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Penny C. Sansevieri knows a little bit about getting a book on shelf—she is the CEO and founder of Author Marketing Experts, Inc., is a best-selling author and internationally recognized book marketing and media relations expert. She's been in the bookselling biz for 15 years and is known for developing cutting-edge techniques that greatly facilitate getting the word out about the words in a book. Including using recent technology such as encouraging authors to put together their own Podcast. Sansevieri knows from both sides of the desk having successfully marketed her first book, *The Cliffhanger* (Writers Club Press), which was released in 2000. *Cliffhanger* rocketed through the ranks at Amazon.com thanks to Sansevieri's deliberate, well-executed marketing plan and held the #1 spot for three months! Sansevieri's book marketing bible, *From Book to Bestseller* (PublishingGold.com, Inc.), has been called "the roadmap to publishing success."

Sansevieri was kind enough to provide us with some juicy answers to a few questions about marketing and publicity via email. Get ready to take some notes.

Write and Publish Your Book: What is your basic marketing philosophy?

Penny C. Sansevieri: More isn't better sometimes--it's just more. A lot of authors feel that throwing money at a marketing campaign will make it better, it won't. The best campaign is strategic and focused, and it doesn't have to cost a fortune or even a whole lot of money. With 500 books published everyday in the US an author has to stay very focused in their campaign and not be sidetracked by promises of sizzle or "Oprah" - The industry is all about "platform" now - it's not about who you know but who knows you. Building a strong platform will go a long to help you sell your book. A platform can be your website, your business, your speaking events, media you've done - it's virtually anything that lends itself to having a built in audience for your book!

WAPYB: Since some readers will be new to the marketing/public relations side of the book business-how best to combine these efforts? Work with the same person on both?

PCS: Yes, ideally the same person is handling the entire campaign. Remember that you can't have publicity without marketing--a marketing strategy must come first! Also, remember that every book is different and hence, every marketing campaign must be different - some books we've worked with are never pitched to television or radio, it just depends on the market we're targeting.

WAPYB: In your opinion, what is the most important part of marketing

PCS: Knowing who you're marketing to. This might seem obvious but you'd be surprised how many folks embark on a marketing campaign without profiling who their reader is and finding strategic ways to go after them. Knowing where your reader lives, shops and what emotions trigger your reader are all important questions to ask. We all buy on emotion. What are your reader's hot buttons? What will make them buy your book?

WAPYB: Any advice to writers who are thinking about going the self-publishing route

PCS: Yes, remember that there's nothing wrong with self-publishing as long as your book doesn't look self-published. As I said earlier there is 500 books published each day in the US and with that kind of competition, your book needs to be letter-perfect. This means editing and cover design. An author should never self-edit or tinker with their own cover, even if they're a designer. Remember that often the best person to design your cover is someone who's never read your book. The person who sees your book for the first time hasn't read it either, the cover must attract them to the book and translate what's inside on the outside.

WAPYB: What impact do you think Print on Demand publishing will have on the publishing industry in the next ten years?

PCS: I think eventually all publishers will use POD technology, many of them already do. Print-on-demand has already leveled the playing field and as we continue to fine tune the digital technology that supports this we'll see a more affordable print run as well as books that carry the look and feel of their traditional counterparts. POD has done for the book industry what iTunes did for the music industry. It's allowed anyone with a voice to be heard.

WAPYB: What is your general opinion of Print on Demand?

PCS: I have always been a supporter of print-on-demand, it works well for an author who is seeking to build a platform or build their writing resume. It's a great tool for a business owner who wants to turn their knowledge into a 24/7 sales tool. It's not a model that can be used for mass market printing, the per piece cost doesn't support this, but when used correctly print-on-demand can help an author leverage their book and expertise into something bigger - like a traditional publisher contract. Many POD authors have seen their books picked up by major houses - and even a few movies have come from books that were originally POD.

WAPYB: What advice would you give a new author who's ready to publish his or her first book?

PCS: Do your homework. Know your market. I can't emphasize this enough.

It's important for an author to understand who their competition is and who else in writing in the same genre. Get to know

what's already out there. Also, if an author says, "there are no other books like mine" the author might want to dig a little deeper and find out why. The old saying that there are no new ideas isn't always true, for example five years ago we wouldn't have had a book on blogging but many times if an author comes up with an idea for a book that's never been done, there might be a reason. A few years ago I had an author contact me about a book he wanted to write, it was a self-help book for men - he was so excited because no one had ever written a self-help book geared to men before. Well there's a reason, it's because 93% of self-help is bought by women.

Also, ask lots of questions. Often authors feel intimidated by the whole process and don't ask enough questions because they're afraid of not looking knowledgeable. When it comes to your future there are no dumb questions. Ask for referrals if you're shopping for support people to help you edit, market, or publish your book.

WAPYB: What specific genres of books are selling best right now? Does this fluctuate or does it stay fairly consistent?

PCS: What sells in books fluctuates wildly at times and it's often tough to predict. Often political or global influences have a lot to do with what publishers are buying. Bestsellers also have a lot of influence i.e. The Da Vinci Code spawned a whole series of similar books. But right now Erotic Romance is becoming a big seller, it's getting quite a bit of buzz in the industry.

WAPYB: Anything else you'd like to add?

PCS: Yes! This industry is tough, you must love what you do to be in publishing because there's no other place where you'll meet up with so much competition for shelf space and air time. The key is to never, ever, ever give up. Authors who stick with it find success, the key is to publish what you *want* to publish. Don't follow a trend unless it's your passion, if you don't love what you write you'll never stick with it long enough to make it a success.

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CEO and founder of Author Marketing Experts, Inc., is a best-selling author and internationally recognized book marketing and media relations expert. Her company is one of the leaders in the publishing industry and has developed some of the most cutting-edge book marketing campaigns. Her company researched, developed and implemented the first comprehensive Internet publicity campaign called The Virtual Author Tour™.