
Steven Manchester Shares His Book Marketing Plan

Contributed by
Tuesday, 12 December 2006
Last Updated Tuesday, 12 December 2006

If you've read any book-marketing article on this site (you have, right?) or done even the slightest modicum of research into the matter, then you are well aware that it's pretty much every man for himself. No matter if you are published by HarperCollins or, like Steven Manchester, your publisher is the smaller, Sunpiper Media.
An Insiders View of Book Promotion

If you've read any book-marketing article on this site (you have, right?) or done even the slightest modicum of research into the matter, then you are well aware that it's pretty much every man for himself. No matter if you are published by HarperCollins or, like Steven Manchester, your publisher is the smaller, Sunpiper Media.

Manchester's latest book, *Pressed Pennies*, which he describes as a "mainstream fiction, written from a male perspective to a female audience", arrived in bookstores this past fall. Manchester is a sharp fellow and a seasoned self-promoter, so I thought it was well worth taking a look at how the writer can seize the opportunity to create his or her very own marketing plan. Manchester answered a few questions for WAPYB via email.

Your new book, *Pressed Pennies*, is fiction--did you adopt a different marketing/publicity strategy for this book from those of your books that are non-fiction?

Yes, with non-fiction, all you have is the special interests groups that the book talks to (i.e., my book, *THE UNEXPECTED STORM* addressed Gulf War Veterans and their families. Essentially, that WAS my market). With fiction, however, the audience is vast. The trick is to identify readers who like/have liked similar works of fiction and begin by targeting them.

How early in the writing process did you begin putting together a marketing plan for *Pressed Pennies*?

Before the book was even done (which is two years before it was published). As you're writing, you need to be thinking about who the book talks to -- and start to compile contact lists (i.e., *PRESSED PENNIES* addresses issues such as single parenthood; growing up in the 80's, etc. These become the first doors that my publisher and I knock on).

At which point before the book came out did you begin implementing your plan? What was your first line of business?

Once I had a signed contract and received a 'tentative' release date, I began to solicit pre-publication book reviews and create hype on the Internet. This is how a few snowflakes start to form a snowball -- which will hopefully become an avalanche!

What forms of marketing and publicity are you currently using and what will you be doing in the future?

For now, we began with a grass-roots concept (book clubs, reading groups, avid readers who have displayed interest in similar books as *PRESSED PENNIES*). Once "local success" is enjoyed, Phase II calls for a more national focus. This is when the book can stand upon the foundation (book reviews; critical acclaim; sales success, etc.) that was created locally. As long as your publisher doesn't threaten to back-list your book for awhile, there's time. For the future (when the time is right), an investment in a reputable publicist will be in order.

How far does your plan reach after the point book came in July? Do you have a plan for the year afterwards, six months--five years?

Our plan (my publisher and I) works in three phases:

Phase I (local; 6-9 months).

Phase II (national/international; for as long as we can ride that horse).

Phase III (lifetime; as long as we're pitching, and this speaks to the release of new works, *PRESSED PENNIES* will never die).

What do you think is absolutely necessary to do and educate yourself in as an author in the current book-selling environment?

Research the venues that your audience frequents. I've seen lots of author's fish in ponds where they were wasting their time. Until you can identify the spots where your readers can be properly addressed, save your bait.

Is there any part of getting the word out there that makes you feel uncomfortable? If so, how did you overcome it?

It's never easy to talk about yourself - especially in the beginning when you're trying to create such positive hype - but you have to! What helped me was to focus on the product rather than myself. If you believe in your messages and the quality of your writing, it's not so hard to face someone and ask that they consider reading a really good book.

Any good stories that happened to you along the way during book promotions, etc?

In many ways, we just got started -- but it would be difficult for me not to mention the looks on my kids' faces the first time they saw *PRESSED PENNIES* sitting on a bookstore shelf. It was worth every second!

Lastly, tell us about one of the most exciting/enlightening/break-through moments during the writing process of creating *Pressed Pennies*.

It took a while for *PRESSED PENNIES* to come together for me. My wife and I had just been blessed with the birth of our daughter, Isabella, when I'd begun the process. I was in love with the original theme and plot of the book, but was piecing it together like some complex puzzle. Finally, I was showering one night when it hit me - the real ending! Within five weeks, I had the first draft complete and was ready to collect some feedback. I handed out five copies and waited. The payoff: Two cried, one fell in love with my protagonist, one thought I'd captured her childhood and the last offered to

publish it.

Steven Manchester is the published author of twelve books, and the screenwriter of several independent films. His broad range of interests led him to pen diverse works of non-fiction, poetry, and fiction (to include romance, horror, short story and spiritual tales). After trying on these different sets of wings, Steven discovered that his true voice was best heard in full-length, inspirational fiction-a male perspective to a female audience, or the sensitive side of the human experience. Believing that 'good writers make readers think, while great writers make people feel,' Steven aims for the heart each time he puts pen to paper.