

Harnessing Social Media to Connect with Readers and Increase Sales

Competing with self-published authors

In the ebook market, publishers and authors can learn a lot from self-published authors, some of whom have emerged as leaders when it comes to harnessing the power of social media to reach new readers, connect with fans, and drive traffic to their titles across online retailers. Discovery through social media is growing fast, and there is ample opportunity to participate, so why wait?

So many ways to connect – but how to engage?

Readers can be found in the unlikeliest of places, but the only way to find them is to ENGAGE.

Encourage your authors to take to twitter and facebook and blogs. The more adept might even have their own website, Pinterest, Tumblr or Flickr account. These can be incredibly powerful tools of engagement if used correctly. The key to doing this well is to ‘engage’. Be personal, friendly and conversational. The author shouldn’t try to ‘sell.’ We’ve all seen those tweets: ‘BUY MY THRILLING NEW CRIME NOVEL NOW FOR 99p [here](#)’

That comes across as a bit aggressive. Why should someone simply buy your book just because you’ve told them to?

A better way to engage is to stop trying to sell and instead start having a conversation. Interact with your readers. Answer their questions and respond to their comments. Offer them a glimpse into your life, or the lives of your characters. Tell them what inspired the story, how you went about writing it. Give your readers a *reason* to engage with you! Be interactive. The most important content is personal, visual and most of all, expresses identity.

Authors who engage well

There *are* traditional authors out there who have mastered the art of engaging well.

Judy Blume (@judyblume) is a great example of a traditional author who engages well, and frequently, with her fans. She is conversational in tone, she ‘talks’ to her followers, and replies to their questions, and offers us glimpses of *her* life, what she’s watching, reading, thinking. She’ll post pictures of her pets and she employs humour to connect with her base in a very personal way. The personal touch is always best.

Jackie Collins (@jackiecollins) is another writer who knows how to harness the power of twitter! She tweets out links to her titles, uses hashtags effectively to converse and invite responses and she rewards her readers by offering give-aways in competitions.



Tracking engagement

There are various ways to track the number of people who are clicking your links and participating in the conversation.

Hashtags

Hashtags are a great way to add context to something and make it part of a larger conversation. Plus, you can track who is using your hashtag.

URL shorteners

Bit.ly is a quick and easy URL shortener, which is great when there is limited character space per tweet. Create an account and use this tool to send out links to your titles and then track how many people have clicked your link!