

Building Buzz in YA

Tina presents... Who is the Teen Audience?

MY EXPERIENCE WITH TEENS:

- mother of three
- daily interactions with all kinds: A-Listers, Band Geeks, Jocks, Emos, Druggies, Brainiacs
- I “speak” IM and WoW (that’s World of Warcraft) and Gibberish

TEENS TODAY:

- aren’t used to waiting for things
- speak in abbreviation
- tend to like bullet points, lists and IM convos
- still want the same basic things: friends, acceptance, measures of success and a future.
- still want a good story told in a believable voice

GOOD RESEARCH PLACES:

- high school football games (the action is NOT on the field)
- find out your high school’s late day and go to the nearest Starbucks
- frequent the closest fast food joint to the school
- Writing YA:
- Before my kids were born, an editor praised me for my teen voice, so you don't HAVE to be around teens
- YA is about feeling it. About remembering how absolutely, awfully, life-and-death
- critical everything feels and getting it on paper.

BOTTOM LINE:

- Hang out around teens, listen and learn.
- But remember they are just younger versions of you. Times change, but people don't necessarily.
- Then tap into your inner teen, write a story as a teen that you as a teen would have liked to read. Chances are, it'll sell.

Dona presents... To Blog or Not To Blog

GETTING STARTED:

- Decide if you want a group blog or go at it alone
- Pick a simple blog name
- Pick a cool, colorful schema
- Good examples of cool teen-friendly blogs

TOPICS:

- Boys
- Fashion
- School
- Parents
- Music, TV, Movies
- Future
- Misc.

NETWORKING:

- How to get teen readers to come to your blog
- How to get other writers to link to your blog
- How to get industry professionals to come to your blog

OTHER TOPICS:

- Measuring visitors
- Giveaways
- Guest blogging

Tera presents... Websites for Young Adults (or the Young at Heart)

APPEARANCES ARE EVERYTHING

- Okay, not really... but they count.
 - Basic design principles.
 - Pick a color scheme appropriate to your voice.
- Overcrowding in schools is bad enough.
 - Make sure there's plenty of "white space"
- I get around.
 - Making navigation easy.

FRESHEN UP BEFORE YOU GO OUT IN PUBLIC

- How to turn your standard, basic pages into something teen-worthy.
 - Writing a bio that people want to read.
 - Value added book pages that give the readers a behind-the-scenes view.

BEYOND THE BIO AND THE BOOKSHELF

- Pages for professionals.
 - Teachers
 - Schools
 - Librarians
- It's all in good fun.
 - Quizzes, polls, and games.
 - Wallpapers, screen savers, and buddy icons.

NOT ANOTHER AUTHOR PAGE

- You can have more than just your author page.
- Finding possible bonus websites in your book.
- Characters

- Blogs
- MySpace
- Schools
- Miscellaneous
 - Countries (Genovia)
- Myths (Mt. Olympus)

Steph presents... Wanna Be My Friend?

Brief introduction to several Internet networking sites such as MySpace, Friendster, Facebook, GoodReads, Shelfari, and Jacketflap.

I JUST WANT TO WRITE BOOKS FOR TEENS, DO I REALLY HAVE TO DO ANY OF THIS?

Only if you want teens to know your book exists! These sites have the potential to get your book cover in front of thousands of people a day, but to do it right, they require a time commitment. The only thing lamer than not having a MySpace account is having one that isn't kept up!

YOUR MYSPACE IS L-A-M-E A/K/A TIPS ON CREATING TEEN-FRIENDLY SITES

While the Buzz Girls can all appreciate your Burt Reynolds wallpaper and your choice of 'Hungry like the Wolf' for the song on your page, teens are going to think you are lame with a capital L. You have to treat your page exactly like you do your teen novels. Pick songs, backgrounds, and icons that teens will appreciate. You can still express yourself and your individuality just do it in a more teen-friendly way so that you can attract more friends. Save Burt and Simon for your personal page, because your family and friends already know and appreciate how lame you are.

My favorite place to find cool layouts: www.mygirlyspace.com There are hundreds more just type MySpace layouts into any search engine and it will give you tons to choose from.

PHISHING--TIPS FOR KEEPING YOURSELF FROM BECOMING BAIT.

Do:

- Take the time to go to every single person's page who sends you a friend request.
- Copy the code from your page into a Word document.
- Check on your page daily to make sure everything is okay.

Don't:

- Ever click on a link sent in a message, especially from someone you don't know.
- Just friend everybody, no matter how tempting as it is to click APPROVE when someone sends you a friend request. Remember you are going to be reaching out to teens. You wouldn't want them hooking up with some freak they found off your page.

SIX DEGREES OF MEG CABOT--HOW TO GET THE FRIENDS YOU WANT!

I love friending other authors as much as anyone else, but that isn't who the target audience for your book is going to be. You want to reach teens that are going to be interested in YOUR book. Here are some tips on how to find them:

Most social networking sites, especially MySpace, have several teen lit groups. Join these groups and post bulletins, comment on posts, and friend the other members.

Say your book is about toy robots that come to life (what, I've got TRANSFORMERS on the brain), use the search function to type in toy robots books and see what comes up. You have the potential to reach thousands of readers you just have to use your imagination.

Visit the pages of authors that write similarly to you. Friend the kids who take the time to comment because those are usually the die-hard readers looking for new books all the time.

DO YOU KISS YOUR MOTHER WITH THAT MOUTH? ALL ABOUT MYSPACE ETIQUETTE.

So, you've finally got a cool page and some teens have actually friended you and said they would buy your book. That's it, right? WRONG! Some of these teens are actually going to want to be your friend and talk to you on a regular basis. They will be your biggest cheerleaders so don't ignore them.

Always send a thank-you when someone adds you or requests you to add them. Try to comment about something on their page so it doesn't seem generic.

It's hard to keep up with birthdays but I think it is really special when you can do it.

Don't send those generic comments that go to everybody just trying to pimp your book. They are totally lame and will get you de-friended in a heartbeat.

Don't overload your friends with constant bulletins.

Simone presents... The Scoop on School Visits

EEK, you mean I have to speak in front of all those kids?

OPPORTUNITIES

How do you get speaking engagements at high schools and middle schools?

FEEES

How much should you charge for speaking engagements? How some authors make more money on their speaking engagements than they do on their book deals.

CONTENT

What should you talk about?

- your journey
- your books
- funny anecdotes
- writing tips

SALES

Including sales in your speaking engagements, combining book sales with school talks.

Marley presents... Using Your Existing Network

WHAT ARE THE FUNDAMENTALS OF NETWORKING?

Networking: To interact or engage in informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support.

Marketing: Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, services, organizations, and events to create and maintain relationships that will satisfy individual and organizational objectives.

VIEW YOURSELF AS THE PRODUCT

To get published, you have to offer the business (the publishing world) your product. Everything you do as a writer, every story you craft, every conference you attend, every contest you enter...it's all part of your company's marketing plan.

MEETING OTHER PEOPLE

- Everyone is not born an extrovert... and that's okay, but you can learn to talk to strangers.
- Have courage and self-confidence.
- Think of yourself as a character.
- Listen when introduced to someone. Be attentive and participate in the conversation.
- Find common ground and similar interests.
- A smile and a laugh will go a long way to make a new friend.
- Be confident and offer a firm handshake. You'll be remembered more for a weak one.
- Have one liners or topics you can easily toss out ready.

BODY LANGUAGE SAYS A LOT

- Your own body language and reading body language in others.
- Watch for signs of being uninterested.
 - Crossing legs in other direction
 - Leaning back in the chair
 - Folding arms in front of you
 - Looking around, not making eye contact
- Watch for signs of interest.
 - Leaning forward as if to listen more
 - Head nodding
 - Eye contact and smiling
 - Legs crossed towards you, body angled towards you

Easy ways for writers to "market" themselves through networking:

1. Conferences
2. RWA Meetings
3. Entering Contests
4. Website
5. E-mail Loops and Message Boards
6. Become an "expert" in something
7. Write articles
8. Be professional

9. Relationships
10. Follow up
11. Be Yourself

Heather presents... *Blast-off With Book Launches*

MAPPING YOUR JOURNEY

- Free Online presence at least 1 year ahead myspace, facebook, etc.
- Website in place – 6-8 months ahead of release , with cover art up as soon as available, excerpts, blurbs, etc “branding” you as a YA author specific to your genre
- Create a Mailing/Email list – start collecting names and addresses from your website and your personaladdy book of people who’d likely be interested in a) buying your book b) coming to your party!

PREPARING FOR TAKE-OFF

- What can you afford? What will give you the biggest bang for the buck?
- Virtual Book Launch Party – Free via Myspace, your website, etc – Invite people to visit your site on release day, hold contests etc...
- Physical Release Parties: Themed or not?
 - Prom Dress Theme – Tina and the cupcakes
 - Jane Porter’s Flirting with Forty Party with Hawaiian Luau theme
 - Gerri Russell’s Highland Themed party with dancers, etc.
- Think about how to make your launch appeal to teens?
 - Partner with teen group – for ex. in Seattle, the Vera Project which features underage venues for alternative & rock bands would be a match for my release.
 - School visits to up interest for your release party
 - Consider a charity booksigning that would draw new readers and help a related charity. Donate a portion of the proceeds in return for their advertising the signing event to their donor list, on local community calendars, press etc.
- Promote your signing party (and your book) to local media outlets – finding the angle that will appeal to them. Are you a former resident, returning to sign books near your old HS? Make a connection to the local community to better your chances as a “human interest” story. People like to hear about local folks who’ve done good things. Make sure to mention the signing info.
- Schedule your signing with a local bookstore or book a venue (museum, library atrium, community center, restaurant) and see if a local bookseller will help with the bookselling part of things. If you are doing it yourself, enlist friends to help with the business part of things – you’ll be signing books!
- Submit your signing to all newspapers – don’t forget free & community newspapers.

BLAST-OFF

- Invite EVERYONE you know. The great thing about YA is that everyone knows a kid who loves to read! Everyone has a niece or daughter who they could buy the book for. Use the mailing list you started to get the word out. Ask the venue or bookstore to promote to its patrons, or for a mailing list you can use.