

# Positive Publishing Perspectives

Your Guide to Getting the Most Out of Your Publishing Business

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Volume II, Issue I

## Help for the Graphically Challenged

As most of us are painfully aware, possessing literary talent does not always translate to possessing artistic talent. And unfortunately, the internet is very much a visual as well as written form of media. What this means is that often, independent publishers have a difficult time creating a professional looking web presence. There are, of course, plenty of software programs available, but many of these are either expensive, complicated, or both.

The good news is that there are a variety of free, online tools available to help you spruce up your site, create banners, and more. None of these sites require you to register or download any software.

### Cooltext.com

<http://cooltext.com/>

This online logo and button designer has a wide variety of design options. Plus, download a host of custom designer fonts for use in your other programs. Customize size, fonts, colors, textures, and more to exactly match your website. The only problem is that this tool does not allow you to make vertical graphics, only horizontal.

### Banner-generator.net

<http://www.banner-generator.net/>

This simple online tool creates buttons, banners, and skyscraper ads. Banners can be made in jpg, png, and flash formats. The creation process is relatively quick. There are limited graphic

choices, however. Also, the preview function does not adequately show you what the final banner will look like.

### Logogenerator.com

<http://www.logogenerator.com/>

This online tool allows you to create simple business-card size graphics for use as logos, headers, or banners. The tool only allows for the graphics to be created in 600 x 300 pxl format. However, it has a variety of simple designs that can be customized by selecting from a variety of different fonts, text sizes, and colors.

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## Free Image Resources

One of the biggest issues often facing independent publishers is how to acquire quality art for projects. When budgets are tight, it can be difficult to get the needed art to make a project really stand out. Fortunately, there are a host of free sources for artwork.

### Oldbookillustrations.com

<http://www.oldbookillustrations.com/>

This site has a variety of public domain images available for folks looking for a woodcut images or a Victorian feel. Images are high resolution and good for a variety of projects.

### Fromoldbooks.com

<http://www.fromoldbooks.org/>

This site hosts over 2,000 images from rare and old books. Almost all are now in the public domain. Many of the images are available in different size formats. Even has scans of the front covers of old books that can be used for cover art. High quality scanned images

### NASA

<http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/iotd.html>

Believe it or not, most images posted to the NASA site are considered public domain, as they are paid for by public tax dollars. You are free to use them in for-profit projects, so long as your use does not imply endorsement by NASA. There are some restrictions so be sure to read the [Usage guidelines](#) first. But you will find hundreds of beautiful images that can be used for a variety of projects.

### CreativeCommons.org

<http://creativecommons.org/>

Search thousands of images that have been specially licensed by their creators to be used royalty and fee free. Make sure to check the specific licenses to ensure that a picture is useable for commercial projects.

[Burningwell.org](http://www.burningwell.org)  
<http://www.burningwell.org/gallery2/main.php>

All images are 100% in the public domain. The site has already obtained model releases in those cases where people appear in the images, alleviating privacy concerns for publishers.

## Cause Based Marketing

Marketing is the biggest problem most independent publishers face. It's hard to get people to pay attention to yet another ad screaming "BUY ME". There are plenty of marketing ideas, but one that many people don't consider is caused-based marketing. Caused-based marketing refers to an indirect marketing program that is designed to benefit a cause.

Caused-based marketing is part of a long-term commitment to build your company's identity, and requires careful planning. But the benefits are real.

First, You're doing something good. Really, the biggest reason to engage in caused-based marketing is to do good things. You have to market anyway, why not create something positive in the process? You'll feel better about yourself knowing that your marketing is helping other people.

Second, you build relationships with your customers. People like doing business with businesses that do good things. It's not about selling one book to someone. It's about someone getting excited about what you are doing and sharing it with others. You may have folks that visit your blog regularly just because they find you entertaining, but have never told their friends about you. But then they see you promoting their favorite charity, and suddenly they are sending links to all of their friends. These

relationships create customer loyalty, so when you are ready to promote your next book, they will be more receptive to you.

Third, it's expected of serious businesses. A very interesting report on social responsibility by businesses found that *"companies' charitable and philanthropic giving is no longer enough to impress consumers. Perhaps it is now viewed as a standard expectation that consumers have — a bare minimum requirement — to even be considered as a socially responsible company."* In short, there is a portion of the consumer population that expects you to be socially responsible, and if you aren't they won't do business with you.

The full article can be found below:

[http://www.csresults.com/CSR\\_ExecutiveSummary07.pdf](http://www.csresults.com/CSR_ExecutiveSummary07.pdf)

Fourth, it pushes fence sitters to act. We know that generally someone needs to see something seven times before they even remember it. Caused-based marketing provides an incentive to act immediately instead of forgetting about you. It gives them a reason to buy now, as opposed to waiting until later...when they will probably forget about you and your book.

Finally, cause-based marketing generates publicity and visibility. While the local newspaper editor probably doesn't care much about your new book, he will be interested in a poetry reading to support a local charity will. In the future, when someone does a Google search for your charity of choice, chances are they will come across you as well.

*Do I need to get permission from the charity first?*

It depends on what you are doing, and whom you are doing it

for. Some charities have whole sections on their websites that include online tools for launching your own programs. For example, [Kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org) allows donors to set up their own donor pages on their website. The donor page shows what projects you have supported. You can use one of their banners on your site to link directly to your donor page. It's clean and transparent. They even have a forum where donors can share their ideas and projects.

Other charities are not as open, and if you wish to actually sponsor some sort of program they expect you to get their permission. The best course of action is to review the charity's literature and website and see how they prefer to handle such matters. If it is not obvious, ask! Our September Charity of Note, Flamingnet.com, doesn't solicit cash donations. But the people who run it are very open, and they were receptive when we contacted them.

Generally, however, if you are merely running a short-term fundraiser, you don't need any official permission. If you want to donate 10% of your profits in one month to a specific charity, you don't need permission. You can just say you are going to do it, and then do it. If, however, you plan something more intensive, you should always seek the feedback and support of the charity. When we launch our writing contest each year, we always communicate with the prospective charity first to let them know what we are doing, and how we intend to promote them.

*How Do I Select Causes?*

Think about what matters to you. Support causes you believe in, not just what you think people are interested in. If you genuinely

believe in the cause, that natural energy will shine through. And that makes it easier to push your program and build trust.

Think small. Yes, you are trying to do good with your marketing, but you are still marketing. The goal is for your marketing to be mutually beneficial. As such, you need to focus your energies on those charities that will afford you the best opportunity to both do good and promote yourself. Your local newspaper isn't going to be impressed with a \$300 donation to the United Way. But donating \$100 worth of signed copies of your book as a door prize for a local charity fundraiser is going to put your book in front of a lot of people, not just from those that win the free copies, but also because your book is probably going to be mentioned in the event's program.

Think about the repercussions. Raising money for your local animal shelter makes everyone feel warm and fuzzy. Raising money for PETA carries a boatload of political baggage. If your target market is politically active, it probably isn't an issue. If PETA's tactics turns off your target market, you may create a negative impression of your company.

Also consider the reverse. A charity that provides books to children may love that you are donating \$1 from every sale to their cause. Unless, of course, your book happens to be hard-core erotica. Charities work very hard to construct a positive image to their market, and they won't want to be associated with anything that could tarnish that image.

## Internet Networking

Social networking sites, forums, and blogs have become a critical marketing tool for independent publishers. These sites allow you to interact with people who have shared interests and to build relationships that can be mutually beneficial. On many sites, professionals in the industry interact with novices and students. The potential to attract business partners, mentors, and new long-term customers is huge.

Unfortunately, too many independent publishers destroy their chances by engaging in annoying, and often downright bizarre, behavior. Internet savvy folks are inundated with information when they log on, and have developed a variety of filters to remove the distractions so they can enjoy their surfing. If you are engaging in any of the following behavior, you are most likely getting trapped in those filters.

*You have an unhealthy affection for exclamation points.* Whenever I see a forum heading that ends in more than one exclamation point, I cringe. Exclamation points are the online equivalent of wearing a clown suit and standing on the corner with a sign advertising your product. Such posts get ignored.

*STOP SCREAMING AT ME!* In case you were never told, using all capital letters in a sentence is the internet equivalent of screaming. People don't want to be screamed at. Particularly by someone trying to sell them something. Yes, you are trying to attract attention to yourself, but so is that toddler in the shopping cart screaming at the top of his lungs. Does that scream make you want to rush out and buy stuff? Or does it make you want to leave the store as quickly as possible?

*What language was that suppose to be?* No rational person expects

internet blogs and forum posts to be grammatically flawless. Often, they are written on the fly and you don't always have time to edit. But at the very least demonstrate some basic grasp of the English language.

You are an ***independent publisher.*** Your goal is to convince potential customers that your books are quality products. Your goal is to earn the respect of your peers so you can benefit from their experience. How does posting something like "ne1 no were I cn find free avertising hlp plz?" provide a warm and fuzzy feeling? How many people are going to jump up and down to help you if you post "r there ne reviewers 2 review my book it is relly good and im willing 2 give u a free pdf 2 reviw it."

*Just because you're a contact, doesn't not make it SPAM.* I happen to be a member of several social networks. You can add people to your "friends" or contacts list, and these folks can send you messages. This is all well and good...until I start getting the mass private messages letting me know this or that contact just posted a new article.

You are already on my contact list. I already see a list of all new articles when I log in. Why do you need to send me a message begging me to read your article and rate it? If I want to read it, I will. I know it is there. I can see it when I log in. You don't need to send me a new message every day telling me you posted to your blog again.

Your contact lists on social networking sites are not your private marketing list. By adding you to their contact lists, they have extended a certain level of trust to you. A trust that says they want to hear what you have to say. But by constantly spamming them

with nonsense, you show them that you aren't worth that trust, and you'll soon find your list of contacts dwindling as you end up on everyone's *block* list.

*Stealth Spammers.* Most forums allow members to have signatures that can link to outside sites. Good use of that signature line can help attract attention to your site. If you add something witty, informative, or entertaining to a discussion, people will often click your signature to learn more about you.

But note that the key words are *witty*, *informative*, or *entertaining*. Too often, people post in a thread for no other reason than to post a link to their own site or sales items. If all you are going to do is post "lol", "good point", or "thanks for the post" with a link to your site, don't do it. It is annoying. It's spamming. And everyone with more than three brain cells knows why you are doing it and thinks you are an idiot.

Of course, we've all posted short replies in threads or to blogs, and if it is in direct response to another post that's fine. Your pal pays you a compliment in a thread, and you reply with just a blushing smiley face. But if your goal is merely to throw your link into a thread, people are going to see through it.

*If you like this, you'll love...* A different type of stealth spam. Many social networking sites and forums have separate sections for promotional stuff, where members can hawk their services and personal projects. There is nothing more annoying than posting a promotional thread, only to have some hack post "thanks for posting if people like this they will also like my book" followed by a link and promo.

All you are doing is showing to everyone that you have zero respect for your peers, and will do anything to hawk your book in front of people.

*Panic attacks.* Everyone needs help once in a while. We all get frustrated when things go wrong. How people perceive us during these times is strictly our own doing. Can you maintain your composure? Or do you start posting identical **HELP ME KNOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!** threads in fifteen different areas of the forum, while also usurping other threads asking the identical question? Can you conduct yourself like a professional, or do you start throwing around conspiracy theories about how this or that moderator hates you and is trying to destroy your business? Nobody wants to help, or do business with, someone who seems out of control and paranoid. Do you present yourself as someone who appreciates help, or as a high-maintenance paranoid?

**None of the sites mentioned in this publication paid a fee for inclusion. Recommendations are based on our own use of such sites, not any paid advertising.**

### Stock Book Covers and Art

Your book cover can be the most important marketing tool you have. Many POD services offer stock covers, but then you are using the same cover as how many thousands of others? Paying an artist to design the cover can be an expensive additional to your production budget. If you didn't find what you are looking for with the free sites we mentioned earlier, you may want to peruse the following offerings. If you have a little bit of design savvy, you can benefit from customizing stock

covers that are available from a variety of third party publishers.

These third party publishers did not pay to be listed. We have been involved in the RPG industry for several years, and we make these recommendations based on our own knowledge of these publishers. Please note that links do go to our affiliate shop with [RPGNOW](#). If you do find something you like, support Bards and Sages by using the links.

[UKG Publishing](#) produces a series of stock book covers that are affordable and unique. I have used some of their covers in my own projects, including our novella [The Grandmaster](#). These covers are high resolution and come in a variety of colors, so you can crop, edit, and play with them to customize for your own projects. Besides stock book covers, they also have a lot of stock fantasy and pulp art that is inexpensive.

[Dungeon Dweller's Guild Games](#) has launched a series of stock book covers that are also customizable. Like the UKG products, they come in a variety of colors to allow optimum customization.

[Postmortem Studios](#) has a very popular series called *ClipArt Critters*. Quality varies a bit, but they have a large library of clip art available so it is easy to find the type of art you are looking for.

Though written with RPG designers in mind, [ePublishing 101](#) is a recommended product for anyone thinking about getting involved with PDF publishing. Written by two of the most successful publishers in the RPG PDF industry, there is a huge amount of information available in it.