

MODULE 8: LAUNCH & PROMOTION

“Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing.”
~John D. Rockefeller

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Planning for Your Launch

While it's a very important piece of the puzzle, the launch of your ebook is also the easiest place to drop the ball during this process. You've just poured everything you have into an ebook, most likely pushing it right up until the deadline, and it's tempting to hit "Publish" on your listing or announcement post and then want to go hibernate for a while.

Here's the not-so-secret secret: that doesn't work out too well.

Getting your ebook written, designing a beautiful cover and interior layout, putting together a killer sales page – all of that is necessary and good, but unfortunately, even if you build it, there's no guarantee that they will come!

In Module 8 we're looking at your launch and promotion, including the things you need to think about as you get close to that date and ideas for building buzz and increasing sales.

One of the best things you can do is start working on your promotional plan early. If you've got those things in place in the weeks leading up to launch, you'll be able to focus on following through on each one rather than trying to come up with new ideas when you've exhausted all of your creativity (and likely your sleep too!).

I'd also recommend outlining your announcement post early. As you're writing your ebook and planning your launch, you'll probably think of a million different things you want people to know about the ebook, but it's hard to remember all of those when you're put on the spot. Start making notes about things you want to say as you think of them, and then worry about cleaning it up and deciding what to keep as you get closer to the actual announcement.

Creating Pre-Launch Buzz

We talked about the idea of building buzz earlier in the course, but in the weeks leading up to your launch, start looking for ways to do just that. Your goal is to build anticipation for the ebook among your loyal blog readers *and* to start growing a mailing list that you can use to help boost launch sales. Here are a few ways to do that:

Build a Mailing List

Growing your mailing list with warm prospects – people who are saying they are interested in what you're talking about and want to hear from you when the ebook launches – is a smart idea all around. Of course, they are not all going to actually buy the ebook, but the bigger that list, the more sales you'll make at launch even without an announcement post, blog tour, etc., which is a great way to kick things off.

Offer a special coupon code or bonus for readers who sign up for the pre-launch mailing list, which you can set up using [a simple Google Drive form](#) or through a mailing program such as [MadMimi](#). Then, email the people on the list with a special offer either the day before you publicly launch or, at the very least, at the same time you launch. By giving them an exclusive first look and a special offer, you're more likely to close those sales!

Social Media

Talk about topics related to your ebook on social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram in

the weeks leading up to your launch. Some of these can be blatant self-promotion, “Long night as I finish up the edits on *Caring for Guinea Pigs in Alaska*. #twoweekstilllaunch,” and others will be more natural, “Our guinea pig is going through baby carrots faster than a bunny. Making a list of even more snack ideas for my upcoming ebook!” The key is to talk about it often (without being obnoxious, which we all know is a fine line and pretty subjective!) so that your followers see a few reminders and get excited about the launch as well.

Related Blog Posts

Another way to build buzz is to focus some of your blog posts on related topics in the months leading up to your ebook launch. (This is also a great way to get an idea of the interest in the book topic before you commit!) You can start doing this before you announce the ebook, and then begin including information about your ebook in those posts as you get closer, including the link to the special launch newsletter.

Preorders

I’m not sure how I personally feel about preorders for an ebook (which is ironic considering we did preregistration for this course, I know!), but some ebook authors swear by it, so that’s something you might want to think through as well.

The key with offer pre-order specials – such as a discounted price – is it really does need to be a special offer. So, for example, you don’t want to discount your \$7 ebook to “only \$5” for pre-orders and then announce a special price of \$5 – or worse, \$3 – on launch day, because then people will just feel like they’ve been taken advantage of. If you’re going to use a “special price for preorders” strategy, you really need to deliver on that and make sure the price you’ve offered really was a good deal for the people who trusted you enough to order your ebook before it was ready!

Special Launch Offers

Many (most?) people will use a special launch offer to capture early sales and begin creating buzz. Discounting your ebook for a limited time only is a great way to convince readers to buy because it creates a sense of urgency, and it also gives them a reason to share the ebook & special offer with other people.

Work with Sponsors

I don’t have a lot of experience in this area, but a promotional approach that is gaining popularity is to actually work with companies to offer special discount offers on other products and services during your launch promotion.

So, for example, Erin at [The Humbled Homemaker](#) decided not to discount her [Confessions of Cloth Diaper Convert](#) at launch, opting to offer additional bonus offers instead, and she put together a package for purchasers that included the following freebies plus a ton of coupon codes as well:

- a free sling (\$48 value)
- a free nursing cover (\$34.95 value)
- a free nursing pillow (\$39.95 value)
- a free carseat canopy (\$49.95 value)
- a free ebook guide to using essential oils

This type of promotion obviously takes a ton of work to organize, but it's a great way to offer a special value without actually discounting the price of your ebook!

From [Erin Odom](#):

I think [hosting a] Facebook party and [offering] coupon codes for freebies went over very well. During the midst of it, I would have probably said I would never do it again. Yet, I can see planning another Facebook party and bonus offers for the 1-year anniversary of the book next spring.

I knew that I was targeting my book to a very, very narrow niche—moms interested in using cloth diapers. Because I had been in that cloth diapering mom circle for several years, I knew that cloth diapering moms LOVE cloth diaper giveaways. I thought the Facebook party would drum up a lot of interest.

I thought it might be risky to launch at free or \$0.99, etc. like some others have done—simply because of my target audience. Instead, I left the book full price—\$9.95—and included the freebies. I wanted to make it a no-brainer to buy my book. I couldn't believe I sold over 100 the first day...and a huge chunk of those sales came in during the Facebook party that night!

[Read Erin's full case study interview here.](#)

Get Creative

Here are a few other ideas I've seen used:

If you have multiple products available, consider offering coupon codes on related products for people who buy your latest ebook, which is a great way to boost sales of older products.

During [her most recent launch](#), Katie Kimball offered a coupon code on a *future* ebook that she hopes to release later this year, which I thought was a brilliant way to build buzz and anticipation and reward loyal customers.

Many bloggers use the "[tweet for a free chapter](#)" method to help create social media buzz while also giving readers a sneak peek inside the book.

Finally, don't be limited to the ideas I've listed here or that you've seen other ebook authors use; get creative!

Organizing a Blog Tour

Another popular launch strategy is to organize a blog tour, where multiple bloggers are posting about the ebook during the same day/week/month to help build the buzz. This actually works for traditional books as well as ebooks, and it's a strategy you can use even if you don't have a blog.

Guest Posting

One of the best ways to work with bloggers for your blog tour is by offering guest posts that are related to the topic of your ebook and appeal to the audience you're targeting. Bloggers may not necessarily

have time to read and review your ebook, but offering them content that they can use on their blog is a great way to create a win-win situation – it frees up some of their time, offers a useful resource for their readers, and helps introduce people to your ebook.

Because your time is limited, you want to think carefully about who you offer a guest post – you’ll have to actually write one for everyone who agrees, after all. My recommendation is to leave that option for the bloggers who you think would be most valuable as part of the tour, which often means the biggest bloggers or those with the strongest communities.

You can also offer excerpts from your ebook as part of this blog tour – rather than writing all new content – but you’ll want to be sure that you don’t offer so many excerpts that you end up publishing your entire ebook over the course of those posts!

Reviews, Coupons & Giveaways

Another option is to ask bloggers to share a review of your ebook with their readers. If you’re offering an affiliate program (which I highly recommend) or your ebook is available on Amazon, the benefit for them is that they’re able to earn on purchases their readers make – either of the ebook itself or of other Amazon products. You’ll obviously need to offer review copies of the manuscript in order to facilitate review posts, which we’ll talk about in more detail in a little bit.

Similarly, a blogger might want to offer their readers a chance to win a copy of your ebook or special coupon code that’s unique to their site, all of which result in more links to your book site, more eyes on the ebook and more brand awareness for you.

Contacting Bloggers

Although this is obviously easiest when you already have strong relationships with bloggers in a related niche, it’s also a great time to network with bloggers you don’t know. When reaching out to bloggers that you don’t know, be sure to be friendly yet professional, concise yet detailed, and don’t try to sell them on how great an opportunity participating in your blog tour is for them when the benefit is really for you as an author (although it’s definitely worthwhile to share information about any affiliate program you’re offering, etc.)!

Here’s an example email:

Hi Catherine!

I know you’re busy, so I’ll make this brief, but I am preparing for the launch of my ebook, *How to Care for Guinea Pigs in Alaska*, on 11/15, and I think it would be a great fit for your audience at *Exotic Pets in Alaska*.

As part of the launch, I’m coordinating a blog tour, and I’d love to have you participate in one of three ways:

1. I can submit a guest post on caring for guinea pigs’ toenails during the winter months, on snack idea for hungry guinea pigs or another related topic.
2. You can write a review post about the ebook with your thoughts.
3. We can giveaway 5 copies of the ebook to your readers.

Either way, you're welcome to sign up for our affiliate program and earn 50% of every sale made through your link, and I've included a complimentary copy of How to Care for Guinea Pigs in Alaska here for you as well.

Sincerely,

The Guinea Pig Blogger

The Power of Reviews/Testimonials

Having reviews or testimonials on your sales page or ebook listing is a great way to boost sales and establish the expertise of your ebook. Unfortunately, those don't necessarily show up without a little bit of foot work on your part.

On Giving Away Review Copies

Some people are pretty stingy with the review copies of their ebooks, but as you might have guessed from the previous modules, I think being generous with your review copies is a great way to get other bloggers excited about sharing and promoting your ebook.

If you're at a level where you're getting tons of review requests, I love the strategy that Katie Kimball used in her affiliate email for [The Healthy Lunch Box ebook](#):

"A limited number of review copies are available if you:

(a) sell one book, (b) have over 20,000 pageviews per month, (c) have over 500 subscribers, OR (d) can creatively convince me that you're the perfect affiliate for the books and need to see one to know how to promote it."

She set some clear guidelines to make sure that people weren't taking advantage of her generosity just to get a free copy of the ebook while also leaving the door open for serious affiliates to ask for a review copy even if they didn't meet those guidelines.

Using Blogger Reviews on Your Site

While having bloggers post their reviews on their site can be a great way to get your ebook in front of a new audience, using those reviews – especially the ones from larger, well-known bloggers – on your sales page or mini site is also a great way to add credibility to your ebook. I like to include a mixture of blogger and non-blogger reviews so that people are hearing from the "experts" in a niche as well as from other purchasers they might be able to better identify with.

Be sure to ask before using an excerpt from a review post on your site – just as a matter of professional courtesy – and don't be afraid to ask other bloggers for a 2-3 sentence review as well, even if they won't be posting an actual review on their blog.

Asking for Amazon Reviews

In addition, Amazon's review system is an important part of the Amazon sales price. Not only does the star rating tell potential customers how good an ebook is according to other consumers, but the detailed reviews can provide a deeper look into the things other people like about the ebook. In addition, it's somewhat of a numbers game, and ebooks with more reviews appear to be more successful and popular since only a tiny fraction of purchasers will even leave a review.

For this reason, it's a good idea to actually strategize on ways to ask readers to leave reviews. You can do this with every review copy you send out, but you don't just want a bunch of "I got this free; here's what I think" type reviews.

For Easy Homemade, I actually included a note on the download page that asked readers who purchased the PDF version to leave a review at Amazon. You could also include this request inside your ebook (both the PDF and Kindle version). Another idea is to actually send purchasers a thank you gift at

the end of the launch promotion – an extra printable or recipe, a coupon code off other products, etc. – and ask them to leave a review at that point.

You'll still likely only end up with a small number of reviews compared to the actual number of ebooks purchased, but even a few extra can help!

One thing I would not do is pay for reviews. In fact, I'm careful to stress that what I'm looking for are honest reviews which means, yes, both positive and negative reviews. I think it's dishonest to stack the deck, so to speak, with fake positive reviews, and authors have been called out about that type of thing in the past, which ultimately hurts your reputation and isn't really the way I want to do business anyway.

Dealing with Negative Reviews

In the video at the top of the page, I talked more about why and how to prepare yourself for negative reviews, the three different types of negative reviews and how you should respond to those, so you'll want to be sure to watch that!

Other Things to Think About

And finally, here are a few other things to keep in mind as you prepare for your launch:

Amazon KDP-Only Launch

If you're not a blogger or would like to offer your ebook exclusively on Amazon for another reason, your promotion plan is just as important, although it may look a little different, since you won't be able to offer coupon codes like you can with a PDF download.

I'd still recommend coordinating ebook reviews and a blog tour if possible, but there are also other options you can take advantage of:

Offering Your eBook Free

When you sign your ebook up for 3 months with the KDP program, you're eligible to offer your ebook FREE for five days during that period. My personal recommendation would be to strategically schedule these free days and not to run them all at one time. In my experience working with free ebooks, it's better to offer it free for two days than five straight days so that you can create an urgency that pushes it to the top of the bestsellers list quickly but doesn't leave it sitting there for too long. The ultimate goal, after all, is to boost sales not just copies given away.

If at all possible, load your ebook to Amazon before your free promotion and begin soliciting reviews so that it already has reviews when it launches. This will help it gain traction faster than an unreviewed ebook so that you can make the most of that free promotion.

And finally, you'll want to be sure to contact bloggers within your niche as well as freebie bloggers to try to get the promotion shared in as many places as possible. Here's a hint: Be sure to include the dates of your freebie promotion right in the subject line of your email to make it easy for bloggers to see when the promotion is.

Here's a list of free ebook blogs to help you get started:

- [Jungle Deals & Steals](#) (the Amazon deals blog I run with my mom)
- [Pixel of Ink](#)
- [eReader Girl](#)
- [eBooks Habit](#)
- [Inspired Reads](#)
- [Free Book Dude](#)

In addition, you'll find quite a few places to submit your ebook at the [Author Marketing Club](#), which lets you fill out the submission form in a lightbox without ever leaving the site.

Many blogs offer premium, paid listings, and I can't say for sure whether it's worth the cost of paying for those in order to have your ebook listed in more places during your free promotion, but it's something to consider.

Outsourcing Your Promotion

Finally, let's talk about outsourcing your promotion. If the idea of marketing your ebook is exhausting to you, you may want to consider outsourcing these tasks. There are a few ways to do this, but the key is to

make sure you hire someone who is not just going to go through the process without any extra effort or creativity.

If you already have a virtual assistant (VA), and they are interested in marketing and promotion, they may be the perfect person to take over the promotion of your ebooks since they're already part of your team and (hopefully) invested in your success. If that's something you're considering, be sure to have them take this course as well, because it's important that they understand the ebook process and industry in order to do the job effectively.

Another option is to hire a firm to help you with your ebook promotion. I actually don't know of many companies that are offering these services (but feel free to leave your suggestions in the forums if you know of others that should be added to this list!), but Ashley at [Ambient Promotions](#) has established a strong reputation for ebook promotions, so that's one place to start!

From [Crystal Paine](#):

I'm a big fan of delegation. Why? Because I'm only one person and if I get spread too thin, it hurts my family, my health, and my business.

When I first started my blog, I had to do everything — because I couldn't afford to pay for anyone to help me (I was working really hard to try to scrape out a little income as it was!). I learned a lot in those early years, but when I finally was in a place to make the leap to bring on some help, it freed up so much of my time and energy to focus on what I do best and love most — writing, strategy, and big picture brainstorming.

I've found that I'm much more effective and the business is much more profitable if I focus my time and energy on just those few things and bring really smart people on to manage and oversee all the other facets of the business. It allows the business to grow while not taking more time and effort on my part.

When I met Ashley from [AmbientPromotions.com](#), I knew that I wanted to hire her to do my ebook promotion. She had a lot of experience and knowledge into how to market an ebook well on Amazon and she was also a very hard worker — something that I look for in anyone I hire or contract with.

Not only did she help me with actually getting the ebook finished, edited, and formatting, but she and I worked together to create a game plan for my ebook launch. She had so many ideas and suggestions to bring to the table that I never would have come up with on my own. And without a doubt, I know that we've sold many, many more ebooks than I ever would have had I been trying to do it on my own. Best of all, it saved me hours of time — something that was worth every penny.

Would I outsource the marketing in the future? In a heartbeat. In fact, I've got some ebook project plans for the (hopefully) not-too-distant future and I would never even be considering them if I didn't know that I can hire Ashley again.

[Read Crystal's full case study interview here.](#)