

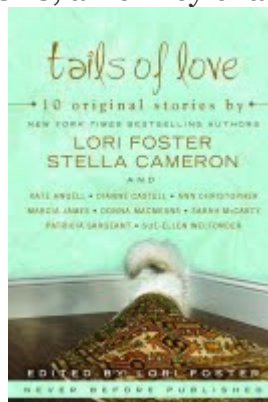


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GUEST BLOGGER MARCIA JAMES ON AUTHOR PROMOTION



Petit Fours and Hot Tamales is thrilled to welcome author, Marcia James. Marcia James writes hot, humorous romances and finished in eleven RWA chapter contests before selling her first comic romantic suspense, **At Her Command**, to Cerridwen Press. In June 2009, her short story, "Rescue Me", appeared in **Tails of Love**, a Berkley charity anthology along with



stories by nine other authors. Marcia is an advertising copywriter and marketing consultant, and she presents author promotion workshops. In her eclectic career, she has shot submarine training videos, organized celebrity-filled nonprofit events and had her wedding covered by People Magazine. After years of dealing with such sexy topics as how to safely install traffic lights, Marcia is enjoying “researching” her novels' steamy love

scenes with her husband and hero of many years. She offers her 200+ page file of author promotion options to any RWAer who requests it. Just email her through the "Contact Me" page on her Web site: www.marciajames.net

Self-promotion. Say the word aloud in a room full of authors and watch a fingernails-on-the-blackboard shudder run through the crowd. I sometimes feel like a freak of nature, because I LOVE promotion. How about you? Is the idea of promoting your author brand and your books as appealing as a root canal? Answer the following multiple-choice question to get a handle on your PR feelings:

Promotion is...

- A. A voracious time-suck
- B. A pain in the proverbial butt
- C. A scary and expensive chore
- D. The source of much stress and guilt
- E. All of the above.

If you answered A, B, C, D, or E, you're in good company. But there are ways to make your promotional efforts relatively painless.

First, strive for GUILT-FREE promotion. Give yourself permission to concentrate on a few specific PR options and let the others go. No one person can take advantage of every promotional opportunity out there, even if you hire a publicist. So stop worrying about keeping up with the authors who seem to be everywhere—from reader loops and chat rooms to Twitter and podcasts.

How do you narrow down which promotional options are right for you?

1. Learn what PR options are out there, so you can make educated decisions. I have a 235-page Microsoft WORD file on PR options that I give away free to other writers. If you would like the file, go to my [Web Site](#), to my "Contact Me" page, and request the file by emailing me that way. I'll attach the file to my response to your email.

2. Determine how much money you have to spend on promotion. You'll hear people comment that you need to spend a certain percentage of your advance or royalties on promotion. This isn't written in stone. Only you can decide what monies you have to spend. And there are many FREE PR options available.

3. Budget your time as well as your money. Unless you can afford a publicist or an assistant, it will fall on you to do whatever it takes for your PR push. And any time you spend doing promotion is time spent away from creating those books you want to promote. So take your time constraints into consideration.

4. Take into account any limitations due to your physical location. Where you live can greatly limit opportunities for in-person promotion, such as networking, book signings, and presenting workshops. And authors who want to promote outside of their countries have to deal with other concerns, such as customs and mailing costs. So your physical location (and travel budget) will impact your PR choices.

5. Consider the PR limitations or requirements of your specific books. For example, there are different opportunities and concerns when promoting an e-book vs. a print book. And shelf life can play a part in how you promote a category print book vs. a single title print book. Once you know what PR options are out there, you can choose which would be best for your specific books.

6. Determine what niche markets are worth targeting given your specific



books.

Who is your target audience? The romance-reading community is huge and voracious, but finite. If you can spot elements in your book that lend themselves to niche promoting, you can win new readers and help grow the romance market. For example, I have Chinese Crested hairless dogs in my books, and I have promoted my books on “crestie” message boards and dog-themed blogs.

7. Don't duplicate the promotional support your publisher is providing. Nothing can beat or replace publisher support, especially when it comes to distribution and brick-and-mortar bookstore placement. Some publishers' promotional teams will work with authors and some won't. Learning as much as possible about your publisher's marketing plan will help you avoid duplicating efforts. For example, ARCs (Advance Reader Copies) of your book are expensive to make, so sending ARCs to the same bookstores and reviewers your publisher does is a waste of money. And authors need to dole out their

PR dollars very carefully.

8. Don't discount the role your personality will play in which PR options are best for you. Not everyone is cut out for every PR option. And your experience (or lack of experience) can be a deciding factor, too. For example, I'm technologically challenged, so I pay my Webmistress to maintain my Web site (my #1 PR tool) vs. trying to learn the skills I'd need to do it myself.

To help you determine your PR Personality, take the following quiz:

WHAT'S YOUR PR PERSONALITY?

1. Do you enjoy interacting with readers? Which of the following options appeal to you?

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

-- "Appearing" as the guest in an online chatroom, answering reader questions for an hour.

-- Chatting up readers at booksignings—by yourself or as part of a multi-author booksigning.

-- Giving presentations to readers at libraries, bookstores and conferences.

2. Do you enjoy networking with other authors? Which of the following options appeal to you?

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

-- Cross-promoting with other authors—linking to each other's Web sites, guest-blogging on each other's blogs, etc., as time allows.

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

-- Power-schmoozing with other authors at meetings and conferences.

-- Co-presenting workshops (online or in-person) and participating on panels.

3. Do you enjoy working alone to promote your books? Which of the following options appeal to you?

-- Writing articles on the craft and business of publishing for chapter newsletters, RWA's Romance Writers Report, RT Book Reviews, online e-zines, etc.

-- Building and maintaining your Web site and social media sites (e.g. MySpace).

-- Sending PR materials to conferences, bookstores and readers' groups.

-- Writing press releases, mailing out press kits and being interviewed by the media.

4. Do you factor in your strengths when deciding on which PR options to pursue?

-- Are you an introvert or extrovert? Public speaking, podcasts, and live interviews aren't for everyone. Give yourself permission not to do them if they're difficult for you.

-- Are you a computer whiz or technologically challenged? If Web design isn't your thing, budget for a Webmistress or enlist your teenagers to help you maintain your site.

-- Are there skills from your "day job" or past experience that can be useful in your promotion? Desktop publishing skills? Marketing experience? Article writing?

5. Do you prefer using tried-and-true romance author self-promotion options, or do you look for PR options that are "outside the heart-shaped box"? For example...

-- Do you pay a romance author PR site, like AuthorIsland or Writerspace, to handle your newsletter mailings, contests, chats, and other promotion?

-- Do promote your latest release or your author brand or both?

-- Do you try to "grow the market" by chatting up non-romance readers, or do you go after a piece of the voracious but finite pool of established romance readers?

-- Do you write articles for romance publications or do you look for "angles" to place an article in a mainstream magazine or association publication. E.g., if you're over 50, you could pitch an article about your second career as an author to AARP's magazine. If you graduated from college, you can pitch a story about your novels to your alumni magazine.

-- Do you look for elements within your book that could lend themselves to promotion to a niche market? There are groups/associations for everything from hobbies to sports to good causes.

-- Do you booksign at the usual venues or do you look for venues offering an interested audience (e.g., Curves women's workout centers or a tea room) or tie-ins to elements of your book (e.g., if your hero drives a vintage car, you could hand out PR items at a vintage car show; or if you write Scottish historicals, you could get a booth at a Scottish festival).

Now that you've taken the quiz, can you see any trends in your answers? Once you determine the best promotional options for you and your books, you can focus on those specific PR opportunities for a set amount of time each week and let go of the pressure to do more. You'll be surprised how doing just the PR you enjoy (or tolerate) and letting go of the guilt of not doing more will take the stress off self-promotion.

For more information: I have a number of author promotion articles on my Web site www.marciajames.net/articles.html, and I also present online PR workshops. My next workshop is Sept. 14 - 25, 2009: "A PR PRIMER: Promoting Yourself Before—And Just After—"The Call". The Mid-Willamette Valley (OR) RWA chapter will host the workshop. Visit <http://www.midwillamettevalleyrwa.com/online.classes.htm>



I'd love to hear about your PR challenges and successes. And I'll randomly pick one commenter to win a free download of my comic romantic suspense, **At Her Command**.

Happy promoting!

-- Marcia James ;-)

POSTED BY DEBBIE KAUFMAN AT 3:28 AM 36 COMMENTS  

LABELS: AUTHOR PROMOTION, BOOK PROMOTION, MARCIA JAMES, PUBLICITY