

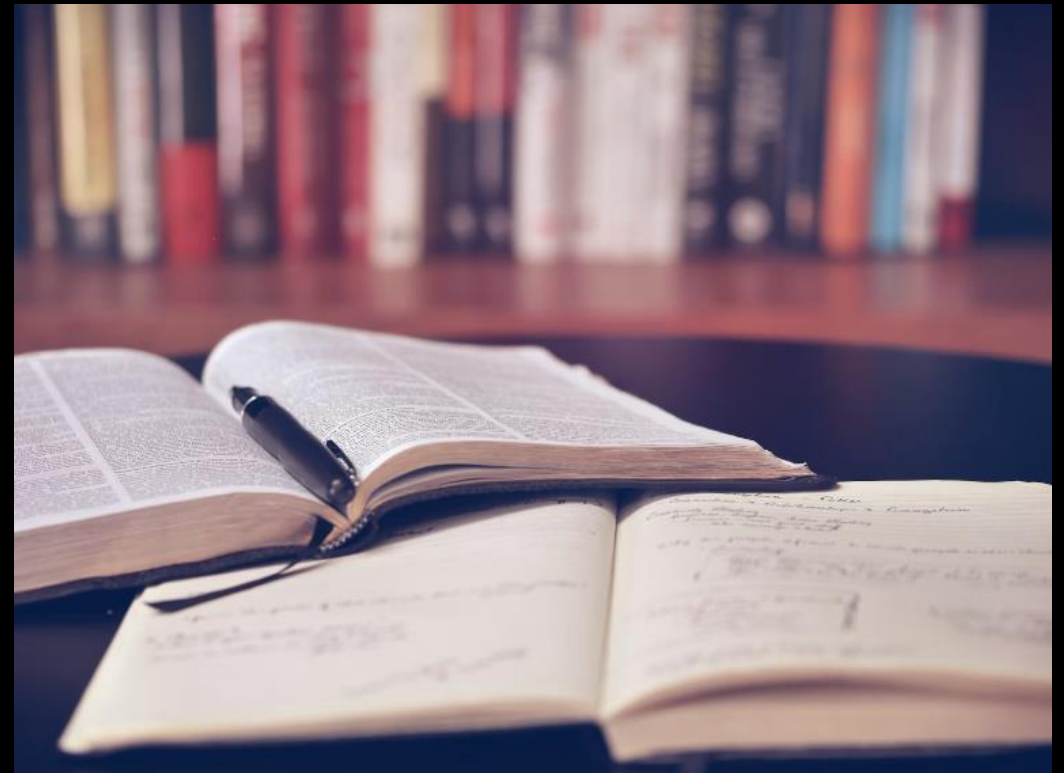
# Promoting Your Book on a Shoestring Budget

*You don't need to break the bank to effectively market your book. Discover practical, low-cost strategies to promote your work and build an engaged readership.*

Instructor: KC Grifant  
[www.KCGrifant.com](http://www.KCGrifant.com)  
@KCGrifant

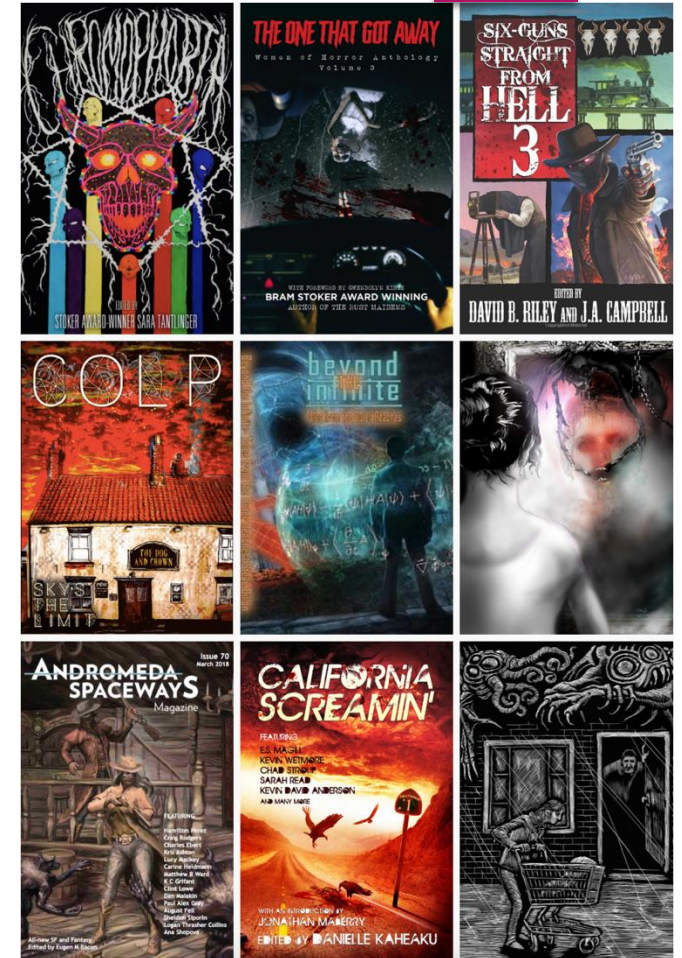


[www.KCGrifant.com/promotion](http://www.KCGrifant.com/promotion)

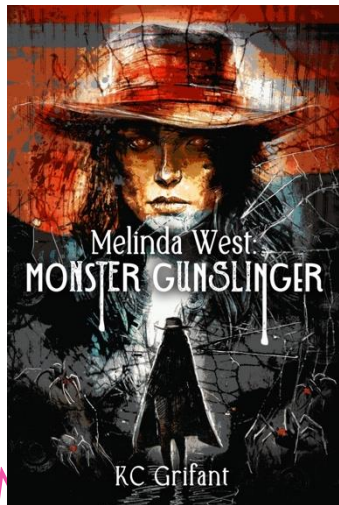


# About KC Grifant

- ▶ Horror, sci-fi, fantasy & weird western genres
- ▶ Dozens of short stories in magazines, podcasts, games and anthologies
- ▶ Author of the *Melinda West: Monster Gunslinger* weird western book series
- ▶ Author of *Shrouded Horror: Tales of the Uncanny*
- ▶ Co-founder of HWA San Diego chapter, Co-Chair of StokerCon 2024
- ▶ SFWA mentor, member of Authors Guild, San Diego Writers & Editors Guild, and other organizations
- ▶ Speaker, moderator, panelist, instructor
- ▶ [www.KCGrifant.com](http://www.KCGrifant.com) @KCGrifant
- ▶ [www.WeirdWestFiction.com](http://www.WeirdWestFiction.com)

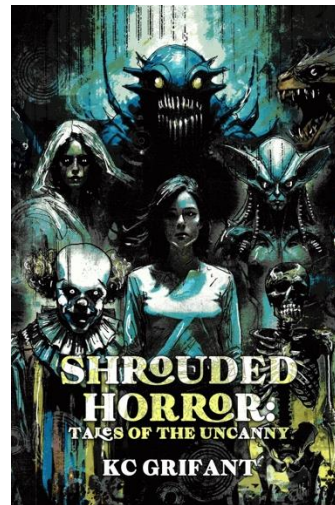


# Books As Examples



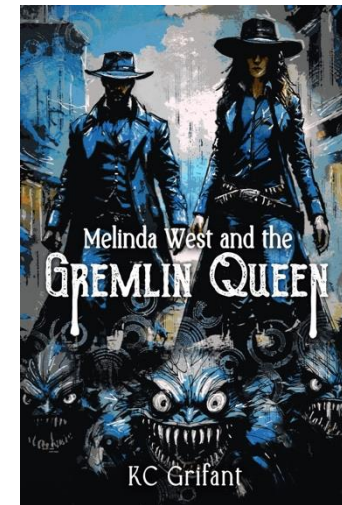
## Monster Gunslinger (2023)

- #1 Amazon New releases for Horror Westerns
- 2025 IPPY award--Distinguished Favorite Pick
- Dozens of interviews, podcasts, articles, events (focus: Twitter & outreach)



## Shrouded Horror: Tales of the Uncanny (2024)

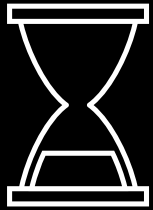
- First Place in the Horror - Creatures category, 2024 BookFest
- Dozens of interviews, podcasts, events (focus: IG & outreach)



## Melinda West and the Gremlin Queen (2025)

- Scheduling interviews, events, articles, podcasts (focus: BookTok, IG & outreach)

# Overview of Marketing & Promotion: Approach



## Start Early

Best to begin marketing well before you're published.



## Time or Money

To market effectively you need to spend time or money.



## Test and Refine

Try various approaches, keep notes and see what works and what doesn't. "Fail fast" approach.



# Marketing & Promotion: Expectations and Caveats



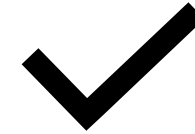
## Have Realistic Expectations

NO marketing: sells 10-12 books  
Self/small press with no budget:  
25+ books



## Focus on Key Tools

Website, social accounts, outreach,  
newsletter, events, cover, hook, art



## Caveats

What one author swears by may  
not work for another. Stay flexible  
and positive.

# Promoting Your Book On a Shoestring Budget

Topics we'll cover:

MARKETING MINDSET (OR “MARKETING 101”)

THE POWER OF ARCS (ADVANCE READER COPIES)

SOCIAL MEDIA TACTICS

FREE AND LOW-COST TOOLS TO SUPPORT YOU

HOW TO APPROACH BOOKSTORES, LIBRARIES, MEDIA (AND PLAN A BOOK LAUNCH)

★ TIP: Promoting your book can be overwhelming. Test and repeat, do what you can.



# Marketing Mindset

FOR AUTHORS

# Marketing VS Promotion

## ► Marketing

A broad, long-term strategy to grow your readership during your career and build your brand.



**Marketing**

VS



**Promotion**

## ► Promotion

Specific tactics related to book sales, e.g., a short-term campaign focused on immediate action like boosting engagement and making sales.

Source: American Marketing Association



# Types of Promotional Efforts



**Advertising:** Paid media to increase sales and visibility.

**Example:** Amazon ads, social boosts, ad in a magazine



**Sales promotions:** Short-term incentives like discounts to encourage readers to act quickly.

**Example:** A weekend-only discount code for signed copies.



**Public relations (PR):** Efforts to shape a positive brand image through media outreach, events, and community initiatives.

**Example:** A press release to the local paper about the book.



**Direct marketing:** Personalized messaging through email, text or snail mail.

**Example:** Sending an email to your newsletter subscribers offering an exclusive gift if they purchase (e.g., short story).

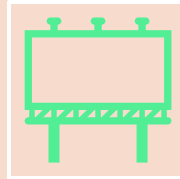
**“Owned” (social, website) vs. “Earned” Channels (reviews, interviews)**

More reading: <https://www.ama.org/marketing-news/marketing-vs-promotion-key-differences-and-how-they-impact-your-strategy/>

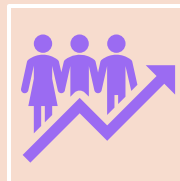
# The Role of Promotion



**Promotion is about making noise and attracting attention to boost your book's visibility and drive book sales.**



**Promotion can't make a book launch successful if it's not a strong product to begin with (exception: money blitz). Make sure your book is professionally polished, and your messaging resonates with your target audience.**

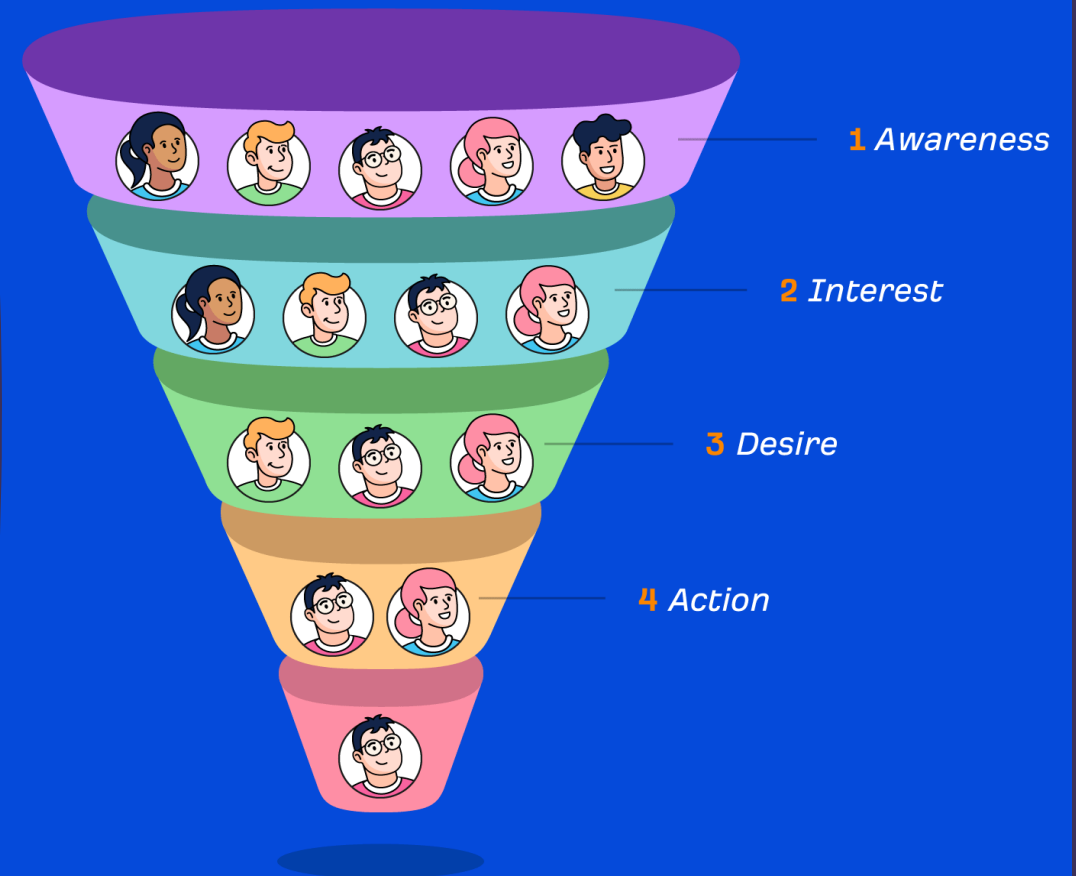


**Stay creative, positive and flexible, as technologies, platforms and readers' preferences constantly change. Promotional strategies must likewise adapt.**

# Marketing Basics

- ▶ Marketing funnel is the reader's journey from awareness of your book to buying the book.
- ▶ “Rule of 7” – A potential customer needs 7 exposures to a product before purchasing (remember this!).
- ▶ Appeal to something a reader may want, not what you want. “Buy this because no one else is” is not a good strategy.

## Marketing Funnel in Reality



**ahrefs**

<https://ahrefs.com/blog/marketing-funnel/>

Note for #1: “Awareness” is also often called “Exposure”

# Marketing: The Importance of Buzz

- ▶ Also known as "hype"
- ▶ Strategy is to generate anticipation, excitement, FOMO
- ▶ Benefits: the more people see others posting about and engaging in your book/series/brand, the more exposure you get (people at the top of the funnel)

Examples: Blair Witch (fake website); Apple (air of mystery); ALS (ice bucket challenge)

More reading: <https://www.myhoardings.com/FAQ/what-are-public-relations-and-advertising/>  
and <https://www.dontpaniclondon.com/blog/what-is-buzz-marketing/>

# Tools to Generate Buzz



## Social Media Virality

- **How:** Develop engaging hooks, follow social media best practices, consistently post

## Influencer & Brand Advocacy

- **How:** Send invites to reviewers, podcasters, and other influencers relevant for your genre who might be interested in your book.

## Word-of-Mouth Marketing

- **How:** Share ARCs with enthusiastic readers and do giveaways/gifts

## Exclusivity & Scarcity

- **How:** Offer limited deals (preorder) and contests

*Note: best to avoid intentionally controversial approaches to generating buzz, e.g., the “no such thing as bad PR” approach*

More reading: <https://www.admetrics.io/en/post/what-is-buzz-marketing>

# Marketing: Your Baseline Tools

- ▶ Again, a good product! An edited, copyedited, and properly formatted book.
- ▶ An eye-catching cover that is market-tested.
- ▶ An intriguing hook or elevator pitch that represents the story and introduces mystery (from your query or back book text).
- ▶ Comps are your friend.
- ▶ Research (save social posts or ads that catch your eye, understand genre and reader).





# The Power of Advanced Reader Copies (ARCs)

A KEY STEP TO BUILDING BUZZ AMONG REVIEWERS AND READERS

# Who are ARCs for?

1. PROFESSIONAL REVIEWERS
2. READERS WHO REVIEW
3. INFLUENCERS
4. BOOKSELLERS
5. LIBRARIANS

Goal: Generate buzz, reviews and book placement.

# General Influencer and Reviewer Outreach

## **Keep in mind when cold emailing:**

Briefly introduce yourself and your story; ask if they'd be interested in reviewing your book or interviewing you.

Some state "No DMs." Respect this.

Some have forms to fill out on their website.

Above all, be respectful.

1: List building (research)

2: Check parameters (outreach)

3: Send information once accepted

4: Leave them alone.

*\*These tips are more for indie authors.*

# Outreach to Reviewers

**Reviewers** blog or write reviews professionally or semi-professionally, posting reviews on their website or a media outlet. Some are hungry for ARCs, some are backlogged.

Check their  
website and  
make sure your  
book is a match.

Fill out their form  
to request a  
review.

# Outreach to ARC Readers

ARC readers are passionate readers who will post early honest reviews in exchange for ARCs.

Set up a Google Form for readers interested in receiving an ARC (name, email, date)

Use a service like MailChimp, BookFunnel or email to send messages to ARC readers.

Tip: For a cost you can find early readers through NetGalley, Edelweiss, BookSirens, Book Sprout, Voracious Readers, and others

# ARC Form Example and Email

*Subject: Alert! Advance Reader Copy of [title] available now!*

Dear Reader,

I'm excited to share that an Advance Reader Copy (ARC) of my upcoming book, [title] is available! Thank you so much for your interest.

**About the book:**

**Access your ARC here:**

**Book publication date:**

**Website link for more information:**

As an early reader, your honest opinion is invaluable to help refine the final stages of the book. If you see any lingering typos, please let me know. Please share your review on platforms like Goodreads, Amazon, your website, and/or social media.

Thank you for being a part of this journey!



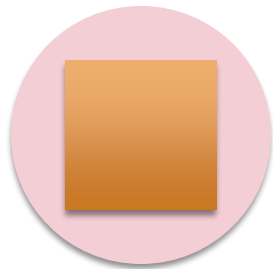
# Reminders: Dos Vs. Don'ts For Outreach



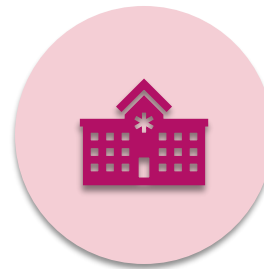
Always be polite and clear in your communications.



Don't expect a positive review.



Don't expect an answer/review.



Roughly 1:4 ratio of reviews from ARC readers.

TIP: Check Facebook Groups in your genre that allow ARCs.




# Free And Low-Cost Tools

NEWSLETTERS, BOOSTS, GRAPHICS AND MORE

# The Importance of Websites

- ▶ Essential landing spot for anyone looking for more information (readers, agents, etc.).
- ▶ Helps people find you when they search.
- ▶ Include links to your social media, newsletter sign-up, announcements.
- ▶ Free options through Wordpress, Wix, Squarespace, Weebly.

## Ideas For Content

- 
- Blog content on your area of expertise
  - Share author bio and background
  - List publications, events, interviews.

# The Importance of Newsletters

- ▶ The only platform where you have full control of your messaging and audience.
- ▶ Weekly, biweekly, monthly.
- ▶ How readers w/o social media will hear your updates.
- ▶ Mailchimp, MailerLite, many others offer free versions.



## Ideas For Content

- Show behind-the-scenes glimpse of your work.
- Promote other authors' books or what you're reading and watching.
- Share memes.
- Do a newsletter swap.
- Offer exclusives.

# Graphics/Social Tools For Free

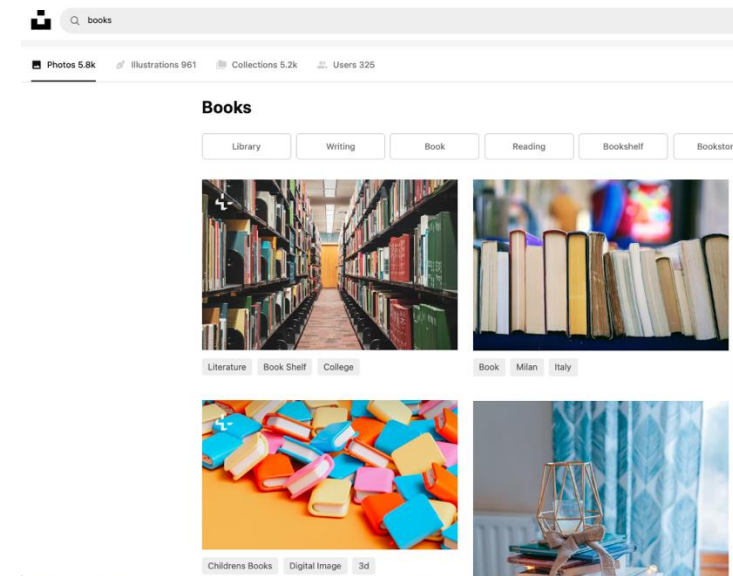
► BookBrush.com



► Canva.com

► Mematic

► Unsplash.com



More: <https://www.writtenwordmedia.com/free-book-marketing-tools/>

# More Support (For a Price)



Voracious Readers: (20 readers for free)

<https://voraciousreadersonly.com/voracious-readers-only-author-sign-up/>



MTMC Tours (social posts of your book):

<https://mtmctours.com/services/>



Bookbub (offers deals to readers):

[https://www.bookbub.com/partners/launch\\_a\\_new\\_book](https://www.bookbub.com/partners/launch_a_new_book)



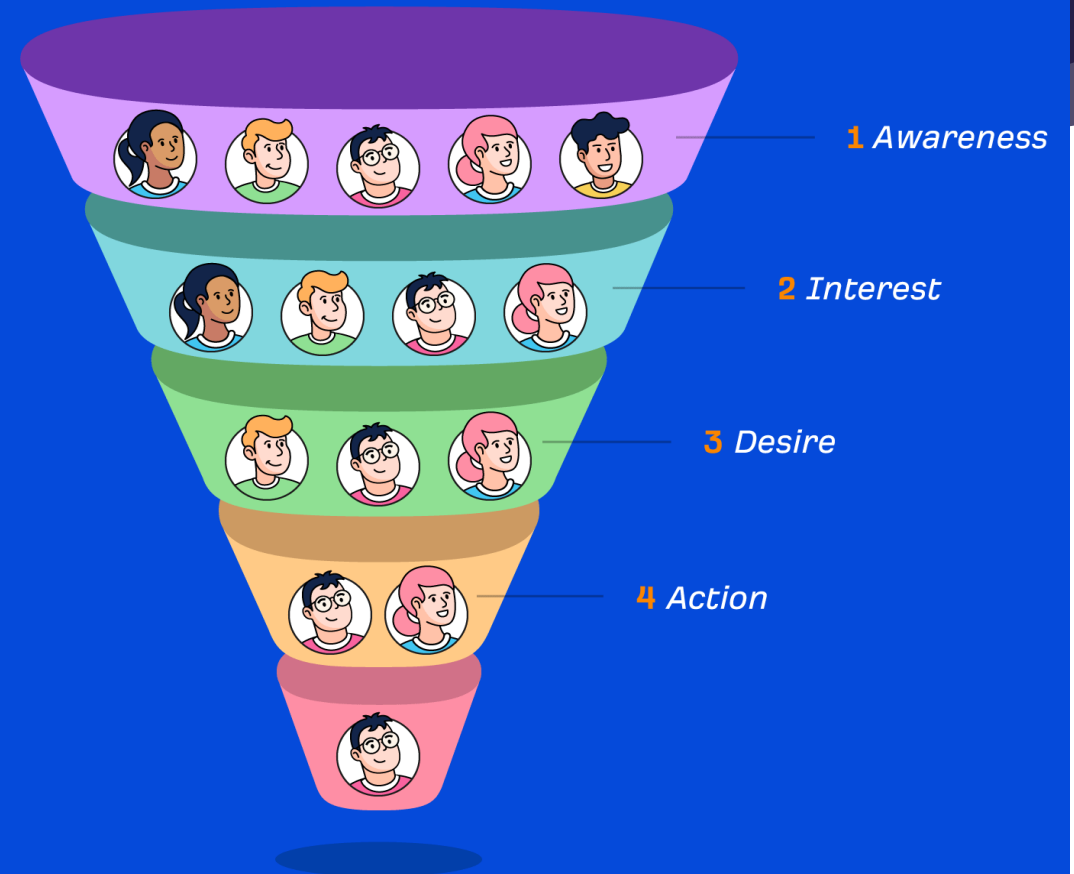
# Social Media

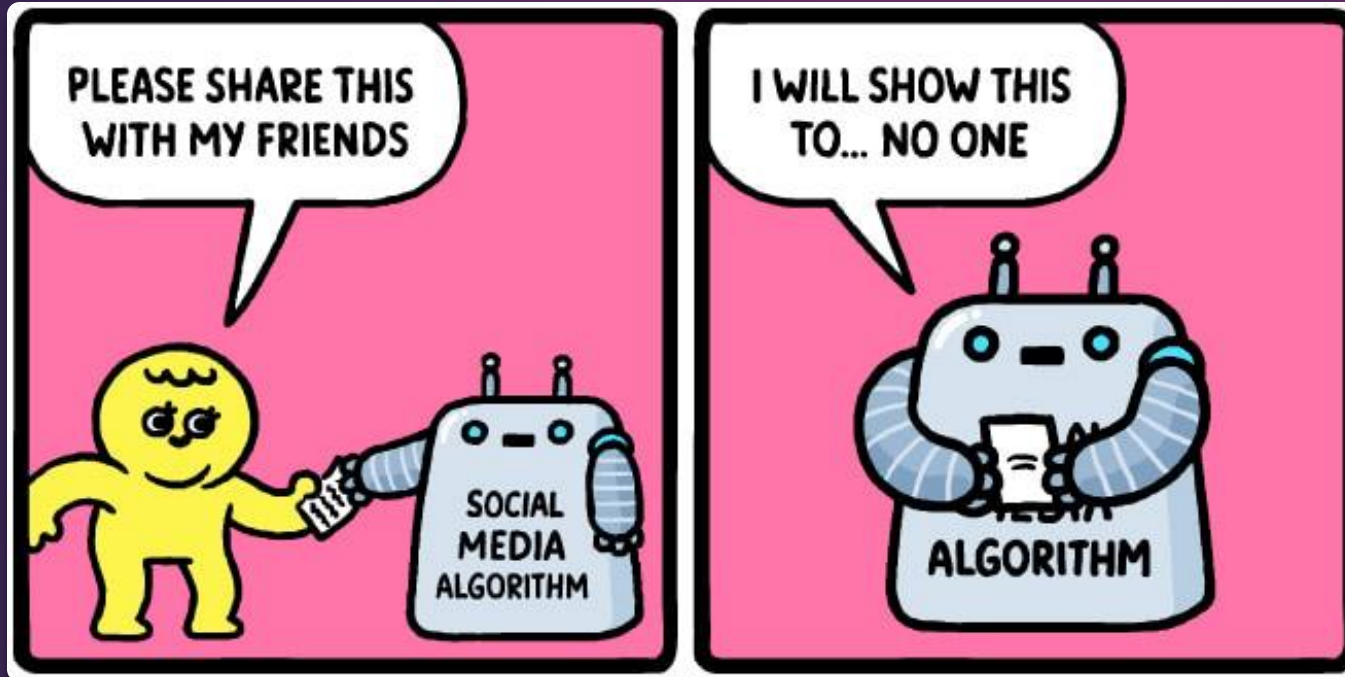
GETTING IT JUST RIGHT

# Remember the Funnel!

- ▶ 7 times to hear/see something before purchasing.
- ▶ Social media algorithms show your content to small percentages of your followers.

## Marketing Funnel in Reality





Example: Facebook shows a typical post to only 1%-10% of your followers. If you have 100 likes on your FB page, only 10 people will see an organic post.

*Organic post is one that you do not pay to promote or boost*

# 80/20 Rule

## BRANDING RATIO RULE

### **20 percent = promo content:**

- About your book
- "Buy my book"

### **80 percent = other content:**

- promoting others
- curated personal posts
- memes
- informational

NOTE: The ratio is just a guideline. The main point is to share a mix of different types of content. When you're close to book release, the ratio will change.

# Social Media Porridge

Not too much, and not too little

01

Nonstop book promotion won't attract followers (exception = TikTok)

02

Average follower may only see a small percentage of your posts, so don't be too timid.

03

Don't have all your eggs in one basket (social media changes constantly!)

04

Build connections and a community.

05

Experiment with content. Be as personal and visible as you feel comfortable .

06

If you hate it, skip it!

# Social Media Best Practices

---

**Do: Post consistently (3-7x a week)**

---

---

**Do: Use the same name and user image across platforms.**

---

---

**Do: Use the platform features, like filters and posting to Stories/Reels.**

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**Do: Post at a time when people are most likely to engage (weekday mornings).**

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**Do: Post a mix of promotional content and other content (80/20 rule).**

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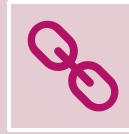
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**Do: Be aware of trigger words (e.g., “kill”) that suppress content**

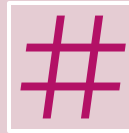
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# Social Media Best Practices



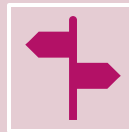
Don't: Link to external websites in your main post.



Don't: overtag or add too many hashtags (2-4).



Don't: Engage with trolls.



Don't: Post the same content over and over again.

A hashtag is a topic relevant to your post, e.g., #newbook #indieauthor #coverreveal

# Facebook & Instagram (Meta)

01

Create an author page.

02

Use Meta Suite to schedule posts and cross post to Instagram and FB.

03

The longer someone stays on your post, the better.

04

Use the Stories and embedded features as much as possible.

05

Likes, comments and shares help to boost the content.

TIP: Use hashtag "Bookstagram" on IG and use carousels.

# Bluesky, Mastodon, Threads (Meta)

01

Create an author account.

02

Post and reshare often.

03

Find fellow authors and readers to connect with.

04

Watch and experiment with trends.

# TikTok (“Booktok”)

01

Consistency rewarded:  
experiment with what  
type of video gets  
you more views, then  
stick with that style

02

Frequency rewarded:  
Post often, develop a  
“hook” as much as  
possible

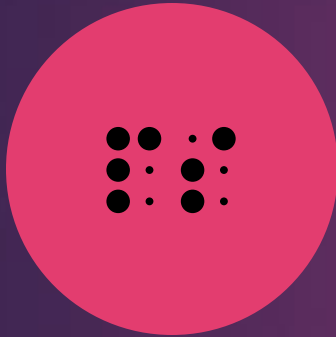
03

Crosspost videos to  
Instagram, YouTube  
Shorts

04

Styles: Face on  
camera, voice-over,  
text on screen

# Going Viral



GOING VIRAL FOR YOUR BOOK IS THE DREAM—BUT IT'S A ONE-IN-A-MILLION SHOT



OFTEN A POST THAT GOES VIRAL IS NOT RELATED TO YOUR BOOK

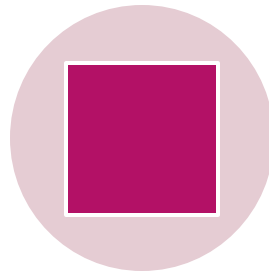


THERE IS NO FORMAL TO GOING VIRAL. DON'T FOCUS ON THAT AS AN END GOAL, BUT RATHER STEADILY BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE.

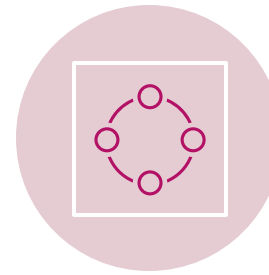
# Social Media – More Rules of Thumb



BE GENUINE



USE THE BUILT-IN  
SCHEDULING TOOLS



SHOUT OUT YOUR  
BOOK AT EVERY  
(APPROPRIATE)  
OPPORTUNITY



BOOST OTHER  
AUTHORS

Tip: Remember whatever you post publicly can be captured via screenshot and saved.



# Approaching Media, Magazines & Venues

A KEY PART OF YOUR BOOK LAUNCH PLAN



# Three Approaches



Events

Local media  
and podcasts

Guest  
articles/blogging

# Tips for Events

**Partnering with organizations for launch events, interviews and articles can help boost visibility.**

**Professional organizations are a great way to connect with fellow writers. Team up with others who have a recent or upcoming book.**

**Pitch a signing event to your local bookstores, libraries, coffeeshops or other businesses.**

**Theme your event. For example, romance book event for Valentine's week, or a horror book event in October.**

**Follow the same do's and don'ts as reviewer and ARC requests.**

**Once event is confirmed, it's on you to promote and bring in an audience.**

Tip: Schedule a book launch event for when you are sure you'll have your books in hand.

# Media



Find a press release template online and send to your local papers (hyper local)



Pitching yourself as a profile can be a good approach, especially with a timely news hook / interesting expertise



Many local and community papers have sections where you can submit news or events

TIP: Share your book launch with your professional groups (SFWA, HWA, Authors Guild)

# Podcasts (and YouTube shows)



- ▶ Find writing and genre-specific podcasts
- ▶ Listen to a few episodes to see if it might be a good fit.
- ▶ Look for ways to submit yourself as a guest (via website or social) and share what you offer beyond a new book.

Note: don't expect immediate sales from these efforts, rather know they are building your brand and giving you valuable practice in being interviewed.

# Interview Tips

Sound bites	Think in “sound bites” – use short pitch and comps
Approach	Be personable, polite and yourself (like a job interview)
Research	Research the outlet before hand
Contact	Make sure to mention where people can find you
Practice	Practice but don't memorize

# Blogging/Guest Articles



FIND RELEVANT  
MAGAZINES AND  
WEBSITES ON YOUR  
GENRE



CHECK THEIR SUBMISSION  
GUIDELINES. MANY HAVE  
WAYS TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE  
OR A PITCH FOR AN ARTICLE,  
OR A BOOK REVIEW OFFER.



OFTEN THIS CAN BE A WAY TO  
SHOUT OUT YOUR BOOK (IN YOUR  
BIO) AND FIND NEW AUDIENCES.

# Book Launch Day!



Celebrate! Plan something offline: a special meal or treat for yourself.



Don't stress about sales, reviews or numbers.



Start on the next book.

# Aftermath

01

Continue to post and promote your book but gradually ease off the frequency. A book is “new” for a few months.

02

Milestones are an easy way to celebrate on social/website/newsletter(1 month anniversary, a good review, etc.)

03

Keep an eye out for relevant ways to promote your book where appropriate (holidays, etc.).



# A Note on Series

*A series is an opportunity to promote previous books as well as the full series.*

## **Promotion Ideas**

- Brand the series – hone the general pitch
- Make sure the books are linked on Amazon as a series
- Create an exclusive boxset
- Discount the first book
- “Permafree” the first book

# Recap

TIMELINE AND CONTACT INFO

# Overview: Steps to Promote Your Book



## Timeline: 4-month example

### ► 4 Months Before

Assets: Pitch, logline, comps, Cover art, ARC

Actions: Send to ARC readers and interviews\* (dependent on ARC), teaser posts, order bookmarks or swag (dependent on cover art)

### ► 3 Months Before

Assets: Book link (preorder), Amazon page, Goodreads page

Actions: Regularly post on social media, reach out to libraries, bookstores, podcasts\* (dependent on launch date)

### ► 1-2 Months Before

Assets: Social content, reviews, interviews

Actions: Write blogs, guest articles, do interviews

### ► Launch Period

Assets: Live link, events

Actions: Ensure you have books, swag for events

### ► Post-Launch

Assets: Reviews, Events

Actions: Continue to post and promote at less, but regular, intervals

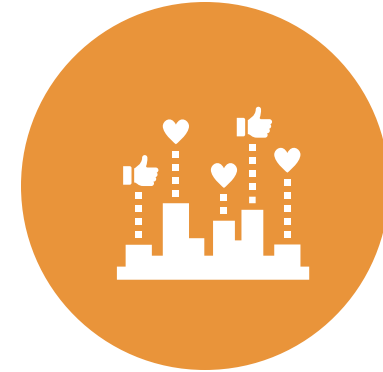
# Reminder: Your Marketing Toolkit



OWNED: WEBSITE, SOCIAL  
ACCOUNTS, NEWSLETTER



EARNED: INTERVIEWS,  
ARTICLES, REVIEWS



IRL: FESTIVALS, SIGNINGS,  
EVENTS

*All of these efforts help boost visibility of you and your book.*

# Resources

You can email me at  
[KC.SciFiWri@gmail.com](mailto:KC.SciFiWri@gmail.com)  
for general questions.

Tip Sheet:  
[www.KCGrifant.com/  
promotion](http://www.KCGrifant.com/promotion)

Other questions? Email  
or ping me at  
@kcgrifant on the  
socials.

