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From Book to Bestseller: An Insider's Guide to Publicizing and Marketing Your Book

Penny Sansevieri
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Each year, 195,000 book titles make it into print. Authors are often disheartened when they discover the publicity machine they imagined, one that takes their title from obscurity to bestseller seemingly overnight, fails to materialize. Don't wait for it, advises Sansevieri. Here, the bestselling author of *The Cliffhanger* wears her other hat—owner of a marketing/media relations firm—and opens the door into the business end of books. Ensuring the success of an individual title, she says, takes nothing more than hard work and lots of creativity.

Although the methods that most think of as traditional marketing—book release, book tour, and book reviews—do work for some authors, many other avenues exist, explains the author. With so much competition, leaving a book to languish on bookstore shelves, if it gets there at all, makes no sense. Sansevieri sprinkles many examples throughout the book of how alternative marketing can and does create bestsellers. Award-winning author E. Lynn Harris, to name one, failed to find a publisher for his first novel. An enterprising man, he self-published it and distributed it to beauty salons for the sole reason that a captive audience resided there. *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* initially tanked in stores until the word spread through local book clubs that it was a winner. Sansevieri is also clear on the need for each author to define "success." Whether it's achieving bestseller status, nourishing a creative soul, or helping others, a marketing plan must be tailored to that aim.

Each of the book's nine sections delves into a different area of book marketing. Section Two, for example, addresses the various elements of a press kit, as well as exactly where to send it and when. She cautions authors to curb their enthusiasm—it's not about the quantity, it's about the quality of both the kit and its targets. Section Five thoroughly covers how to work the media, and is diligent about including current contacts for not only the well-known names, but also for suggesting ways of thinking "outside the bookstore," à la Harris—if the book features a feisty feline, why not contact *Cat Fancy* to see if the magazine will do a review? She also is a believer in never letting a customer go off with simply a book, and has many creative suggestions on how to keep a book—and thus the author—in the forefront of the audience's mind, from postcards and thank you notes, to contests and speaking opportunities.

What comes through on every page is the author's passion for her subject. She also delivers her advice with a liberal serving of common sense—not every book will make it to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list, publicity machine or no. Not surprisingly, however, she closes with a quote from Winston Churchill: "Never, ever, ever, ever give up."

VICKI GERVICKAS (April 10, 2007)

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