

Reality Marketing

Tips from Jen Abbas, author of *Generation Ex: Adult Children of Divorce and the Healing of Our Pain*

and Associate Marketing Director for Zondervan

If you read nothing else, remember this:

- **Be proactive about promotions.** When I turned in my manuscript to WaterBrook, I also turned in a document of ideas, my personal promotion plan. The first list included things I was going to do (showed my initiative and willingness to take ownership for promotion). The second list was things I'd like WaterBrook to do (demonstrated realistic expectations and understanding of publishing realities), the third list included ideas for how we could partner together. The subtext of the whole thing was that WaterBrook knew that I was serious about doing my part to promote the book.
- **Seek to serve.** *NO ONE is going to be more passionate about your book than you.* Your publishing team believes in your book, that's why they are taking the financial risk to get it in print. But practically speaking, each person at the house is working 20 or more books at a time, you just have one. If you take the approach of making every interaction with your publisher a positive one for them, your requests are likely to go farther.
- **Always have a book with you.** You never know who you are going to meet. Be prepared to give a copy to someone who can increase your circle of influence. A good rule of thumb is that if someone can influence ten others to buy your book, it's worth giving them a copy. Another idea is to have postcards or business cards. I like postcards because of their versatility. You can get 1000 for about \$150.
- **Have an informative website.** In this day, it's CRAZY not to have a site. The first place people tend to look for a specific book or for a book on a specific topic is ONLINE. You *must* be there! Hire a webmaster with an eye for design and especially one who understands the book world. I highly recommend my guy: Kevin McNeese at KMWebDesigns (info@kmwebdesigns.com).
- **Start blogging.** It's free. It's easy. And readers are looking for it. It's a great way to quickly interact with your audience. I recommend Blogger: www.Blogger.com.
- **Check out MySpace.** Musicians have led the way in using MySpace as a promotional tool, but authors are starting to join in. If your book targets the 14-35 crowd, here they are!
- **Look for the hook** - My book is for adult children of divorce. One media hook is that I donated a portion of my advance to fund a scholarship for high school seniors and college students.
- **Get on tape** - Most big media wants to know that you can represent yourself and your topic well. This means they want to see tape. If you aren't a speaker, learn to be! Attend a conference such as Speak Up with Confidence, and get out there to practice!
- **Gather a prayer team** - Most importantly, ask a group of people to commit to praying for you: as you write and as you promote. If you are writing as God leads, you will need prayer cover.

Here are some additional ideas for you to turn your enthusiasm into sales:

No Cost Promotional Ideas:

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- **Make friends with retailers.** Introduce yourself to the managers of the bookstores in your area. Before the book releases, bring in a copy of your catalog with your information so that they are aware in advance that you are a local author (and hopefully a loyal shopper). Create a one sheet that demonstrates why it's a good idea for them to carry your book. Come back again when you get your copies. Give a copy to the manager and ask what you can do to help them sell the book. Partner with a retailer when you do speaking events. Give the store the option to sell books for you.
- **Encourage web reviews.** Ask fans to write a review at amazon.com, bn.com, ChristianBook.com and other popular online retailers.
- **Establish yourself as an expert.** Introduce yourself to local media, pastors, retailers and other influencers. Give them a copy of the book and let them know your background. Offer to serve on panel discussions, write articles or otherwise share your knowledge.
- **Add a signature to your email account.** Keep it simple and direct them to your website. For example:

John Doe

Author of My Book

Available April 20, 2006 from Zondervan

www.MyName.com • www.MyName.blogspot.com • www.MySpace.com/MyName

- **Create your own personal marketing plan.** It doesn't have to be formal, just a month-by-month list of things you can do to promote your book, including store visits, web updates, pursuing speaking engagements, etc. Remember, promotion is not about being obnoxious. It's finding natural ways to talk about what you're passionate about. For example, one very introverted author friend loves to bake. When her book came out, she made cookies for all the local bookstores. She quietly delivered them with a postcard, which she used to express her gratitude for them carrying her book. You can believe those stores thought fondly of this author! Something I did with *Generation Ex* was have my book framed in a shadow box for each of my parents. While putting in my order, I was able to talk to the manager about my book and tell her I was a local author. I gave her a copy of the book and when I returned to pick up my order, the book I gave her was framed and displayed on the wall. Two years later, it's still there!
- **Arrange a local bookstore appearance in your hometown.** Then contact your local media and let them know you have a new book out and that you have an upcoming appearance. Ask for a feature by giving them an enticing hook and plenty of notice to meet their deadlines.
- **Take Advantage of AmazonConnect.** This program allows authors to post blog entries and list favorites to connect with readers. Readers can create a plog (Personalized Blog) and subscribe to their favorite authors blogs. A good example is Karen Ball's profile.
- **Sign Up for Google Alerts.** Let Google find opportunities for you. Register your name, your book title and other key phrases. Google will send you an email (I suggest weekly) with links to articles relating to the terms you submit. For example, I registered

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"Jen Abbas," "Generation Ex," "adult children of divorce," and "effects of divorce."
Voila! You will now have interested parties delivered to your In box.

- **Send an email to friends and family with ideas for how to help.** This is what I sent out to everyone on my newsletter list:

TOP 10 WAYS TO SUPPORT JEN'S BOOK

1. If you are child of divorce, consider buying a copy for yourself, your parents and your siblings.
 2. Consider buying a copy for adult children of divorce you know, or send them an email to tell them about the book.
 3. Consider buying a copy for counselors, pastors or college staff members you know, or send them an email to tell them about the book.
 4. Ask your local library to buy a copy.
 5. Call your favorite bookstore and ask them to carry the book.
 6. Tell your church about it. Better yet, give a copy to your pastor or write a review for your church bulletin.
 7. Post a review on one or all of these sites: Amazon.com, BN.com, Parable.com, LifewayStores.com, Christianbook.com and other sites.
 8. Write a review for your local newspaper, or write a letter to the editor.
 9. Tell people about my website: <http://www.jenabbas.com>.
 10. Pray for me as I have the opportunity to talk about this book.
- **Write letters.** Decide which groups can best get the word out about your book and write letters to those groups. See if your retail partner or publisher would be willing to offer a special incentive to this group.
 - **Post on related sites.** Go to where those most interested in your topic are and become a part of that web community. Most sites will let you have a signature, which you can use to note your book.
 - **Pray...without ceasing.** Pray that the right people will pick it up at the right times and be blessed by the message inside. Pray for retailers to have a personal passion for your book. Pray that your sales reps would have safe travel and good health as they tell retailers about your book. Pray that your publishing team is focused and excited about your book and their jobs. Pray that they would find the right balance between their work and their other commitments. Pray that you would be a worthy ambassador of the message Christ has entrusted to you and that you are a person of physical wellness, emotional wholeness and spiritual integrity.

Blog Opportunities:

- Offer free books to the first 10 bloggers who agree to post about your book.
- Post links to other authors and topics of interest
- Offer to write a guest post on other blogs (either other authors or those with an interest in your topic).
- Seek opportunities to do email interviews with other bloggers (both as interviewer and interviewee).
- Have an easy-to-find link to buy your book.
- Host an essay contest
- Create a discussion/study group

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- Podcasting
- Solicit reader feedback and post responses

MySpace Opportunities:

- Create a link to buy your book
- Post book description
- Use the blog and bulletin features to announce signings, interviews, reviews and other events.
- Network with other authors
- Network with potential readers
- Use the bulletin feature to offer promotions and giveaways
- Create/join a book club
- Upload pictures and videos of you speaking on your topic
- Offer booking information
- Podcasting
- Show your speaking schedule

Low Cost Promotional Ideas:

- **Invest in some postcards.** Include the book cover on one side and a book description, ISBN, release date other pertinent information on the back. Make sure you don't block the space the post office needs. Suggested uses include:
 - *Thank you notes* for anyone who's shown support for your book—friends, family, retailers, churches, ministries, co-workers, associates, doctor, dentist, postal carrier, media and other influencers.
 - *Prayer cards.* Ask interested parties to post the card where it will remind them to pray for you and the ministry of your book. (It will also be a good conversation starter.)
 - *Invitations* to a release party or celebration party. Use labels to note the important details.
 - *Pre-publication reminders* for use at speaking engagements or with anyone who expresses interest in your book. If the person you are talking to seems to have someone in mind, or seems especially passionate, give them an extra postcard or two to pass along. (Keep extras in your car)
 - *Advertisements* in stores with bulletin boards in the entryway.
 - *Follow-up* to your own speaking engagements and events. Have a stack available at your table for attendees to take with them.
- **Make your own media kit.** Include a color photo of your book cover, professional head shot, biography, copies of any reviews or articles mentioning you, your ministry or your book and a pitch letter suggesting topics your book covers.
- **Create personal mailing labels.** Include the book cover, website and release date, in addition to your address.
- **Send press releases.** Your publicist will probably hit the majors, but you can hit sent a short news item to your local paper, hometown paper, alma mater, etc.

Worth Every Penny:

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- **Develop your own website.** Try to secure your name, i.e. www.JohnDoe.com. A good site will include a book description and table of contents, bio, speaking schedule, links or contact information to order your book. A great site might also include:
 - a press page that includes everything a media person might need to talk up your book, including:
 - press releases
 - downloadable images of your book cover, both high (300 dpi) and low resolution versions
 - downloadable headshots, both high (300 dpi) and low resolution versions.
 - possible story angles and pitches
 - suggested interview questions
 - a schedule of where you'll be and when (and for what reason)
 - reviews, endorsements, and links to articles about you, your ministry and your book
 - a message board
 - a Q&A section with frequently asked questions about you, your ministry and your book
 - registration to receive updates from you
 - contact information for scheduling interviews or speaking engagements
 - a list of other resources (with links to buy).
 - links to other sites, especially those promoting your book—blogs, organizations, etc.
 - a retail partner (or two or three). There are several online retailers who offer affiliate programs that give you a bit of change for every item sold when you direct surfers to their site. In addition to Amazon, check out FamilyChristian.com and Parable.com.
- **Host your own release party.** Invite prayer team, friends, church members and pastors, and co-workers. Serve cake with book cover, title and release date. Instead of a guest book, include a journal in which guests can write words of blessing and dedication over the book. Invite your favorite retailer to take pre-orders and host a book signing on release day. Make sure the receipts give the details for the opening day event.