

Book Publishing Timeline for Success

All of these times are counted backwards from your estimated “release date”. That is the date your publisher tells you the book will be released. The actual release date will likely be two weeks either side of that date, so use that date as a general guideline when following these instructions.

5-6 Months Prior: Create your overall marketing plan, talk to your agent about the best marketing strategies for your particular content; outline your objectives, plan ancillary product lines, start interviewing book publicists, get expert endorsements/blubs started, make sure you have all your permissions assembled properly, and get brand new author headshots if your publisher says there is time.

4-5 Months Prior: Write press releases (two styles), create tip sheet for sales reps, finish the first drafts of any products you are creating, spruce up your website, add the photos of your book, intensify your social media presence, choose and hire the publicist, review 20+ magazines (terrestrial or online) that you think are read by your ideal reader and note the contact information for the submissions editor, sketch out ideas for 10-12 articles you could write for those publications, submit your best 2 ideas to all the magazines you’ve selected; make friends with the local bookstore owners within a 100 mile radius of your house, gather up a list of radio, print and television stations within 100 miles that interview authors like you on subjects like yours. (Hint: you can use a college student who can use the internet to compile these last two items) .

3-4 Months Prior: Follow up with magazine editors by submitting 2 more ideas, finish up your website makeover, write an eBook or record a short audio MP3 you will give away free to anyone who listens to you on radio/reads about you in an article/sees you on TV and goes to a special web page on your site (where they give you their first name and email and you email them the “gift”, greatly increase your social media presence; start paying Facebook to boost your best posts - \$20/shot, make sure your publicist is getting started, review his/her first few press releases, hire a virtual assistant if you think you’re going to be big, get media training, if you are planning to use it to begin/grow a speaking business, collect names of the 50-100 people to whom you will send copies of your book with personalized cover letters (you’ll get your copies before it hits the stores), if you will be touring, book your flights and other travel arrangements and consider hiring a “handler” in each city – ask your publisher’s publicity department or look them up on Google. These people know all the local media and can help you make sure you get to your interviews on time AND often help you find local media you (and your publicist) couldn’t get to, write out flash cards of the 10 bullet points you want to be sure you say in every radio and TV interview. Perfect them into pithy sound bytes – use humor if possible, make one flash card be your website.

2-3 Months Prior: Write 6 newsletters you’ll send every 3rd week to anyone who signs up for your free eBook or MP3, check out www.ConstantContact.com, lose 10 lbs so you look good on TV interviews, pursue the remaining magazine journalists, call your publicists to check in on progress and compare notes, ask your publisher if the release date is firm yet, buy brightly colored bubble envelopes a little bigger than your book – address them with the names of the speaking targets and stuff in future-dated letters signed by you in blue, green or purple ink, so all you’ll have to do is slip in the books, affix postage, send out your press releases and make sure someone follows up by calling those journalists.

1-2 Months Prior: Review overall plan, write 2 more press releases, sign and mail the early copies to the speaking targets, send a note or make a call to those bookstore owners, arrange to do your book launch party in one of their shops, call your local library to arrange a second signing, enlist another bookstore to do a

third, if relevant, invite yourself to guest lecture at local colleges, school, clubs, etc. and film yourself so you can build a speaker demo reel, get your hair cut. Interviews start to pop any day now, send your first press release to local radio, TV and print (if you don't have a publicist.)

0 – 4 Weeks Prior: Begin accepting interviews (no need to wait for book to release), send invites to your launch party, buy 2 new outfits in solid colors that flatter you and send the right message, hire a local makeup artist to teach you how to look great on camera, follow up with more magazine journalists, check in with your publicist, send your second press release to local radio, print and TV shows.

Release Day to 120 Days AFTER Release: Work your tail feathers off! Say yes to every interview, even if it is dinky, at 2 AM in Idaho, and you think the only people listening will be truckers. Follow up instantly on all media requests. Be tireless. Be 100% focused every single day on promoting that book to the best of your ability. Ask every single media person to send you copies of every interview, or track them down yourself. Send handwritten thank you cards to every journalist who interviews you. Be gracious, indefatigable, charming, funny and informative on every single interview, no matter how tired you are. Be ceaseless. Talk about your book to every person you meet. Promote for 120 days precisely, no matter what happens, with all your heart. Give it all you've got!

120 Days After Release: The ticker tape is now lying on the floor, in most cases. Unless you hit some major updraft and got super lucky, most of the hoopla is now over. (As of this writing, I have 31 published books. Of those, only 2 got a media frenzy – the 16th and the 27th.) You may get some long lead magazine hits in the future. But it's time to get real. Take stock. How many books have you sold? You can get a good indicator on Amazon.com. Look at your general Sales Ranking, it's halfway down the page. If that number is NOT under 150,000, stop the publicity efforts. The success you will now get will be because you wrote a book, not from book sales. Focus your undivided attention now on NOT getting more media, but on leveraging all the wonderful inventory of attention you just got.

Your publicist or your publisher may try to tell you to extend your efforts, especially if you are paying them. This is unnecessary. The most valuable part of authorship (for nonfiction authors) comes AFTER the 120 marketing frenzy. Why 120 days? Because this is when the big publishers all release their next batch of new titles – and your book is therefore “old news” in the industry (although there may be some straggling journalists interested). It is also when the effort it takes to promote your book begins to show diminishing returns. Now is when you should be using what you got from this wild ride and consciously, intelligently building it into the success it can become. (Come to a Keller Media webinar on using your book to build your business if you are at this stage.)

When to plan your next book?

If you published with a traditional publisher, you may well have an option clause that tells you when you're allowed to pitch them your next project. If you don't, when the book you've just promoted has sold +2,500 copies within a year of release, that's the signal that it is time to write and shop a proposal for your next one. Of course, if it is nonfiction, Keller Media would love a look! www.KellerMedia.com/query In a perfect world, you want to have a new title release every 18-24 months to keep your name in the news.

Best Wishes with Your Books!