

 **Author Platform Rocket****How to Package Your Products
(Using Your Books as Marketing Tools)**

Leveraging Your Mailing List to Sell Books Webinar Series: Part 11

Hi, everyone and welcome to the eleventh session of the webinar series we're giving on how to Leverage Your Mailing List to Sell Books!! This will be how you can leverage your covers, blurbs, front matter and back matter to help you sell more books, which WILL tie into your mailing list so this is definitely still on topic. We touched very briefly on this subject way back in session 1 when we talked about book funnels. But we're going to go into greater detail about all those other things I just mentioned come into play together.

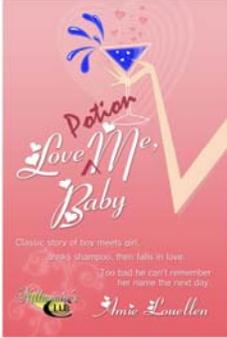
How To Package Your Products

Using Your Books as Marketing Tools

There are two things I'm going to be sure I do throughout this presentation and that is address both traditionally published and self-published authors. Obviously, if you're self-published, you have a lot more control over the final product and presentation of your books. And if your books are already published through a publisher, you won't have ANY control over your books. With that being said, all this information today will help you make a better decision about what contracts to accept because you'll have a better idea of how a publisher will represent your book BEFORE you sign that contract and also what you should be looking for when you're shopping for a publisher.

Arial's Experience

- Cover Designer
 - Freelance
 - Small press publisher
- Editor
 - Freelance
 - Two small press publishers
- Learn from my mistakes!





And just so you know why I have some insight on all this, I'll share my experience with you really quick.

- I was a freelance cover designer as well as on staff at The Wild Rose Press – some of you may know that publisher
- I was also an editor at two small press publishing houses, so I had to proof the front and back matter and I learned what the publishers knew about how readers responded to internal content. Incidentally, I edited first for Ellora's Cave and then The Wild Rose Press.
- And when I failed miserably at selling my own books, I took the lessons I learned from being a professional cover designer and an editor and applied it to my own series. My redesigned covers definitely made a difference in my sales!

This cover here is an example of what I designed for a book at the Wild Rose Press. What genre would you say this book is? It is a Romantic Comedy but of course also falls into the Contemporary Romance genre as well.

Traditional Publishing vs. Self-Publishing

- Big 5 does NOT mean Big Time!
 - OLD DAYS: Publishers sold to bookstores
 - Current Trend: Publishers are at the whim of Amazon
- Be picky about your publisher!
- Small publishers usually offer better royalty rates – less overhead than Big 5
- Do your homework!
- Why choose a publisher vs. self-publishing?
 - Can you format your own books or pay for it?
 - Can you create your own cover or pay for it?
 - Do you have an editor at your disposal or can you pay for one?

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I cannot in all good conscience proceed with the presentation until I make something very clear. I am personally a huge advocate for self-publishing, but I am also one of those rare individuals who can do everything for herself. As you saw from my experience, I can do everything except for the editing part. I outsource that to my best friend, who was also an editor. Now, I'm not against traditional publishing, but my philosophy is if you can do it yourself OR pay someone to do it, then self-publish. If not, then going with a publisher is your best option. However, you can probably do more than you think you can. I want to help all of you understand the power you have as authors now that digital publishing is available.

- First of all, I'm going to dispel a popular myth, which is, (CLICK) "If you land a contract with a Big 5 publisher – even one of their digital imprints – you've finally made it and you can sit back and let them do all the work." BUUUZZZZ! My experience over the last decade has taught me Big 5 publishers don't know how to sell eBooks. (CLICK) They were good at selling print books to *bookstores* before eBook publishing took the world by storm. I have at LEAST a half-dozen very close friends who all thought they finally had their big break when they landed a Big 5 contract. Most of those contracts are with their digital imprints. Two gals even had a mass-market paperback deal. All of them are hardly making enough money to pay their electric bill off their royalties. And the books are no longer in the stores because they aren't selling. Also, many of them have been dropped by their publisher because their books aren't selling. And I can tell you most of these authors also do not have a mailing list, in spite of my encouragement for them to follow what I've taught all of you. Do your research on the internet and those authors who were with the Big 5 publishers for 20 years got their rights back and self-published and the vast majority of those authors are saying they are finally starting to pay their bills with the sales of their book or they're making more money than they ever did when they were with their publishers.
 - (CLICK) The only publisher who knows how to sell eBooks these days is Amazon and it makes sense – they're selling 75% of the eBooks sold in the market today. If you can land an Amazon contract with one of their imprints, grab that puppy up while you can! Even though they only have a \$4,000 book advance, which is a heck of a lot more than you'll get from most

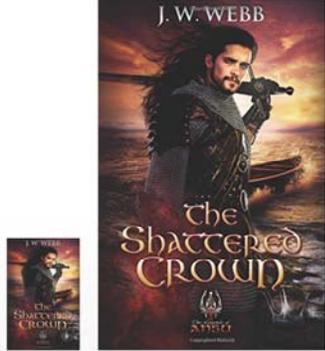
- publishers, you're almost guaranteed to earn royalties past your advance.
- I'm dispelling this myth because the Big 5 publishers think you authors should be begging them for a contract. They're still banking on their past success with bookstores as their clout and reputation. Think about that. How many bookstores are still around today? Digital books are the way to go and they don't know how to sell those. They don't tell you you're not going to make any money from that contract. Two dear friends I have are easily making over a million dollars a year with their publishers (*cough* Amazon *cough*) and they both said the same thing: Publishers contract authors and treat them like spaghetti – they throw them up against the wall and see who sticks and then they invest their time and effort into those authors who stick and they dump the rest. It's a numbers game to them.
 - One more point to prove to you the Big 5 contracts are next to worthless: Give a show of hands. How many of you have been to the Random-House website to go shopping for books? How many of you are on Penguin Putnam's mailing list to find out what their new releases are so you can buy them. Right. So the only place the Big 5 are selling books are the online retailers. They aren't doing it through their own websites and they aren't doing it through their mailing lists. So that means they do not have a fan base and they are in the same boat most of us authors are – trying to sell books to the masses like everyone else.
 - I will tell you that there are many small press publishers who DO have a mailing list and they DO have some faithful readers who go to their websites to buy their books. Seems the small press houses have a better chance at marketing your books than the Big 5. All of this to say, I'm pretty confident you can afford to be picky about your publisher. Unless they're offering a huge book advance and have a concrete marketing plan in place, it doesn't matter who publishes your book – you still have to do all the marketing. You might as well go with the publisher who has the best royalty rates. Readers don't care and couldn't tell you who their favorite publisher is. But they can certainly tell you who their favorite author is. Hrmmmm...can you see why YOU have the control? Readers only care about the authors. They don't care how they get their books, as long as they get them and as long as it's easy to get their books. That's another reason why Amazon is so successful.
 - (CLICK) Okay, so myth dispelled. BE PICKY ABOUT YOUR PUBLISHER and PLEASE, for the love of Zeus, don't accept any contract thrown in your direction. Look at it carefully and on a long-term basis. Whether you land a Big 5 contract or a small press contract, look at the benefits you gain. All publishers will create the covers, do the editing, and handle the distribution. This is why you give them part of your royalties – they do the work you can't do for yourself or you don't have the money up front to pay for, so that puts all publishers on even ground. What they offer above the production of your book is what you should be looking at.
 - (CLICK) Small press publishers will usually give you higher royalty rates because

they have less overhead expenses, so that's why it's better to go with a small press. Most contracts do not have a book advance, so that means no one is going to market your books for you. That will be left up to you.

- (CLICK) So BEFORE you sign a contract, do your homework. What you should be doing BEFORE you sign a contract is looking at all the covers of the books in a publisher's catalogue. Go to their website and browse their titles. If you do not like the covers they're producing for other people, you certainly will not like the cover they make for you. DO NOT submit to those publishers, I don't care who they are. Big 5 or otherwise. Also, look at the rankings of the books of their new releases AND the books that have been on their catalogue for several months to a year. Assuming the author is doing nothing, how are the sales looking? If you don't like what you see, don't sign a contract with them! Think of the long-term affects. They own your book, you have no control over your cover or your pricing and you have to do all the work to market your book while they get most of the money. Ask yourself if it's worth the frustration.
- (CLICK) So how do you know if you should go traditional or self-publish? Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Can you format your own books or can you afford to pay someone to do it? Fiverr has a lot of options to get formatting done very inexpensively. I'll try to include a couple of links in the handout to formatters and some tips on what to look for in a formatter through Fiverr. You can expect to pay less than \$75 on Fiverr to have your book properly formatted.
 - Can you create your own cover or pay for someone to do it? I'll also include some links of cover artists I recommend who are fairly reasonable but do great work. I'll show you a sample on the next slide. For a good cover that fits the criteria I'll be sharing with you today, you can expect to pay anywhere from \$100 to \$300 per cover.
 - Do you have an editor who will do some exchange of work or a friend or can you pay for one? Now...I hate to say it, but if you're very limited on your budget and you have to choose which one to sink your money into, sink it into the cover. Formatting can be learned and Fiverr is your friend. You can get your book properly formatted for less than \$75. Use beta readers if you don't have the money for an editor. I wholeheartedly support getting your books professionally edited, but readers don't really care. There are plenty of horribly written books out there to prove this. *cough* 50 Shades of Gray *cough* Put your money into your cover because that will get you sales.

Book Covers

- NOT a summary of your books!
- Should be eye-catching
- Should match the genre or atmosphere
- Should look good as a thumbnail
- Should look professional
- Traditionally Published Covers
 - Submit suggestions in your cover form applications
 - Keep above in mind!
 - Shop for publishers with great covers



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Okay. Let's talk about Book Covers.

- (CLICK) First and foremost, they're a marketing tool . They NOT a summary of what's inside the book. As a cover designer, I received so many requests from authors to include every aspect of the storyline on the face of the novel. I'm not kidding you – I once had an author tell me, "Please make sure you put the heroine's kids on the cover and having them arguing. They're constantly at odds with each other and it gets in the way of the relationship. And they had a really big fight in the kitchen, so if you could have the kids throwing flour and utensils while the hero and heroine are trying to stop them. Flour has to be on everyone. And then I'd like the hero and heroine to be in a romantic pose at the top. Please make sure she's wearing..." Um...yeah. The point of the cover is to sell the book NOT tell the story. This is the first thing readers see and it's the only thing that usually gets them to read the blurb. Keep this in mind whenever you submit a cover request to a freelance artist OR your publisher. Also please trust that your cover artist and publisher know what they're doing when it comes to designing book covers to sell.

Hopefully, the publisher you're signing on with has great covers and that's one of the reasons you chose them because you did your homework, right? So what makes a great cover?

- (CLICK) It needs to be eye-catching! You want your readers to say, "Ooo! I wanna read that book!" The cover should invite them into the world of your novel.
- (CLICK) It should capture the genre of your book. At a glance, does it look like a paranormal romance or a contemporary romance, or a fantasy novel or a sci-fi novel?
- (CLICK) Hopefully it's eye catching as a thumbnail. This is a good test for the cover and you can certainly put that in your cover design request on your form to your freelance artist or your cover artist if you don't think they take that into consideration. When I was searching for a cover to use on this slide, I found a lot of covers that looked amazing full size, but when I shrunk them down to thumbnail size, I couldn't tell what was on the cover.
- (CLICK) The cover should look professional! You are competing with so many covers out there, you cannot afford to look like you put it together in Microsoft Paint.
- (CLICK) If you have a publishing contract, then not only are these the things you need to keep in mind when you're shopping for a publisher, but if you already have a contract you can submit suggestions in your cover form application that are in line with these ideas.

SHOW LARGE COVER – Now, this is an example of a GREAT cover. Via the Questions panel, please tell me what genre this book is. (wait for answers) This is a fantasy cover.

If you're a lover of fantasy novels, show of hands...does this cover entice you to want to explore this world or at least read the blurb? And some of you who aren't fantasy readers might want to dive into the book just based on this cover.

SHOW THUMBNAIL – Now, look at the thumbnail. Can you still tell what the genre is or at least what's on the cover – a guy with a sword.

So in short, the book cover is what tempts the reader to go further. It's what catches their attention to take a closer look at the book and check out the blurb.

Back of the Book Blurb

- Also NOT a summary of your book!
- Meant to TEASE the readers into buying the book
- Tips for crafting a good blurb
 - Hook readers with that first sentence
 - Do not ask questions to which the readers already know the answer
 - Keep keywords in mind as you write
 - What is at stake for the characters?

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- (CLICK) Now I know this is going to sound wacky, but the blurb is NOT a summary of your book!
- (CLICK) It is a marketing tool used to entice the reader to want to read the book. I have read blurbs that put me to sleep. And I've read blurbs that gave me chills...or got me hot! A good blurb has a reader saying, "I have GOT to read this story!" OR "How the hell are they going to get out of that mess? I have to read just to find out." (CLICK) So what makes a good blurb?

TIPS

- (CLICK) Hook readers with that first sentence – most readers don't read past the first sentence! Attention spans are short, so hook them from the start.
- (CLICK) Introduce your character with something interesting and with depth. Don't start with ordinary. "Life was dull for Mandy and she drudged through every hour, one day blending into the next." SNORE Start with compelling. "Life was dull for Mandy...until her co-worker Sean hijacked her car at gunpoint."
- (CLICK) Don't ask questions to which the readers already know the answer. Let's say Sean is our hero and Mandy is our heroine. "Will Sean overcome his fear of commitment and finally fall in love with Mandy?" If this is a romance novel, the answer had better be yes or you're going to have some pissed off readers. *Of course* the hero and heroine get together at the end of the book. It's a romance. But you could ask, "Will Sean sacrifice his billion dollar inheritance to be with Mandy?" Well, we sure hope so if it's a romance, but she'd better be a pretty special woman to give up a billion dollars! And you might even hope they can find a way to have their cake and eat it to! What will make Mandy so special that Sean *would* give up a billion dollars? If the question spawns more questions, you're on to something.
- (CLICK) I am no expert at keywords. In fact, I suck at it and I'm still trying to crack that nut. But there are other people out there who have mastered it. I'll try to include a few resources in the handout of places you can research. I haven't had the time to dive into too deeply myself since my mailing list is keeping the cash coming in. But if you know how to manipulate keywords or you know which ones to use, work those into your blurb. Publishers may not know how to do this very well, and many of them don't even consider it when drafting the blurbs, so if you know how to do this and you're working with a publisher, be sure to point that out to them if they try to edit your blurb to eliminate some of those choice words.
- (CLICK) Ask what is at stake for your characters. What is the main obstacle your characters have to face in the book? How does your main character's goal clash with the antagonist of the story? These are things to consider when crafting your blurb.

Example: Vampire's Kiss by Leda Summers

Once you sip the Nectar of the gods...

Leda Pierce is working as a paranormal investigator between human civilization and the supernatural world. Modest, but at least she has her family. Her brother goes missing, captured by a vampire.

With no magical powers of her own, she travels to New York and join the Legion of Angels. Powers gifted to them by the gods, she'll lead them up the ranks, she will...

But Leda soon finds herself in a world of vampires and a supernatural world—and she'll have to learn to survive. Vampire's Kiss is the first in the series.

...the dividing line between the mortal and the immortal. The pay is high, but the work is dangerous. When it goes wrong and she's left with nothing, the only option is to go back to the mortal world. Natural soldiers with no magic, they're not strong enough to make a difference.

...will shake up the world of the vampire hunting angel.



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Let's look at an example. I went to the bestseller list today for a book and I skipped down to #4 because it was a full priced book. The top 3 books were all 99 cents and that can easily get a book to the top – just on price alone. So here's the thumbnail. You can tell it's a kick ass heroine with a sword and a moon behind her.

And here's the full cover. What genre would you say this is? This was #4 in Romantic Action & Adventure, but it's also ranking #1 in Dark Fantasy and #1 in Steampunk.

Okay, so here's the blurb...Look at that first line... (read) I don't know about you, but I'm intrigued enough to at least read the next line. (read) This describes the world she's in and not only sets the stage, but tells us more about her – she's a bounty hunter. That solidifies the impression of kick ass heroine. The next line cracks me up. (read) In HER world, she lives a simple life. This says so much more about who she is and the setting of the story. A simple life? Compared to what? That certainly ups the stakes about what a complicated life is. (next line) So, by the end of this paragraph, we know the type of character she is, the world in which she lives and what her inciting incident is or what she has a stake. If this is the kind of book you like, you'll probably continue reading.

(Read) Now we know what her goal is and what she's up against – it's going to be a pretty long road to finding her brother and it's going to test her skills and character...at least that's what this blurb promises so far.

(Read) And in this closing section, we have a big picture of the overall plot of the story – it's going to affect a lot more people and she's going to not only be in the thick of it, but it also promises a little bit of romance. The final line steps us out of the story and lets us know there will be more to come either with Leda, our main character, or at least in this intriguing world of vampire hunters and conspiracies.

At this point, the reader is either going to buy the book OR, if they're experienced enough to know that covers and blurbs aren't the book, they'll use Amazon's "look inside" feature.

Interior

- Make that first page count!
- Make that first LINE count
- Make your readers feel SOMETHING!
- First line of *Vampire's Kiss*:

You knew your life had hit a new low when your sixty-year-old inebriated next-door neighbor offered you a 'quickie' behind the bar of the Witch's Watering Hole.

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The reader has come this far. Don't lose them now! You've got a great cover! A fantastic blurb! And now they're checking out how you open the book. Can you deliver what you promise? Will they enjoy your writing style?

- (CLICK) You'd better make that first page count!
- (CLICK) In fact, make that first LINE count. What are you going to do to hook the reader?
- (CLICK) If you can get some emotion out of your reader in that first line, you'll get them hooked for sure! Does that first line make them gasp? Does it get them hot? Does it make them throw their head back and laugh? Look at the opening line for *Vampire's Kiss*: (CLICK) (read)

I don't know about you, but I kept reading! And yes...I bought the book. In fact, I had to tear myself away from reading it so I could finish putting this presentation together. I'm looking forward to a good read. And that is exactly what you want your readers doing.

People have very short attention spans in today's world of immediate gratification. If you're a traditionally published author, you might not have a lot of control over your cover after you've signed that contract, but YOU have most of the control over your story so make those first words count. In some cases, you have control over your blurb. Make every single word count there, too. If you're self-published, you have all the control, so definitely make those words count.

Front Matter & Back Matter

- Book funneling
 - Mentions or enticements to the next book in the series
 - Links to the next book in the series
- Mailing List
 - Pretty Links are PERFECT for this (<http://arialburnz.com/vipclub>)
 - Author Page with your publisher is an option – have signup link there
 - Might be able to include this in your "About the Author" blurb
- Giveaway if possible

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If you're self-published, you'll have a lot more control over this, but some publishers will work with you on these things if you ask. I'm of the philosophy and experience as an editor to believe that it's better to go ahead and put these things into the manuscript and cross your fingers they don't take it out OR work with them to keep the information in. You have a better chance of this info being included if you have already put it in there, than if you asked for them to add it after the fact.

If you can, try to include...

Book funneling

- Mentions or enticements to the next book in your series at the back of the book, right after the words "the end". If you have a multiple book deal with a publisher, try to get a sneak peak into the first chapter of the next book in the series added to the end of the first novel. Of course, a sneak peak of Book 3 at the end of Book 2, etc. If you cannot get them to include a sneak peak, then try to at least include a phrase like, "The adventure continues in Book 2..." and give the title. If the title changes, it's an easy fix before the first book goes live. But make sure you follow up with your editor to remind her to change the title in the back matter. She'll probably have a hundred other things to think about.
- If you're self-published, you can most definitely do this, but you'll also want to include a link to the second book if you can. I highly recommend Pretty Links if you have a WordPress website. I've talked about them before. There are other short-link options out there and I think I've mentioned one other in my handouts. And most pretty links will get by the scrutiny of the distribution platforms. Most publishers don't mind if you link to your own website, which is what a Pretty Link is. So even if book 2 isn't published or even up for preorder, you can still provide a Pretty Link to a landing page. Here's an example of the landing page I have to all my books that are not yet published (show web page). If you don't write romance or erotica, then you can do something a little more genre appropriate, but you get the idea. Please note the bottom of this page – About 5% of my mailing list came through this page, so this is a great way to catch those new readers who are hungry for the next book!

Mailing list – As always, we encourage you to keep building your mailing list, so you want to try to include this in your front and your back matter.

- If your publisher will allow it, provide a web address (which people can either copy and paste) or a real link to your mailing list signup in the front and the back. I definitely encourage a Pretty Link for this. I gave mine here as an example. It's easy for people to remember. Those crazy short links you get from MailChimp are impossible to use if you don't copy and paste or link directly. OR ask your publisher to provide the link to your author page on their website...and then be sure to have a link to signup for your mailing list from there.

Giveaways

- Most publishers won't allow it, but if you can include the link to your giveaway, that's a great way to net new readers for your list. Value add right from the start with the promise of a free eBook and the chance to win a prize! They might let you put this on your author page on their website, so use that if you can.

Quick Tip for Reviews in a Series

- Learn to write a synopsis!!!
- Easy option for reviewers to get caught up on a series
- Can package as an eBook
- Additional bonus: Helps iron out plot holes!

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IF you don't have a solid review team yet OR you're trying to get traction with bloggers on a new release, it can be a little difficult to get readers to jump into the middle of your series without the monumental task of reading the entire series just to get caught up. If the books in your series are written to be stand alones, then you should have too much of a problem. But if you're like me and the overarching storyline really contributes to the experience, (CLICK) consider the synopsis.

I know! I can hear you all groaning from here. Especially the self-published authors. You traditionally published authors probably already have a synopsis written because you most likely needed it to get your contract, so you have a leg up on the self-published authors who NEVER write a synopsis. But hear me out on this one. This could totally work in your favor.

(CLICK) Remember that a synopsis has to have the beginning, middle and end of the book. The editor and your blogger need to know how the story is going to end. Before I had a review team and when I was launching Book 4 in my series, I ran into a lot of bloggers on my tour who did not want to jump into the middle of a series and they were turning my book down for a review. However, when I added the option to read the synopses of Books 1-3, they agreed to do the book review for Book 4.

(CLICK) So I packaged the synopses for Books 1-3 into an eBook, but a cover on it showing all three covers, and sent that along with the complete ARC for Book 4. Each book is about 10 pages, so they were able to read the main plot for three books in 30 pages instead over 1200 pages. Almost every one of the bloggers came back with a resounding THANK YOU and more than half of them said they were so intrigued by the synopses they wanted to read the previous books anyway and promised to do reviews on them, too, even though they knew how the story was going to end. I gave them enough information to know what was happening in the story to push the main plot along, but only gave them enough information of the sub-plots where they contributed to the main plot. This teased them into wanting to find out the details.

I still write a synopsis of all my books. I try to write it as soon as I'm done crafting the entire manuscript because it helps me iron out any plot holes I might have and now I have tools to get bloggers to dive into my series if I'm on a tour. So you can only benefit from writing these.

Recap

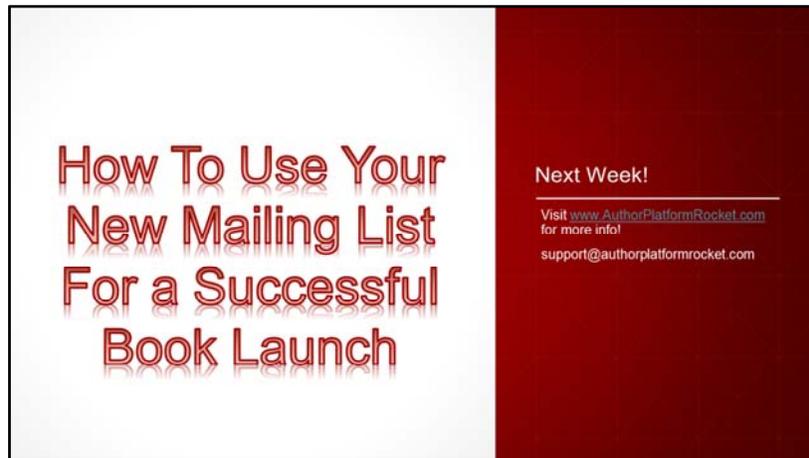
- Covers are the most important tool for selling books
- Blurbs are the next important tool
- The first page is the final selling point
- Use front and back matter to your advantage

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Okay, I hope you found this information helpful and you have a better perspective of how every facet of your product can be used as a marketing tool to either sell more books or build your mailing list, which also helps you sell more books.

So...

- Everyone does judge a book by its cover, unfortunately, so that's why this is the most important marketing tool for selling your books.
- The blurb is the next most important. This will usually get them to take the plunge to delve further
- And that's why the first page – nay the first line – is so important. That is usually what gets them to hit that BUY button.
- Once the book is in their hands, you'll want to take advantage of their attention and use the front and back matter to drive them to your other books and to your mailing list. Once they're on your mailing list, the control belongs to you to entice them to read the other books with teasers and character interviews and engagement with you. That's how you build devoted fans.



No homework except to take what you learned today and apply it to your books now or at least use it when you're considering your next contract.

Next week going to tie up this whole series and show you how to leverage your mailing list to have a successful book launch. We're going to apply everything you've learned in this series - from communicating with your mailing list and sending out drip campaigns to using all those graphics and tools and proper utilization of social media – to successfully launch your next new release. This is what we've been building up to, so make sure you take this last class.



Any questions about what I shared in today's session? Did you find it helpful? I know it was kinda light, but some of those tips are kind of important with the last session, so I had to make sure we were all on the same page. I hope you got something out of it. Thank you so much for attending today's session! We'll see you next week!



Thank you!

www.AuthorPlatformRocket.com - support@authorplatformrocket.com