By: Marsha Friedman

It's understandable, really. People who have the passion necessary to write a book usually have just one thing on their minds: writing a book. Not marketing a book. Some may think ahead to getting it published, but, tragically, that's where the planning often ends.

I'm not exaggerating when I say "tragically"! I talk to many people who've poured years of effort, money and sacrifice into their books, which wind up sitting in boxes in their garage. They never thought about how they might market their books themselves or budgeted for book promotion services.

When's the best time to start thinking about marketing a book? Ideally, before you even sit down to begin writing. Because — and I speak from experience here — the first step will help in your writing.

Step 1: Ask yourself, "Who is my audience?"

The answer is the first piece of any marketing plan and it can also help you define what you'll write. When I decided to write a book about public relations, I had planned to write it for businesses in general. Then I thought, "That's too broad. Who will my audience really be?"

I decided to write for individual professionals such as doctors, lawyers and financial planners. Not only would that put a face to the people I was writing for, it would also give me the first piece of my marketing plan.

If you want to write a book and you're a financial planner working for baby boomers chugging toward 65, you might write about planning for retirement after age 50. Another audience might be the boomers' kids – adults who may be helping their parents. Depending on the expertise you put in the book, you might find other audiences you can target as well.

Here are the next steps to consider in planning your promotional campaign:

• **What's the best way to reach that audience?** Where will you find the people you expect will be interested in your book? Will you buy advertising, look for speaking engagements, try to whip up interest from the media? You might hire a publicist or contract with your publisher to handle PR, or put together a promotional tour. You'll definitely need a website. Will you build one yourself or hire a pro? Research the options that appeal to you and find out how effective they are in terms of meeting your goals. If you're considering contracting with professionals to help you, get references from people who've had successful marketing experiences.

• **How much will it cost?** Some options are less expensive, others more. Look into the ones that interest you and get an idea of their price. Decide how much you can afford to spend and budget for it. Is there an organization or business that would benefit from sponsoring you? A landscape designer, for instance, might get financial help from a plant nursery or a tools manufacturer in exchange for standing behind a business or product. A chef might find an ally in a food manufacturer.

• **Develop a following online.** Do you have a database of people already interested in what you have to say? If not, turn to social media and start building it now. The more of a following you have, the more potential audience you've created for your marketing message. Big numbers will also turn heads when you try to get speaking engagements or guest spots on radio and TV talk shows. Having a following is everything. The organizations and media that book you for an interview are also hoping all those followers will either buy tickets or stop by their website.

Marketing is too important to be an afterthought, so think about it long before it's time to get started. Yes, I understand the effort that goes into writing a book. I know it's hard to think about anything else! But if you have invested your dreams in that baby, you probably want to share it with the world. And that takes planning.

About Marsha Friedman

Marsha Friedman is a 22-year veteran of the public relations industry. She is the CEO of EMSI Public Relations (www.emsincorporated.com), a national firm that provides PR strategy and

publicity services to corporations, entertainers, authors and professional firms. Marsha is the author of *Celebritize Yourself: The 3-Step Method to Increase Your Visibility and Explode Your Business* and she can also be heard weekly on her Blog Talk Radio Show, EMSI's PR Insider every Thursday at 3:00 PM EST.