

Book Launch Party

Easy. Just follow these steps:

1. Approach the desired venue with your idea- Be prepared with a press kit and pitch. Tell them why this book launch is not only good for YOU, but why it will help bring new business to their store or new interest to their cause. They'll also want to know how many people you can bring out for the party.

2. Work with the event space/venue/store on a promotional plan- Divvy up the responsibilities if possible, or at the very least, have a discussion that outlines all the promotional activities you plan to do. They'll see you're serious, and you'll have a plan to execute on.

3. Enlist help- Will there be food? Costumes? Props? Decorations? A podium? Music? A cage of doves to set free? Help with parking?

Find some folks to help out. And yes, family and friends are always a good place to start. Beyond that, see if caterers, bands, and other local businesses would be interested in sponsoring or assisting somehow.

Also, try to find an author, book critic, or other personality to act as a kind of informal MC. They'll handle your brief introduction at the beginning of the event. And hey, everyone loves endorsements!

4. Promote the hell out of it!- You may go on a book tour or have future readings and signings, but you're never going to have another book LAUNCH for this book. Do it right. Invite friends, family, and fans via email, by phone, in person, over social networks. Remind them of the book launch in your email newsletter. Create a Facebook

event. Tweet and blog about your preparations and what people can expect. Shoot a video invitation and put it on YouTube. Make it sound fun!

Design fliers and posters. Hang them in coffee shops, libraries, bookstores, and community centers.

Let the press know at least 2 months in advance (though if you can give them 3 months, they'll love you for it) by sending them a succinct (but exciting!) press release and press kit. This includes the regional newspapers, local art papers, weekly rags, literary journals and reviews, colleges and universities, individual professors who may be able to inform students, radio stations (including local NPR affiliates, community radio, and college radio), online events calendars, book bloggers, cable access channels, local news and TV news magazines, and just about anyone else you can think of.

See our article on [creating a digital press kit for your book](#).

5. Follow up- Keep a detailed spreadsheet of all the people and media outlets you've contacted, along with their contact info, and the date of first contact. Follow up with them a couple weeks later asking if they received your press release, if they would be covering the event, and if you can do anything to accommodate them. Interviews? Free books for giveaways? Contribute to their blogs in exchange for some coverage? etc.

Then follow up a second time as the event nears. Sometimes scheduled stories are dropped or miss deadline, and maybe your event is the perfect last-minute addition to fill some dead air or white space.

Ha. I said these steps were easy. I lied a little. But if you've gotten this far, might as well show up to the party!

The party itself

Firstly, it's good to remember that although you're the star of the evening, peoples' attention spans are short. No one likes a conceited blowhard, and no one wants to listen to you read your work for an hour. I suggest you keep things on-time, to-the-point, and then allow a little leisure time at the end for those that like to linger. Something a little like this:

7:30pm- Doors open. Be there to meet and greet briefly with guests. Put your helpers on snack or drink duty.

7:50pm- You sneak off to compose yourself, calm the nerves, use the restroom (and yes, you should force yourself to beforehand since public speaking does strange things to your waste-management system.)

8:00pm- Official start time for event. Guests should have all arrived. Latecomers will suffer evil glares.

If you're in a bookstore, the store owner, manager, or events coordinator will announce that things are underway, thank folks for coming, talk a little bit about their venue/store, announce upcoming events, and then introduce the person who will be introducing you.

If you're hosting the party yourself, a spouse, partner, or friend can handle this initial welcome.

8:02pm- The introductions- You don't want to have to brag about

yourself, so this person takes the bullet for you! They get up and sing your praises for 2 or 3 minutes as anticipation builds and the audience makes that strange transition from a group of family, friends, and acquaintances to adoring fans.

8:05pm- You're on! - If you're particularly adept at public speaking, and if you've scored it out ahead of time, you can use your reading time to weave between actual recitations, readings, annotations, asides, back-stories, personal confessions, and more! (Natasha Trethewey is masterful at this). If not, I suggest you work the personal details and process part of your story into the first 5-10 minutes. Then you can use the remaining time to read straight from your work.

8:30pm- Q&A- I know a lot of folks who think "Oh, I'll know most of the attendees. A Q&A sounds lame. They'll feel like they have to ask something to be polite!"

That may be true in some cases. But oftentimes a reading allows folks who know you quite well to see a different side of you; they get curious, and tend to ask question because they genuinely want to have a discussion with you about these new revelations.

And if you tend to get nervous thinking about Q&As, remember that "I don't know, I'll have to do some soul searching and put the answer on my blog" is a perfectly good answer.

8:45pm- Thanks and goodbyes - You or the MC can then thank folks for attending. If you want the party to rage on afterwards, go all night! Folks will appreciate being released from their official responsibilities, and then you can all unwind together.

The ultimate rule: Keep a positive attitude. You can be in persona if

you want, acting mysterious, cool, gregarious, funny, or whatever else, but be kind to your attendees. Show genuine appreciation for THEM and they'll care about you in return. Plus, you never know who "they" may be— a critic, a blogger, an acquisitions editor who is in town while visiting parents, or your next #1 fan.

Well, those are some of my thoughts on throwing your own book launch party. This has been a long article. If you've read to the end, thanks for sticking with me. And if you have any thoughts or experiences to share, please feel free to comment in the section below.

-Chris R. at BookBaby

Tips for a successful book launch

Well, first and foremost, press coverage is pretty vital. The local media – especially radio – attract bigger fish like sharks around chum, but they might only attend if there's a story within a story and nothing attracts a story as much as celebrity. If you know one, get him or her there ... even if you have to pay them. A big name controversial author would be good, but a boy band member or an actor or someone totally talentless so you can shine in the pale imitation of their stardom, is all the better. So, in short, a reality show contestant failure who has just written an autobiography at the age of 20 exposing a torrid somewhat kinky affair with a leading politician, is a sure fire winner and pretty easy to find.

Then there's the theme. If you've written a book about Aliens, deck the room in spaceships, ET's and other sci-fi stuff and have the food, music and drink

reflect it. If you've written a Jilly Cooper / Jackie Collins style sex romp, have it in a lap dancing club. At the end of the day, a few curling butties and a glass of warm Lambrini aren't really going to cut it. Then there's what to wear. You're a professional now, so look it. If ever there was ever a time to wear your best bib and tucker, surely the "birth" of "your baby" is it? Splash out. Spoil yourself. Go to town. This is the biggest night of your writing life ... especially if it's your debut novel ... so live a little, look the part and *live* the part.

More advice

Get someone to introduce you to the stage and, when you get up on the podium, make it memorable. Dramatic music, a few flashing lights and a little bit of dry ice never killed anyone which, in turn, will make everybody say "do you remember when" even though some will think it tacky.

Another idea is to get some student actors in to re-enact a scene from the book, film it and then place it on your Website via You Tube as a Book Trailer. The students get exposure, your book gets exposure, you get exposure ... everyone wins.

If you've fallen out with your neighbour, make it up with them about a week before the night. Invite them – and everyone else you know – to the event. Why? Because most people will feel duty bound to buy a signed copy and be seen with the "star of the show". You can always fall out with them again the day after.

Finally, like all good parties and celebrations, your launch needs to be organised. In the run up to the event, rehearse everything as though it's your wedding. Practice the speech, make sure that there are microphones available for your speakers and that any Power Point presentations or videos are clear, precise, visible and audible DAYS before you play them. Above all, make everyone feel welcome, even if it is your local Tax Inspector.

Mingle, glad hand and press the flesh with your business card at the ready at all times.

Networking is everything and this is no exception. Believe it ... everyone else will be at it. Don't miss out.

Conclusion

So, you've done it. The book has been sold, the agent is smiling and the publishers have pound signs in their eyes. Now you've been plunged into a world more cut throat than *Pirates Of The Caribbean*, those looks of joy may not last forever so make the most of it. Above all ... Enjoy !!!! Chris High.

Chris High Author Multi-media Promotion Service CHAMPS is a new service that aims to promote new and established authors who do not currently enjoy sufficient promotional budgets for their work. Working in tandem with the author and the PR representative of the their publishing house, CHAMPS will promote an author's work via regional and national Press, Radio, TV and Websites.

How to Throw an Awesome Book Launch

Hey Moonrat. Any tips for throwing your own book launch?

Uh, YEAH. I've seen some really excellent book launches in my time, so let me throw down a couple of ideas I've stolen from innovative authors.

1. Expect zero support from your publisher. I mean financial support as well as every other kind of support--a lot of publishers have a zero collaboration policy on book launches. Don't hold too much of a grudge--it's hard to justify spending marketing dollars on a party when they could be spent on retail co-op placement or ad initiatives. So just be pleasantly surprised if your publisher does send materials or people or money (hey! Sometimes it happens!), but be prepared to do it all on your own.

2. Put together an invite list. Do this before you try to take any other steps, because knowing the names of the people (and how many) you expect is really key to securing a venue.

Don't fudge this--sit down and make an actual list. The reason I say this is because if you go the route of approaching a bookstore to host you, they might actually ask for a guest list to decide if they can break even on accommodating your party. But just practically speaking, knowing how many people might come will help you choose a good spot and make sure you have enough supplies. Pretend you're planning a wedding here--take it that seriously. Put the guests in tiers: Definitely will show up come hell or high water; Can probably count on him/her as long as s/he is in town; Might come; There's some chance s/he will show up. I do this pretty frequently, and always use Facebook and LinkedIn as well as my email address book to cross-reference who will be in the area. Remember to include local business people you've patronized--many of them will be tickled pink to see your project, and some of them may offer sponsorship (for example, donating door prizes) in exchange for the advertising opportunity (although I'd say don't ask people for this kind of thing unless you know them pretty well and are sure they won't take offense).

Then, prep yourself emotionally to only expect the "Definitely" people, but to be able to host the "Some chance" people if they happen to show up. Just like any party. Only take this one a little more seriously--the more the merrier at your book's big coming-out party. You want all the attention around launch time you can get, and your friends are a good place to start.

3. Venue: to bookstore or not to bookstore? There are advantages and disadvantages to both. A bookstore party is harder to score and more responsibility for you. You have to be careful of the property, the time frame, and the owner's interests, which include making money while they

close down the store for you. On the other hand, if your party is a great success and lots of people buy books, you have an opportunity to create a beautiful relationship with your local bookstore.

Conversely, a non-bookstore venue is often easier because you don't have to worry about the above pressures. I've seen some very creative and successful venues: bowling alleys, hair salons, living rooms, back yards, clothing stores after-hours, liquor stores, ballrooms. In my opinion, the best venue is one you don't have to pay for. But other than that, there are really no rules to where you can throw a book party.

The downside about not having a bookstore party is you're going to have to arrange your own book copies and sales. Sometimes, your local bookstore will be able/willing to send a bookseller to staff and sell at your party, even if they can't afford to actually host the party. If you can't set that up (and it's often tricky, but it's worth a shot), you can always just order your own copies. (See below.)

4. Arrange food and beverages. Trust me--you can't have too much. And also trust me--if you've got stuff to nosh, you'll get a higher turnout commitment. What can I say? People like food. Heck, if you have a party with food, just tell me where and when and I'LL come.

If you're worried about cost, there are lots of ways to do this cheaply. One of my authors held a truly GORGEOUS book launch for herself--I thought the whole thing was catered and must have cost her thousands of dollars. I found out later that in fact several of her thrifty friends each pitched in potluck style. It was a seriously classy party for not very much money.

If you're doing the whole thing yourself, remember it's quantity, not quality. Piles of Doritos are just as munchable as fancy canapes. You don't need to spend lots of money; this party is about your book, so you're not

going to be judged for what snacks you serve.

5. Creative add-ons make people happy! I've seen some authors have themes that relate to their books. For example, [Alaya Johnson](#) had an excellent 1920s-themed party for *Moonshine*, which is set during the 1920s. She was smart, though, in that she didn't make the theme a prerequisite of the party, just a fun add-on--you don't want to make your party work for the people attending.

If themes aren't for you, consider a raffle! Maybe guests can fill out a cue card with something cute related to the book, and you can draw a winner or two. Then you can advertise "door prizes" on your invite, which looks nice. If you're energetic, you might make gift bags or little giveaways. These don't have to be expensive, but something to take home is a nice thank-you to your guests for coming out. You can get things like tote bags for \$3 or \$5 a pop if you're feeling fancy, or you can make things like personalized bookmarks or pens for a lot less.

Obviously, none of these things are necessary to making a good party. Really the only necessary thing is food.

6. Uh, make sure there are copies of your book at the party. If you scored a bookstore venue, the store owner will have to work this out with your publishing company. Your guest list will DEFINITELY come in handy then. You really, really want to guess about the right number of copies. Over-ordering will be a great trauma for your kind host, but under-ordering will cause both you and them to lose business. In my humble opinion, it's always better to over-order slightly. Sometimes the host, if they are generous, will invite you to sign the remaining stock. So be nice to the host.

But yeah, if someone else is providing the books, follow up. A lot. I mean,

be nice about it. But don't underestimate the ability of other people to be disorganized. It would be really sad if you had a party with no books.

If you're at a non-bookstore venue and aren't partnering with a bookstore to sell your book, you have some extra bonus options. I would recommend buying copies for yourself and selling them for cash. As a courtesy to your guests, you might sell them at a discount if you got the copies at an author discount (an advantage over working with a bookstore, who will probably charge cover price). Now here's the most unorthodox suggestion I'm going to make in this post. If you're buying the copies yourself, do so from a retailer who will give you a bulk discount (I have no preference among accounts, but there are certain retailers that pretty much always give discounts, such as Powells and Amazon). If you buy copies from an account like this instead of from your publisher, the books you buy will a) count toward your national sales numbers, which is always a good thing, and b) pay you royalties. And yeah, a lot of times you can get a discount from these accounts that's almost as high as your contractual author discount. So, as Michael Scott would say, it's a win-win-win situation.

7. Remember to thank everyone profusely all the time. Just in general, when you're an author, make this your policy in all things. But especially be gracious at your book launch. Be unflappable! Expect the least from your guests/customers, and appreciate everything as much as possible. It's easy to let your nerves get the best of you, but just be nice no matter what. (Those who have been around these parts for a while might remember my story of watching an author event go down the tubes because the author let their nerves make them snappish.)

There are my thoughts! Hope they help.