways to create helpful, engaging content for your readers. Good content is the single biggest driver of audience attention. Don't have time to create content? I was listening to a talk by Gary Vaynerchuk on social media and content. Someone asked him, "But what if someone doesn't have time to create a lot of content?" He smiled and said, "Then you shouldn't be doing this." I couldn't agree more.

**4. "These rules don't apply to me":** I was doing a series of speaking events recently and after I was done, an author came up to me and told me about his book. I asked him what he was doing to promote it, he said: nothing, really. Not because he didn't have the time, but he felt that his topic was such a hot trend, he didn't need to. This might be the worst mistake authors make and the most frequent. The basic rules of marketing today do apply to you. I don't care if you are somehow connected to someone who is famous, writing about someone who is famous, or slightly famous yourself. If you don't work for it, the results will still be the same: crickets.

**5. Not staying on top of trends in your industry:** The basic idea here is that you stay on top of not just your industry, but the industry you're in, too. That is: publishing. Why should you stay on top of what's going on in publishing? Because the trends might affect you. Let's say you have a book you want to put out and because it's short, you figure it's not substantial enough to warrant publication. Guess what? If you'd been staying up on trends, you'd know that for a variety of reasons that short is the new long. Thanks to consumers who want quick bites of information and things like Kindle Singles, consumers love short. I just published a book called *How to Sell Your Books by the Truckload on Amazon.com*. Every single email I've gotten back from readers is that they love it because it's packed with information, no frills and, most of all, short.

**6. Lack of engagement:** If someone (a reader) writes you a note or an email, are you responding to them? Often times the answer to this is no, which surprises me. Reader engagement is crucial, not because you need to be polite (didn't your mother teach you that?)

but because in an age where bloggers are inundated with review copies and review space is shrinking, guess who will be your next best ally? Yes, your reader! Engage with them, thank them, but most of all, respond to them.

**7. Waiting till the book is done to launch the website:** This is one of my favorites actually. Well, not really. I speak with authors all the time who are a week away from having a book and have no website. "It's coming," they tell me. "When?" I ask. The answer is often, "Oh, when the book is out." That's about three months too late. Now, granted, sometimes this can't be avoided, I totally get that. Delays happen. But in 90% of the cases when I hear this, it's because the author didn't know that it can take months (and in some cases years) to get traffic to a website. Start early and the minute the site is up, start blogging, too.

**8. Being in a rush:** A few weeks ago, I got an email from an author who asked me for my recommendations on a publisher. I told her and the next day she emailed back and said, "I got so excited that I just uploaded it. I didn't have it edited but that's ok, I still have a book!" Well, I'm not sure of that. Ok, yes, you still have a book but in the long run, did this really benefit you? She said she was using this book to promote herself. Let me ask you this: would you send a potential employer a resume that wasn't edited? Likely not, right? Yet many authors have published books that aren't edited, either. While I know there are a lot of options for publishing and a lot of very quick ways to get your book "out there," fast is not always good. If you just want a book for your family and they won't judge you on your horrible editing, then go ahead and rush to publish. But if you want something that you can be proud of, that's going to help you build your platform, don't rush. Just because you can publish quickly, doesn't mean you should.

**9. Ask for what you want:** I was speaking with a group of authors recently and there was an author in the crowd who said that every book event she does always has a great turnout (lucky her!). I asked her how she was using these events and she looked at me sort of confused. "What do you mean?" she asked. I told her that with that kind of a turnout, she should be signing folks up for her mailing list and then following up with them (think reader engagement). I asked her what she really, really needed for her book. She said she needed more reviews. I told her to ask her readers for help. "You can do that?" she asked. You bet you can.

Readers really do want to help authors they love, so let them and tell them. Whether you're doing live events, online promotion, or whatever. If you want reviews for a book, ask your readers. I have an author who, every time someone writes her about her book, she will thank them and ask them to review it. Almost all of them do this. It's a fantastic way to build your reviews on Amazon. Because of this, she now has hundreds of reviews on Amazon. Wouldn't you like to have that? Just ask.

**10. Wanting to make a fast buck:** With all the news around eBooks and the money some authors are making in this industry, it's tempting to think, "Hey, I need some cash, let me publish something." But as with any industry, these stories are the exception, not the rule. Yes, many authors are doing very well, but they're also working on it every day. This isn't a "set it and forget it" type of market. You can't just throw content out there and wait for the sales to roll in, but you'd be surprised how many people do this.

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I often find myself telling authors "publishing is a business" so much, I feel like I should get it tattooed to my forehead (and what a conversation piece that would be!). But here's the reality: it is. Many who are reading this article will feel like it's written for beginners – but that's just not true. I've seen authors who have spent years in this industry, struggling for success because they keep making the same mistakes over and over.

Many mega-bestselling authors are turning to self-publishing as a way to get content to market faster. I heard a former traditionally published author speak about this recently, and during the talk she said, "I don't have time to do anything other than write the book. I just can't do anything else." I was sort of surprised that she said this, but coming from the traditional world and having been published for years that way, I can see how she might have lived a somewhat sheltered life. Even for traditionally published folks, the world is a different place and no one, even the biggest names, are immune to this. As to point #4, the rules apply to everyone. Yes, that means you.