

# Self-Promotion for Self-Publishers

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## What is 'self-promotion'?

Self-promotion is marketing & communicating – telling the world your book (and you) exists – via channels and methods initiated and – preferably – managed by you.

In its simplest context it's you standing on a soapbox shouting, 'I've written a book! It's great! Buy it!'

But obviously it's not that simple, and the channels for communication available to us today provide a wealth of opportunities.

Here are some things you could do for free...

- Send your books for review
- Create a website for your book
- Write and issue your own media releases
- Organise your own book launches, readings, and the promotion of these
- Get yourself in the newspaper, on radio and TV
- Leverage off other events
- Create an author's blog
- Write speculative articles promoting your book/content
- Talk to book clubs
- Create a promotional email signature
- Create social media accounts for your book/yourself as an author
- Design your own marketing collateral
  - Posters, flyers, bookmarks, business cards, etc.
- Make your own videos for YouTube etc., and your own podcasts
- Stand on a soapbox and shout!

And here are things you can (or will have to) pay for (note many of these are also listed above):

- Creation of a website (professionally designed and hosted)
- Media releases – writing and issuing
- Getting exposure on radio and TV (via paid advertising, commercials)
- Designing and printing of marketing collateral (Posters, flyers, bookmarks, business cards, etc.) using graphic designers, etc.
- Pay to be involved in 'leverage events' (conferences, expos, book fairs, and the like)
- Pay for increased profile on social media ('Pay-per-click', Facebook 'boosts' and adverts, etc.)
- Advertising in print media – magazines, newspapers (consider advertorial material, quid-pro-quo arrangements, etc.), posters for your book at bus stops, etc.

- Professional video production – for YouTube, Vimeo, etc.
- Professional podcast production
- Pay for a soapbox and a strategic location (e.g. Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park) ☺

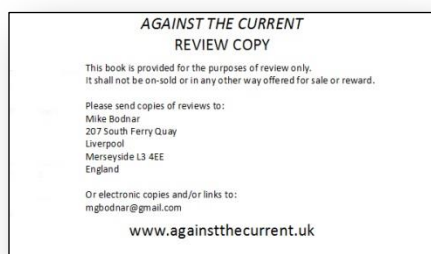
Let's look at these in more detail so you can decide which you might want to pursue.

## Things you could do for free

### Send your books for review

Having got your books printed, you don't want them sitting in boxes in your spare room, loft or garage. Research book review opportunities. Find reviewers who might reach your target audiences. For example, *Against The Current* is both a travel book and a book likely to appeal to boating enthusiasts, so I sent copies to travel publications and boating publications for review, as well as more mainstream reviewers at the Guardian and other national dailies.

When you send a copy for review, include a nicely-worded note in the front that reminds the recipient that this is a review copy and not for sale. Print these notes out and slip one inside the cover of each book you send. Also provide your email and/or physical address for the reviewer to send a copy of any review to.



This of course may not happen, but it increases the chances.

Reviews don't have to come from professionals. Your website (which we'll come to shortly) can encourage ordinary readers to write reviews. And when you receive some encouraging feedback, even from friends, suggest they write something on your publisher's book review page.

You can then pick and choose the best phrases and comments and use them in your promotional material.

I was tempted to use: 'Mike is the new Bill Bryson.' However, the actual quote begins, 'I'm not saying Mike is the new Bill Bryson, but...' and then goes on to say some lovely things about the book and the writing. In theory though there's nothing stopping me pulling the quote 'Mike is the new Bill Bryson,' since that's exactly what the reviewer said ☺.

**Top Tip:** When sending your books out, either for review or to customers, use [Royal Mail's online postage labels](#): much quicker and easier than queuing at the post office.

(Having mentioned Bill Bryson, don't be shy to chase some well-known people for a 'celebrity endorsement' – it could add hugely to your book's credibility and sales. I'm still chasing him...)

## Create a website for your book

You can create your own website for free and without any training. There are many online options for doing this – if you simply search ‘free website creation’ or similar you’ll discover numerous design-and-publish packages.

Many of these are template-based, meaning you can simply choose an existing design, add your own words, images and colours, and click ‘publish.’ Job done.

Why are they free? Two reasons: one is that they will likely include some branding or advertising for the website design service incorporated in your site – not a big issue if you don’t mind promoting them as well as yourself – and the second is that your free website URL address will probably also include the name of the site provider. Again, this is not an issue, *except* that it does make for a more clumsy URL. So, instead of [ididitmyway.uk](http://ididitmyway.uk), it might be [webdesignco/ididitmyway.uk](http://webdesignco/ididitmyway.uk) – which is tricky to promote.

You can get around this by purchasing a domain name, and for a monthly or annual fee your site is hosted with a URL of your choice, for example: [ididitmyway.uk](http://ididitmyway.uk) – easier to remember and much better for using on business cards and suchlike.

Why do you need a website? Because it’s expected these days, but perhaps more importantly, it’s a major self-promotion tool.

At its simplest your website might contain no more than an image of your book, a copy of the blurb and a sample chapter, with – importantly – information on where and how to buy it. And that’s good – because now, instead of always lugging sample copies of your book around with you, you can simply direct people to your website where they can get all the information they need. (You of course hand them your business card which has the web address on it. We’ll come to that soon)

But why stop there? Depending on what sort of book you’ve published, your website could add all sorts of value. A sample chapter is a great idea, but if for example your book is in the self-help genre, you could post useful snippets that tempt readers and make them want to know more.

You can add a blog to your site, so you share your news, thoughts and opinions on a regular basis, and maybe build up a following. You should definitely post reviews of your book, create a forum for feedback or questions, or, like I did, add a photo section (if appropriate). I couldn’t afford to have photos in my book – but I can put as many as I like on my website.

So, by way of example, browse through the main sections on [my website](http://mywebsite) – Home, The Book, Photos, Bios, News, Buy!, Talk! and a page called Useful.

If you’re not confident of creating your own website, you’ll find any number of web designers prepared to do it for you, but of course it will cost. However, the advantage is that if you’re – for example – writing your next book – you can concentrate on that as your core business and leave the web design to the professionals. It all depends how deep your pockets are.



## Write and issue your own media releases

Here's another thing you can do for free – write your own press releases. It's not hard, not rocket science. But having said that, there are many wrong ways of doing them, and only a few right ways.

Here are a few simple rules:

1. Limit any media release to within one page, and use 1.5 or double-spaced lines.
2. Always put the media release as body text in your email – never send it as an attachment.
3. Have a catchy title, and identify your email as a media release in the subject line.
4. Write the release in exactly the same way as a news story, that is: start with the *significance* of the story, then explain how you arrived at that, the backstory.
5. Follow the W5+H formula: who, where, what, why, when, plus how – all need to be covered.
6. Include specific details of the event (e.g. book launch), opportunity or whatever, and don't forget your contact details.
7. If you're available for interview, say so.
8. If you have an image, include it as a low-res example with the offer of a hi-res on request (the latter should be 300 dpi minimum).



Who to send your media release to? This is more challenging; it depends really on what you want to achieve. If it's simply local coverage, send it to your local media channels – newspaper, radio stations, and local TV station if you have one, and so on. All of them will have websites with contact details. If yours is a specialist book – e.g. a sports genre book – try and target the sports journalist specifically.

If you're looking for national coverage, more research will be needed to identify your targets. In my case for example, with a boating-themed book, it wasn't too difficult for me to identify the main boating-themed publications to target. Ditto with travel publications.

But, sending a media release is a bit like fishing – you can put the bait on the hook, but if the fish aren't biting or don't like it, you might get nothing.

If you want, you can pay someone to do your media releases professionally, and one advantage might be that they're subscribed to a media database, such as Gorkana, or PRMax. But that can be expensive. (Or you can subscribe yourself to a media database, but you might find there's a minimum sign-up period of three months, or even a year. The advantage is an up-to-date database of media contacts)

Should you follow up a media release? Generally no, but if it's been sent to your local paper, for example, it would do no harm to call and ensure they received it.





## Organise your own book launches, readings, and the promotion of these

Your book doesn't launch itself; only you can do that.

But, as you may have heard from other speakers at the Self-Publishing Conference, a book launch can be as sophisticated and expensive as you like, or cost next to nothing. Let's look at next to nothing...

What should your launch achieve? In short, it should:

- Attract a decent crowd
- Inform and entertain your audience
- Sell books!

But it could also:

- Generate publicity (e.g. if you've invited media along)
- Provide you with photo and/or video opportunities
- Be hugely successful and a much-talked about event



The ingredients for a book launch are simple: a good venue, good promotion of the event, strong organisation and planning, and a wonderful you!

What makes a good venue? Here are some considerations: Venue cost – consider carefully. Free is best, but you might have to pay. How many books will you have to sell at the launch to cover the cost of the venue? Is it easy to get to? Does it offer parking? Choose your location to match your book's theme if possible (e.g. in my case I used boating clubs).

What's at the venue? AV gear? Stage, lectern, podium? Importantly, don't just turn up on the night for your launch to be organised and ready. This is *your* event, so take charge.

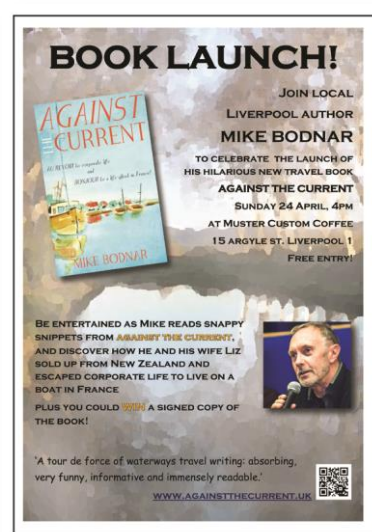
expecting everything

Visit the venue at least a week in advance to check it out – especially the AV equipment and how it operates, the podium/lectern, microphones, seating arrangements, competitive noise, etc. Is there wireless/internet? What cables will you need to be compatible with the AV system?

Possible sponsorship: maybe you can get your event subsidised. Is there a tie-up with another company maybe? Or organisation? Or the venue itself?

### Promoting your event

- Posters – you need to promote your launch at the venue, your workplace, local library, etc.
- Poster design is a special skill, but you can teach yourself. (Any online tutorials? Check You Tube etc.)



- Flyers, hand-outs, other gimmicks: think about how to market your book launch.

Promote launch to your market (audience/s) – via digital media: email, Facebook ‘event’ invitation, Twitter, etc.

Send invitations by direct mail to target people.

Maybe as incentive offer a prize giveaway (your book) via lucky spot, or free raffle, etc. on the night.

### Your launch programme

Craft an introduction so you have a strong and engaging start (can someone introduce you? ‘Ladies and gentlemen, a big welcome for tonight’s star author...’)

The basis of any talk has long been: tell them what you’re going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you just told them. That’s a bit glib, but you can manage your audience’s expectations at the event by telling them how the experience will unfold.

For example: introduction of the book, why you wrote it, some selected readings with explanations and back-stories, a chance for questions, and that you’ll finish by signing copies for anyone wishing to purchase. And, if you’ve decided on a prize giveaway, how you’ll do that.

Then deliver what you’ve promised. But you need some *circus showmanship*; you need to be larger than life! Perform! Read with a stage presence: enthrall and engage your audience.

At the end of your presentation it’s **Book Sale Time!** But, signing books takes a long time, especially as most people will want to stop and chat with you for a while. So, pre-sign copies of your book for those who don’t want theirs personally-dedicated. Have a friend act as your sales assistant at a side table; they’ll need a cash float, multiple copies of your book, paper bags, and a stack of your promotional bookmarks (of which more later).

### Other things to note:

Have someone take good photos of you giving your readings, for use on your website and in other publicity; get someone to videotape the event – for YouTube, your website, as a memento.

And: Book *Launches*; it’s plural deliberately because you can have as many launches as you want (within reason).

## Get yourself in the newspaper, on radio and TV



To an extent, this is where your media release comes in – you craft it, and then send it off, especially to your local media.

But there’s nothing stopping you walking in off the street, or phoning up any of your local media outlets to tell them about your book, and about you, especially if local media have book reviews or literature-related programmes or columns. (Even if you don’t listen to the radio much, you can usually check radio stations’ programme schedules online to find out if they have a book review or programme)

In preparation however, it would be useful to have the equivalent of a publisher’s AI – Advance Information sheet – that explains what your book is called, its genre, ISBN number, the blurb and so on, so that if you do

call in and the programme director or chief reporter can't see you, you at least have something to leave for them.

If you do score a broadcast interview, go for it, but remember a few basics:

- Keep your answers short and interesting
- Mention your book often (but not *too* often)
- Fill in any gaps that the interviewer might have left (e.g. genre of book, who would like it, why)
- Look at the interviewer (if TV) not the camera; relax and speak and act normally
- Don't be afraid of the questions – you're the expert on your own book. Interviewers won't necessarily tell you what they're going to ask (they don't always know anyway!)
- DO tell them if there is something you think is particularly relevant that you'd like them to cover (e.g. self-publishing, call to action, most important thing people can do, etc.) – but tell them before the interview starts, not during it (obviously)
- If TV, you can hold your book when referring to it, keep it still! If referring to it, bring it up close to your face so you know it will be on camera – and keep it there for at least three or four seconds. You want viewers to know what to look for when they go into a bookshop.

## Leverage off other events

Seek calendar events (annual events that somehow match your subject area – national awareness days, etc.). Check:

- National Awareness Days: ([www.awarenessdays.co.uk](http://www.awarenessdays.co.uk))
- Full annual calendar here: <http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/festivals-and-holidays/>
- (From my boating/travel book perspective for example, I look for waterway festivals, canal openings, boat jumbles, and suchlike)
- If your local library offers reader-writer events – take part!

Competitions – offer some of your books as prizes in competitions (but stipulate you want some publicity in return). You can do this when sending a book for review too, say to a magazine – offer them two or three extra copies as giveaways if they hold a simple competition. Maybe suggest it requires readers to go to your website to find an answer.



Or, create your own competition on social media, or via Goodreads, who will do it for free as long as you take care of the postage and packing for the winners.



## Social Media



Create social media accounts for your book/yourself as an author. Rather like your website, readers and followers will expect you to have a social media presence. The more successful your book the more you'll be demanded and followed on social media, and vice-versa.



The main ones obviously are **Facebook** and **Twitter**, and they're free to set up. Instagram and Pinterest are two other options, as is LinkedIn, but there are others.

Promotional advice suggests linking posts on all your social media – including your website – so that there's interaction between them. Facebook and Twitter, for example, can drive traffic to your website if you post an extract, snippet, or hints and tips from your book.

For example, say there's something in your book that's particularly useful, say, a 'how-to' list of tips. You can put some of these on your website (on mine I've got a number of tips about travelling and boating in France, all drawn from the book).

Then you announce these new tips on Twitter – using magnetic phrases that research shows draw the most interest. These are phrases such as, 'Want to avoid a disastrous holiday?', or 'You need to know...' and 'You won't believe...' and 'Before you go abroad...' etc.

Apparently numbers are a really big drawcard too: '9 things about drinking milk you never knew', or '6 ways of avoiding tax', and so on.

Facebook allows you more in-depth postings, and can allow you to expand on your Twitter postings which are limited to 140 characters.

But you could find yourself spending all your spare time on social media, so experiment and choose what seems right for you.

## You Tube

And then there's **You Tube**.



You Tube means videos, and although that's something you might have to pay for to have made, you can make them yourself for free.

How would you use video to promote your book? Any number of ways. Here are just a few:

- A video of you talking about your book, and reading some extracts;
- A video in which you're interviewed about your book;
- Maybe arrange to have one of your readings or book launches videotaped ;
- A video in which a scene or two are acted out;
- A 'promotional trailer' for your book;

Apart from stars like Beyoncé and Katy Perry, or grumpy cats, the most popular videos on YT are 'how-to' videos. So, can you make a 'how-to' video?

What you make is limited only by your imagination, and as an author one would hope that means there are no limits.



Check out [a trailer I made](#) for author Brian Formby's book, *Dark Side of the River*, and [an interview](#) I did with him about the book and self-publishing.

Okay, so how do you get a decent video made for free? One way is to teach yourself a little about shooting and editing, and (of course), you'll find tutorials on You Tube.

You could shoot video on your phone or your



digital camera, and Windows Movie Maker is a basic editing package that's very easy to use.

Another way is to 'know the right people' – friends with video gear, who can help out, but that isn't always an easy thing to conjure up. Realistically though, as long as you've got a means of recording decent quality video, a tripod, a good location and the patience to play around with an editing programme (if you need to) then go for it. Just a hint: quality audio is essential. If your viewers can't hear what you're saying, you're wasting your (and their) time.

A third way would be for you to offer yourself as a subject to a local media school, somewhere where they teach video production and film-making; with luck you might get a free video out of it.

You could even try getting a professionally-made video sponsored by a business – especially one aligned with the theme or genre of your book.

(Or you could engage me!)

Once complete and posted on You Tube, your video can also be embedded in your website, and of course promoted through your social media channels.

Your You Tube video can link to your website too, even if just as a website address on-screen at the end of the video, or with a little tech-savviness you can even embed a link in your video (called an *annotated link*).

And then there are **podcasts**.

## Podcasts



A podcast is 'a digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or portable media player, typically available as a series, new instalments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.'

You could release a series of podcasts, for example, which might comprise the first three chapters of your book, to entice people to buy it in order to find out the full story. Or you could do podcasts of the same sort of things I mentioned for You Tube – interviews, and so on.

It adds another dimension to your book, and to you as an author.

You can make your podcast available on your website, or find some other online hosting options such as Soundcloud, Archive.org, Ourmedia or Amazon S3. Some of these have free options, or expanded services for subscribers.

## Other things you can do for free...

### SPECULATIVE ARTICLES

You're a writer, so why not write to promote your book by writing?

- Choose a topic related to your book, write an opinion piece or an authoritative article and offer it (for free) to a suitable publication;
- Include your book's website, maybe make it a condition of publication for free that this stays;
- Make sure your by-line says By Fernando Bandini, author of '*I Did It My Way*' (Published by Closador);

- Keep an eye on the news; there could be something you could react to as ‘an expert’, as an author who has published on the topic.

## BOOK CLUBS

Offer to do readings and talks about your book, with perhaps special discount offer for club members on the night.

## YOUR EMAIL SIGNATURE

This is easy and free: simply add some promotional details to your email signature, such as your book title, website URL, maybe a pithy quote from your book, or even your favourite review quote (e.g. ‘A brilliant read!’) to help drive traffic to your website.

## A QR CODE

This is a Quick Response Code - a machine-readable code consisting of an array of black and white squares, typically used for storing URLs or other information for reading by the camera app on a smartphone.

It’s designed for those people who have an app on their phones that can read these. Basically it’s a digital signpost that brings up a website as soon as your phone recognises it. No having to type in a URL.

A QRC is remarkably easy to create, and free. Try sites such as [goQR](#), [qrstuff](#), or [qr code generator](#). There are plenty more. You can even make it in colour to match your branding if you want.



You can add it to posters, flyers, bookmarks, any sort of promotional material, and of course include it in the book itself to help drive traffic to your website.

## PHOTOGRAPH and BIO

You’ll need a good high quality head-and-shoulders (portrait) shot of yourself for print and web purposes. You could take a selfie – but it’s important that the image is nicely-lit, good quality and in focus.

If you’re not confident of doing it yourself, get a competent friend to take the image, or a professional.

Make sure it’s at hi-resolution too, because for print purposes it will need to be a minimum 300 dpi (that’s dots per inch).

If appropriate, include versions specific to your topic (for example, because my book is about canal boating I have an image with me wearing a captain’s hat, staring boldly out to the horizon. Me, not the hat).

And don’t forget to create a short biography in case a reviewer, journalist or someone else who can give you valuable publicity needs it.

## Self-promotion – things to do that cost

Nearly everything we've covered can be done professionally if you're prepared to pay for it, but here are some things you can (should?) do and in which with a little perseverance you can save some money...

### Marketing collateral

The sky's the limit depending on your budget, but the following are easy, and often quite cheap (let's say 'cost-effective').

#### BUSINESS CARDS

Why? They're easy to carry with you, easy to hand out, and you'll kick yourself if you don't have one when you need it.

They can be inexpensive (e.g. I paid a total of £16.68 for 250, colour, one-sided business cards, including p&p and VAT. Approx. 6p each).



Include at least your basic contact info and some promotion (maybe your book cover, and/or best review quote on the reverse).

Booksellers will expect you to have a business card – it's professional.

Online graphics companies (such as Helloprint, Vistaprint, and so on) offer templates, so you can design your own. There are plenty of offerings online.

#### BOOKMARKS

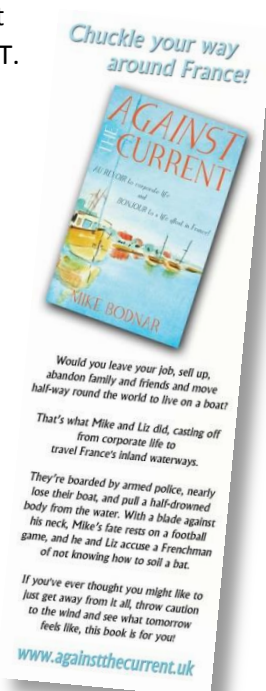
These are an obvious promotional item for an author, very easy, and also not expensive (e.g. I got 400 for £51, colour, double-sided, including p&p and VAT. So, just under 13p each from Helloprint)

Include at the very least the title of your book, an indication of what it's about (genre, teaser), and the publisher. But you could also include your website, QRC, image of cover, synopsis, a quote, reviews.

As with business cards, bookmarks can be one-sided or two-sided.

Here's a tip: if using colour, reflect the colours of your book cover in your design: maintain a theme, a 'brand'.

I hand out mine whenever I can, and I also do a bit of what I call 'promotional sabotage' – I go into public libraries and put the bookmarks inside similar books to mine – travel books, books on France, and boat-related books, because I know they're going to be seen by my target readers. It's harmless, easy, and very well-targeted. (I of course do this surreptitiously, wearing a raincoat, a hat pulled well down and when nobody's looking!)



## STICKERS

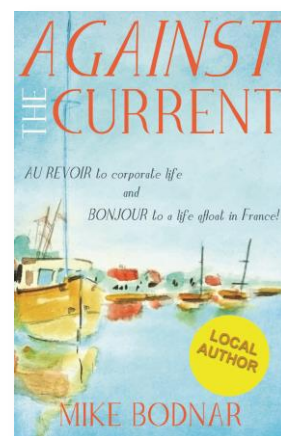


Consider stickers that can promote your book. Is there a review quote you can use? (The sample on the left was made specifically for my New Zealand market)

Stickers can also be used as a cheap way of adding an endorsement to the cover of your book without having to do a reprint.

Also consider '**Local Author!**' stickers for those books to be sold locally or which are in your local libraries. Could increase the chance of a sale!

Maybe even make bumper stickers (like those that say, 'I'd rather be fishing'): *I'd rather be reading 'My Way' by Fernando Bandini*



## THE FINE PRINT

By the way, I cannot be held responsible for the quality of any products or services you might choose to use or commission as a result of suggestions I've made in this document or at the conference presentation. *Caveat emptor*. I recommend you do your own research and make an informed decision. Don't shoot the messenger!

## A FINAL NOTE

Thank you for downloading this document; I wish you all the best in your literary endeavours.

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