

Promotion for the Unpublished

by Ann Charles and Jacquie Rogers

Why Are We Here Talking to You Today?

<i>Ann</i>	<p>Back in the spring of 2007, I was sitting on the sidelines, waiting for my agent to land me a contract. Then I heard a well-known, published author explain that your agent is your teammate, and that you should both work toward your publication and career goals. I realized then and there that I wasn't doing my part. I decided to take action and signed up for an online marketing class for authors.</p> <p>Two years later, after lots of reading, studying, and experimenting, a writing buddy suggested that I share with other unpublished authors (like her) some of the promotion information I'd been gobbling up for the past couple of years. She suggested a workshop, threw out Jacquie's name, and I took the bait. Jacquie didn't require much arm twisting—besides, she owed me a big one.</p> <p>Today we stand before you, excited to share some of what we've learned.</p>
<i>Jacquie</i>	<p>You never know when or how that first sale will happen. We've always been told you have to have a full manuscript to sell your first book, but a friend of mine sold two books on twenty pages. So she worked and worked and worked to get two books in shape by her deadlines, which she did indeed meet.</p> <p>But she had no marketing plan whatsoever. No website, no newsletter, and very little internet presence. I watched her struggle and realized that we should all be following Gerri Russell's example. She hadn't sold yet, but she'd been doing the First Sale column in the RWR for years, and had developed several quality workshops that she presented in several states. I saw that whenever she sold, she'd be ready—except she didn't have an internet presence, either.</p> <p>Being a former techie nerd, it seemed reasonable to get a website and a marketing foundation in place before I was in a state of utter panic after The Call.</p> <p>This workshop is about the different paths we took with the same goal in mind—build a solid platform so all is ready when we need it.</p>

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What Did We Do to Get Started?

Ann	Initially, I stumbled into positions, such as the Editor Agent chair at ECWC. Later, I had my arm twisted by my critique partner, and found myself volunteered to be the Vice President of the Greater Seattle RWA chapter.
Jacquie	<p>I started twelve years ago as the Greater Seattle RWA chapter's newsletter editor. At that time, HeartBeat was a 20-page paper newsletter, and we exchanged newsletters with chapters all over the English-speaking globe. I finaled in the newsletter contest twice, and built a relatively strong name recognition in RWA. At National, people knew who I was. It was an eye-opener.</p> <p>Then, a few years later, I took a page from Gerri's book and signed on to do the calendar of events on RWA eNotes.</p> <p>In the meantime, I'd taken baby steps to create an internet presence.</p>

Why Should You Care about Promotion Already?

Ann	<p>Let's begin with the bad news—this business of writing to get published is HARD HARD HARD!!! You have to really REALLY want to succeed.</p> <p>If you can quit writing right now and enjoy life, do it—quit. This is not a business for anyone not 100% on board. If you can't quit, welcome to hell. Let's get busy!</p> <p>You are your own CEO—it's your company, and your agent works for you. But what happens to CEOs who focus on production with total disregard for who is buying their product? Failure.</p> <p>My point here is that you have to focus on all aspects of your company, not just Research and Development.</p>
Jacquie	<p>Why is it important to do all of this NOW, instead of after you get the call?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time• Money• Learning Curve (Amazon page, Myspace, Facebook, library thing, Squidoo, Pagii, the gazillion Ning sites, manicreaders—Do you know how to use all of these to your best advantage? Do you know how to embed your book cover into an email and make it into an attractive promo package?) Graphic arts: publisher, psp, or buck up and pay for it• Fan-building

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The Importance of Role Models

Jacquie	<p>How did we fall into this? We got halfway down the road and said, "Hey, now we need to get serious about this." But how exactly do we do that? The answer: Role models.</p> <p>We don't have to make mistakes that have already been made. Learn from the winners.</p> <p>Pick a role model or two (or ten) and study them, not necessarily as a writer, but as an entrepreneur.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stella Cameron—Not a technical person but has always been on the leading edge with her website, was one of the very first to use book trailers, and is always generous with her time and expertise. I've also seen her be extremely gracious under fire.• Gerri Russell—Realized from the get-go that networking and building a broad base of support was necessary for the day her first book came out. She worked hard for well over 10 years to become an overnight success.• Rowena Cherry—Ventures into new territory and dragged me into the world of podcasting, as well as introducing me to several social networks in Britain, where faeries are quite popular. She is always generous with her fellow authors and co-promotes all the time.
Ann	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jane Porter—Her workshop/speaking touring, her kindness and generosity with her time.• Yasmine Galenorn—Her discipline in writing and organizing her time.• J.A. Konrath—His generosity with his knowledge on promotion. He has a free 700-page book on promotion for the newly published you can download from his website.• Jacquie Rogers—Her socializing/networking, marketing, and salesmanship (Have you seen her Links page and all of the links she has for finding her on the internet? I counted 13 links, and I know for a fact that's not all of them.)

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The Importance of Peers

Ann	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat your peers with respect, because they may be the next bestseller.• When you are published, sell your peers' work right alongside with yours. Help each other sell books and raise the waterline so that more books are published in general. In addition, readership may follow to your friends work and vice-versa.
Jacquie	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't compare yourself to your peers. Focus on yourself and what you're doing. Everyone's path to publication is unique.• Link yourself to positive-minded, career-oriented, non-drama-filled 'business acquaintances.'• We can't emphasize this enough—Be gracious, courteous, enthusiastic, considerate, funny, confident, genuine, memorable (in a good way), and personable. ALWAYS! This is truly a business of "who you know" when it comes to success.

Let's Talk about Platform

Ann	<p>I'm not talking about shoes here. What exactly is a <i>platform</i> you ask? In short, it's whatever tools you are using to interact with your reading public and increase your fan base. Your platform isn't the same as your <i>brand</i>, which is a topic for another workshop.</p> <p>Any questions on the difference between these two terms before I continue?</p> <p>I first read about <i>platform</i> in Christina Katz's book, <i>Get Known Before the Book Deal</i>. She explains that your platform includes such things as your website, any workshops or speeches you are giving on your specialty (writing genre fiction), and anything else that you use as a way of getting your name out to the reading public. Years ago, this was something that you could count on your publisher to help you develop after you signed a contract. Those days are gone. You need to start building your platform as soon as your writing is ready for publication.</p> <p>Notice those last three words, 'ready for publication.' If you're just starting out, you need to focus on the craft. Without a clean, well-written, professionally packaged product to sell, you are setting yourself up for failure.</p>
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	<p>I tend to think of my platform as a bunch of dinner plates that I'm spinning. Each plate represents a different element of my platform, and each plate needs me to keep adding momentum to it or it will crash at my feet. This takes continual work, and as I keep adding more plates to my act, the spinning takes more energy, focus, and determination. Each plate also raises my stress level, adds more distraction, and increases the amount of risk I'm taking.</p> <p>Are we having fun yet? Well, actually, yes, we are. It's like building an empire-your very own empire.</p> <p>Three key questions to ask yourself (from Katz's book):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who are you known as in the world as a writer now?2. How do others see you now?3. Who would you like to be known as in one year?
Jacquie	<p>Let's talk about some platform examples in more detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articles: if it's in print, it's forever. Use and reuse whatever you write, and always sign off with whatever you want to stick in people's minds.• Website—Needs to be entertaining, informative, compelling. NOT just an ad for your books/work.• Social networks• Workshops & Online classes• Online presence (reader groups, etc.) <p>Example: Charity link to books/author</p>

Authors and the Internet

Ann	<p>Agents and Editors' Wants</p> <p>You need to find out what agents and editors are looking for from authors. Things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A website filled with fun and interactive elements (blogs, puzzles, podcasts, readings from your work)• A regular e-newsletter or blog• A presence in online communities (Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Ning, etc.)• Published articles for magazines, newspapers, etc.• A history of speaking at conferences, meetings, etc• A large mailing list <p>How much have you done on this list?</p>
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Jacquie	Head shots Gerri Russell made me do it... Head shots are one of most important elements of your portfolio. <i>(Don't worry, they can remove your jowls.)</i> A picture is worth a thousand words. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research other author pictures.• Figure out what you want your picture to say.• Make sure your picture matches your platform/brand.
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Miscellaneous Thoughts

Ann	Never Too Old to Learn Unless you have thousands of dollars set aside to pay people to do all of the work for you, you're going to have to learn some new tools (whether you want to or not). <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graphic Arts: MS Publisher, PSP, or Adobe Photoshop• Blog Tools: Blogspot, Wordpress, etc.• Website Tools: Hosting software, FTP, and tons of other software. So, either buck up and pay, or buck up and learn.
Jacquie	Blogs, Contests, and More Build your mailing list with the easy way. Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fun Contests—There are tons of contests out there. You have to come up with something fun, yet different in order to stand out.• Interesting Blogs—To blog or not? If you do, plan it out ahead of time and tie it into your platform.• Helpful Articles—Giving something for free is a good way to make friends.• Cool Prizes—Ask authors to contribute books for prizes.• Collaborate with your peers and help each other. Saves everyone time and money, plus amplifies your exposure.
Ann	Overexposure When is it too much exposure? There is a line between getting your name out there and beating people over the head with it. Find it. Take Facebook, for example. I receive so many invitations to Groups, Author Pages, book signings, and so forth that I don't even read them anymore, especially those that come keep coming from the same source.

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Jacquie	<p>Readers Groups</p> <p>Readers' groups, promo lists. Yahoogroups. There are a bazillion readers' groups.</p> <p>Cata-romance Classic Romance Revival Coffee Time Romance Joyfully Reviewed Long and Short Romances Night Owl Romance The Romance Studio</p> <p>As an unpublished writer, make yourself known as an avid and well-versed reader. But pick your lists according to the market you're targeting. No sense on spending time on an erotica ebook site when you have no intentions of selling either erotica or to an epubliher.</p> <p>On the other hand, you can do some market research—what's hot and what's not. Pay attention to the authors who are peddling their books. What do they do that's off-putting? What do they do that you think will be effective in selling books?</p>
Ann	<p>Be Professional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have professional business cards made. Most people don't have the software to produce professional-quality business cards at home. If you don't have the tools to make them at home, there are plenty of cheap options online (but, this is going to require you to learn a little bit about images and uploading, so we're back to that Learning song-and-dance again).• Also, you need a professional email address. Consider the difference between ann@anncharles.com vs. kittylover2@verizon.net.• You need a professional website/web address (don't use the same site for your author presence as you use for your worship of Captain Kirk). There is a lot to this subject—more information than we have time for in this workshop. However, there are tons of workshops online and through other sources that you can take regarding getting a website, as well as people to hire if you don't want to build your own.• You need other paraphernalia as you begin corresponding with agents, editors, and other professionals in the industry. Things like letterhead, fax cover sheets, and other tools traditional businesses use.

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Jacquie	Proper Emails <p>Learn how to create a proper email, make it attractive, embed graphics, include a signature line, etc.</p> <p>If your email program won't embed graphics, get another program, because if you can't send graphics, you can't send your book cover when you get one. And don't even think about sending a link—only your friends will bother to follow it and see your cover. So get this all taken care of ahead of time.</p> <p>Trick: use HTMLpad to code your message, complete with embedded graphics, tables, and all the complication. Then go into preview, copy, go over to your email program and create a new message, then paste the preview right into the email. Works great, and you'll have the fanciest emails in town.</p> <p>Practice NOW.</p>
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Conclusion

Jacquie	<p>When you get "The Call," your work has just started. If you build a platform before you get that call, your life will be easier and your sales will be higher. Start with baby steps and do your job—build your platform at the same time you build your writing career.</p> <p>When it comes to writing, you get out of it what you put into it.</p>
Ann	<p>Work hard to establish your platform and spread name-recognition. After you get the gears turning, the momentum will help carry you forward and move you along even faster AND make it harder for you to stop. The goal is getting your speed up. What are you doing to turn those gears?</p> <p>Confidence is key! Fake it until you make it.</p>

To learn more about promotion, check out www.1stturningpoint.com!

Brief History by Ann: Shortly after Jacquie agreed to do a workshop on promo with me, I was lying wide awake in the wee hours of the night (as I often did thanks to a teething baby) and the idea hit me to develop an interactive website on the subject of promotion for other unpublished authors.

The next day, I mentioned the website idea to Jacquie, knowing I'd need her help to pull it off. We decided to think about it. A week later, I sat down with the intention of trying to come up with twenty topics on the subject, figuring if I could come up with twenty, the website was a good idea to pursue. I stopped writing after 110 topics

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because my hand was getting tired. I showed Jacquie my topics list, we talked about it some more, and we both agreed to go for it. And that's how **1st Turning Point Was Born**.

Your Presenters

Ann Charles writes romantic mysteries sprinkled with romance and humor. She is currently toiling away on her next book while her agent works on selling her manuscripts. <http://www.anncharles.com>

Jacquie Rogers lives in Seattle with her patient husband and an untamed cat. She currently has two print books and one e-novella out. <http://www.jacquierogers.com>

You can also find both of them at <http://www.1stturningpoint.com>, where they and over two dozen other authors, reviewers, and PR consultants have joined together to teach and share (and learn from each other) all sorts of great information about promotion for both unpublished and published authors.