

The
Wow

e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

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Getting Your Foot in the Door



With the advent of self-publishing, just about anyone who can put words to paper, and can afford minor printing costs, can become a “published author.” While many argue the pros and cons of this self-publishing phenomenon and the flood of new books in the marketplace, no other business has been impacted as much as national chain bookstores.

When it comes to these brick-and-mortar bookstores (e.g., Barnes and Noble), mainstream publishers dominate the bookshelves, with many paying premiums for the best shelf space. And even though many national bookstores do support local authors by dedicating a small area to a few self-published titles, business is business. The product offered must be one that sells, and that applies especially to books from self-published authors.

This month, we offer an idea on how to get your local national chain bookstore to acknowledge your book. But there are some caveats: first, your book must be an actual book, not something you simply printed and stapled together at home. Next, it should have an ISBN number (go to Bowker.com to learn more). And last, it should be appropriate for the store (i.e., no hard core or crude covers or topics). Also, for this story, we’re focusing on the national chain bookstores, but much of this can be easily applied to independent/used bookstores as well.

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Getting Your Foot in the Door

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National chain bookstores face two major issues when they consider selling self-published work: 1) the lack of quality (i.e., poor editing, layout, overall production), and 2) high wholesale/retail prices. The latter is the kicker: while you may have an exceptionally well-written and attractive book, your cost to wholesale the book could be equal to or higher than the *retail* prices of similar traditionally published books. Bookstores require at least a 40-percent discount (what they typically get from book distributors); if your book cost you \$22.95 for printing and shipping to you, and you have a cover price of \$29.95, the bookstore will want to pay you no more than \$17.97, tops. Needless to say, you'll lose money on the transaction.



National bookstore chains are also held to company policies and procedures when it comes to accepting self-published work. So while we provide some insight here, don't be surprised if a company roadblock or two confronts your mission.

With that said, the easiest and most expedient way to “schmooze” a bookstore manager to take time out of his/her busy schedule to talk with you and learn about your book is to propose a two-hour “Local Author Day” event. Commiserate that you can well imagine he/she receives requests from local authors all the time to either carry their books or to do book signings in the store, and suggest that by holding such a one-time event (yearly event is the best for promotional purposes), the manager would be showing good faith to local self-published authors while staying connected to the store's host community. You could even suggest that a portion of the proceeds from the store's TOTAL sales during the specified two-hour event could be donated to the local library foundation or other charitable organization.

When proposing your idea, offer to help with advertising and media alerts. Savvy broadcast and print media are always in need of local feel-good stories, and an event such as this makes good press. By helping or being the media contact, you'll get to know assignment editors and producers at the same time, which is an added bonus in promoting yourself and your books.

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Getting Your Foot in the Door

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Most of all, be sure to tell the manager your goal is to make both he/she and his/her store look good! A local event featuring local authors with proceeds going to the local library or other charitable organization will generate great press and community support!

But be forewarned and prepared: if the bookstore manager says “yes,” you’re the one stuck with the work, from finding other eager authors who have great books to sell, to coordinating with the charity to send out notices to all of their stakeholders to attend the fundraiser, to acting as the media contact. But imagine the possibilities and the rapport you’ll build with the bookstore; if the event is successful, you’ll have caught the eye of that manager for future titles and signings. And if you sell lots of books at the event, you will have finally earned your book’s rightful place on the store’s shelves!



5th Annual Writer’s Digest Poetry Awards Competition

This just in from Writer’s Digest: “Enter the only WD competition exclusively for poets, the Writer’s Digest Poetry Awards! Regardless of style—rhyming, free verse, haiku and more—if your poems are 32 lines or fewer, we want them all. Submit your entries by the December 15, 2009 deadline...and your words could be worth cold hard cash!”

To learn more, go to www.writersdigest.com/poetryawards.

HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF!

Nothing new to report: August and September tend to be slow when it comes to anthology series, as publishers are gearing up for holiday sales. But this lag in new book announcements is your chance to finally get caught up on your writing for these call-outs:

Chicken Soup for the Soul

www.ChickenSoup.com

Endurance Sports: Deadline: September 30, 2009

Dieting and Fitness: Deadline: September 30, 2009

Mothers and Daughters: Deadline: December 31, 2009

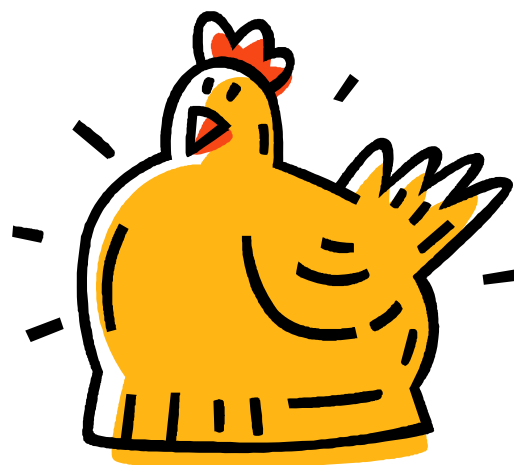
Christmas and Holidays: Deadline: January 15, 2010

Grandmothers: Deadline: March 31, 2010

Grieving and Recovery: Deadline: March 31, 2010

Grieving and Recovery for Dog Owners: Deadline: March 31, 2010

Grieving and Recovery for Cat Owners: Deadline: March 31, 2010



Cup of Comfort

www.CupofComfort.com

For Couples: Deadline: October 1, 2009

For Golfers: Deadline: December 15, 2009

Go for it! Get published! 