

Promoting Yourself at a Writing Conference

Attending a conference is fun, but it's also expensive. There are travel costs, registration fees, food, lodging and time away from writing. So...the question is, "How do I maximize my presence? How do I promote myself and my book?"

Even if your book won't debut until a few months, there are things you can do. Still, it seems silly to "waste" this opportunity even though you don't have a book in hand. After all, you know that you make a note of books you want to read and you might not buy them for months! Surely other people have the same habits. And, remember, in advertising that it takes many exposures for people to form an impression. But those exposures can't be spaced too far apart. Waiting until your book hits the shelves means all those exposures would come AFTER the book is out. And those 6 weeks afterwards are critical because that's when sell-through happens. It makes sense to start now...if you can do it economically.

Here are all the promotional activities you can undertake for our visit to a book writing convention. You won't be able to tell right away which of these have been valuable.

- 1. Interviews--** Offered to interview the headliners for the conference. This will give you the chance to ask questions of the best and brightest. Plus, the interviews were shared in the newsletter, and you can now post them in the resource section of your website. The aim: To be on the radar screen of some of the nation's best authors. You never know whom you'll click with. Or who will bring you the next big opportunity.
- 2. Business cards--** I was once told to wait, but that's silly. How do you follow up a meeting without information? Have the cards printed with your book cover on the front. The ISBN is on everything. "It's like the Social Security number for your book." Should you get a tattoo? Nah.
- 3. Proposal for a presentation--**Any unique ability in your background works for being a speaker. So, offer to do a presentation on speaking before groups. If you give a talk, chances are you will sell some books!
- 4. Appearances--**Try to be fortunate enough to be assigned as moderator on one panel and participant on another. You have to ask early, so register early and make a pest of yourself! If you give a talk or make appearances, chances are you will sell some books!
- 5. Panel descriptions--**How do people choose which panel to attend? Try to write your descriptions in such a way that they were full of promise...promise that you know you could deliver. You want to brand myself as offering

tremendous value while having fun. But remember, you **MUST** deliver on the promise!

6. Handouts--This is a key. But the handouts can **NOT** be self-serving. Of course, on all the handouts, you share your details.

7. Recipe Cards and Homemade Cookies, candy--Hokey, Sure. But every time I've seen them offered, people snatch them up. On the front is a recipe, on the back is info about your book and the book cover is in color on the cards.

8. Pre-Order Contest--See if your publisher will agree to take pre-sales. The publisher keeps a list of all the pre-ordered books. From those, I'll draw one purchaser's name to be included as a character in book #2.

9. Bookmarks--Pretty standard stuff, except that you can customize each one with a scrap booking embellishment. People ooohhhhed and aaaaahhed over them.

10. Prizes--As a motivational speaker, you'd be pleasantly surprised by how excited audiences got when they won something. So have customize bags of M & Ms made up. The colors are the same as your book cover.

11. A small booklet or other genre specific item to ID you--I've also noticed that folks seem really astonished that I actually have skeletons. It reinforces my niche and brands me as a mystery writer.