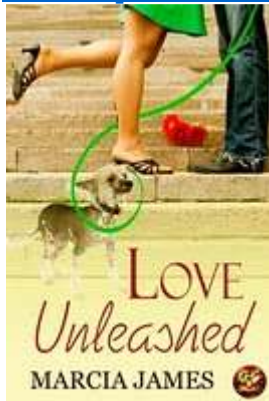




PR Options for the Shy Author by Marcia James



*I'm absolutely thrilled to introduce today's guest blogger: Marcia James. Marcia writes hot, humorous romances and finaled in eleven RWA contests before selling her first comic romantic suspense, *At Her Command*. Her short story, "Rescue Me", appeared in *Tails of Love*, a Berkley benefit anthology, and her latest story, *Love Unleashed*, was released in February 2010. In her eclectic career, she has shot submarine training videos, organized celebrity-filled nonprofit events and had her wedding covered by *People Magazine*. An advertising copywriter and marketing consultant, Marcia presents online and in-person author promotion workshops.*

There's never been more pressure on authors to shoulder the burden of promotion, and no one can possibly take advantage of every available PR opportunity. Even a small amount of daily or weekly promotion cuts into valuable writing time. That's why authors must decide carefully which PR options are right for them based on specific variables, such as:

- * Budget
- * Time constraints
- * Author knowledge & skills



- * Book distribution & format

- * Book genre/subgenre & niche market elements
- * Author personality

With so many promotional opportunities, why not choose those that go well with your personality? If you're an introvert, don't add stress to your life by attempting to do PR better suited to extroverts, such as: presenting workshops, doing book readings, participating on conference panels, holding single-author book signings, power-schmoozing at conventions, being interviewed on broadcast media, doing live chats, etc.

Instead, introverted authors might try some of these PR options:

*** Participating on a reader forum/message board, informally posting on topics as time allows.**

Many shy writers find it easier to converse with readers online. If you join a publisher's reader email loop -- or a reader forum, such as the ones on the RT Book Reviews' Web site -- you'll have the chance to chat up people in a non-scary situation.

*** Participating on writers' email lists, sharing craft and business information as time allows.**

Fellow writers are also readers, and you can develop a following by participating on writing email loops, such as those of Romance Writers of America (RWA) chapters. Sharing your knowledge and commiserating on your author-friends' ups-and-downs is an easy form of networking.

*** Cross-promoting with other authors as time allows.**

You can promote other authors -- and they can promote you -- in a number of ways: linking to each other's Web sites, guest-blogging on each other's blogs (Thanks, Rebecca!), giving quotes to use in articles or workshops, etc. One way I cross-promote is through my [James Gang interviews](#). Each month I interview an author or publishing insider with some form of "James" in his/her name. The interviewees promote the interviews to their readers, writing loops, and friends, and I promote the interviews to mine.

Another example of my cross-promotion efforts is my April 5th - 18th "[Guilt-Free Author Promotion](#)" online workshop. I approached PR-savvy authors and publishing insiders and asked if they would like to write a "guest lecture" for the workshop. Over a dozen did, and I include their bios and latest release information with the lectures, as well as promoting them in all workshop announcements.

*** Co-promoting with other authors to create a multi-author Web site, blog or MySpace page -- all of which would require a regular commitment of time.**

Joining with other authors to share the cost and time of promotion is a great idea. One

way to do that is to create a multi-author site or blog. For example, I'm part of the [Ohio Romance Authors MySpace](#) page. Simpler forms of co-promotion include sharing the cost of a joint print ad or joint promotional materials, such as brochures.

*** Writing articles on the craft and business of publishing for chapter newsletters, RWA's Romance Writers Report, RT Book Reviews, online e-zines, etc. -- which you can do as time allows.**

If you enjoy working alone, you can write articles, which will promote your pen name and should include a brief bio with your Web site URL at the bottom. I wrote a series of author promotion articles for the RWA Kiss of Death chapter newsletter, and I now have those articles on my [Web site](#). In addition, you can look for elements with your book(s) that lend themselves to niche marketing. For example, if your book has a quilting heroine, you could write an article for a quilting magazine and mention your book.

*** Building and maintaining your Web site and social media sites (e.g. Facebook), if you're technologically skilled and have the time to do it.**

An author's Web site is the most important tool in his/her personal "PR Toolbox". If you can design and maintain a site -- including social media sites -- that's a great skill to have. And if you have the knowledge and talent to design bookmarks, banners, postcards, brochures, excerpt booklets, etc., you have a leg up on many other authors. Consider whether a skill you have from your day job or past experiences could translate into a helpful promotional skill.

*** Sending PR materials to conferences, bookstores and readers' groups and press releases to the media, as time allows.**

Once you have logoed/branded PR materials, you can make sure they get into the goody bags at RWA conferences, etc. You can also write press releases and mail out press kits, if you're willing to be interviewed. (Some online publications/blogs will interview you by email, so it's not as stress-producing as a live interview).

*** Paying a romance author PR site, like AuthorIsland or Writerspace, to handle your newsletter mailings, contests, and other promotion, which frees up your time to write.**

Not every author promotion site costs an arm and a leg. Many have an à la carte menu of services, as well as different plans, such as promotion for one month, six months, or a year. This option will affect your budget but free up your time.

That's just a sampling of PR options for the shy writer. Those wanting to step outside of their comfort zones can try opportunities that attract extroverts, such as the power-schmoozing I love. But give yourself a break and don't make promotion even more of a pain than it can be. The next time you're faced with intimidating promotional choices, analyze which ones you'd enjoy the most and don't feel guilty about those you avoid. Match your personality to your PR push.

The best way to do that is to learn what PR options are available. I offer my free 280+ page WORD file on author promotion to any writer who requests it. Just email me through the “Contact Me” page on my Web site (<http://www.marciajames.net/>), and I'll attach the file to my response.



I'd love to hear about your PR challenges, triumphs, questions, and helpful hints. I'm giving away a free e-book version of my comic romantic suspense, *At Her Command*, to a randomly chosen commenter on this guest blog. Thanks again, Rebecca, for hosting me on your blog!

Marcia is giving away a copy of her first book AT HER COMMAND (in ebook format) to a randomly chosen commenter. Good luck!