

## Developing an Internet Presence: The Public Author

The Public Author Why is an Internet presence important? Imagine yourself standing in the middle of a 5-circle bull's eye. 1) That inner circle is you. It also includes your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Anyone you come in contact with on a regular basis. 2) The next circle includes potential readers within your community who you may know, but who you're not in regular contact with or those who don't know about you or your book. The hometown advantage is on your side though. With word of mouth endorsements from those within your inner circle, some local press about your book, and book signings or other events, you have a good chance to reach a portion of the population. 3) The third circle includes individuals you have contact with on a professional basis. These are mostly authors; members of author groups and organizations where you promote on a regular basis. 4) The fourth circle includes people who have bought your book. 5) Number five are potential readers in a global market.

That's your goal -- to take your promotional campaign from your inner circle to the outer circle. The only way to get there is by having an Internet presence. It will draw readers, but more important, the publishing world demands it. The good news is that the Internet provides authors with unlimited ways to promote their books and most offer free or low cost options. Aside from writing a heart-stopping novel, the single most important thing authors need to master is Internet marketing and promotions of their book. I've read numerous articles that state one of the first things an agent or publisher will do is Google the author's name. If they can't find the author on the Internet, they assume the author isn't savvy enough to help market their book(s) or worse, won't and thus they may move on to the next manuscript. From a publisher's point of view, the cost of production is too high to take a chance on someone who won't do their part. Not everyone is born to be a salesperson.

Whether on the Internet or in person, how an author breaks out of his or her shyness will of course depend on their comfort level. But at some point the author will need to break out of that shell. I spoke with several authors who hate book signings because they don't want to appear to be pushy and fear rejection. That's understandable if you have never been in the public eye before, but this is what you've been working toward. Public recognition. When you and your book are on display, that's your name on the cover and your heart and soul between the pages.

Who better to sell it than you? If you love what you do it will show and your enthusiasm will spark a desire and spread like wildfire. Whether your publishing goal is to reach that small target audience within the two inner circles of your bull's eye or to connect with a global market, you must make yourself accessible to the public in order to sell books. In my numerous conversations with aspiring authors, I found two misconceptions:

The publisher will handle all the promotion. Campaigns will vary from one publisher to another, but regardless of the size of the publishing house, the bulk of the responsibility will fall squarely on the author's shoulders. If I launch a website, people will rush to view it and buy the book.

Wrong! The website is only the beginning. One author told me that she has a site but doesn't do anything else on the web preferring to do speaking engagements at bookstores, libraries, etc. The local events are not to be dismissed, but if that is an author's sole marketing campaign, they limit their potential sales considerably. First, let's take a look at what you can expect from a publisher. The narrowest definition of the role of a publisher is that they make information available for public view. A publisher will in most cases assign an editor to work with the author and provide copyediting, graphic design, and will initiate production and printing. In some cases the publisher will make the book available in print and in electronic media. They will also secure the legal rights of the author and purchase the ISBN. Several months before a novel is released the publisher will send out advanced review copies (ARC) and will continue to submit the book for reviews throughout the contracted period of time. Most publishers will spotlight their authors on their website, they may promote their books at key events that attracted book sellers, will submit the books to writing contests, and will make them available to the public via online bookstores such as Amazon, Barnes & Nobel, and Books-A-Million. The publisher may also sell the international rights to the book (have the book translated) and assist with film rights if it comes to that. Let's say you are a couple of months from launch date. The ARCs were sent and some reviews are coming in. Like it or not, you and your book are now public property. Reviewers will dissect your work and tell the world everything they love and hate about it. One reviewer will love your characters while another may feel they're not well-developed. Don't let their comments deter you from your goal. Use the glowing reviews in your marketing campaign. Quote them on all your written materials which you are now developing and will have ready before the launch.

Printed materials should include; press releases, postcards, flyers, and bookmarks. Now is a good time to also get your mailing list of media contacts and others within your inner circle organized. Next, contact local bookstore owners for a commitment on a book signing. If they agree, ask them if they would like to have the launch party at their store! The next article: The Author's Website Marta Stephens is a crime/mystery author of

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## About the Author

Marta Stephens is a crime/mystery author of [SILENCED CRY](#)

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