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10 Reasons Why People Attend Book Signings

By Catherine Franz

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This is the survey result of 325 people conducted by myself so I can improve at my own book signings. After completing the survey, I saw the wealth of insight it had given me. I felt it was important to share it with a wider audience. I also interspersed some personal experiences.

The survey was conducted by Catherine in-person with people who attended book signings at area bookstores in Northern Virginia metro area between January 2004 and September 2004. A total of 325 people completed the survey.

Here is their response to one of the questions: Why do you go to book signings?

If you are wondering how this can help you in marketing your book. These 10 items are extremely important. They tell what authors need to give to their audience in order to increase their books sales and to connect with the audience. When you know what you audience wants, what they expect, the guessing fades and transforms into a great book signing event.

Here are the top ten responses in answer to the first question:

1. People desire to be acknowledged for taking their time to come -- by you, the store, and others that came. Participants who have either already read the book, come to meet other like-minded people. They have a social intention

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and you need to give it to them. Most book signings don't have any social aspect to them so create one. When you include ways, you will definitely increase sales. People want connection, they don't want to be ignored. Get them to talk to the people around them. Introduce one person you just met to the next person to them. There are many techniques or create some of your own. A seasoned author learned to do this over time. Learn to do it sooner.

2. Curiosity. People are normally curious about authors and how they write, or how they got their book published. Tell them about your journey with all this. For the wanta-

be or gonna-be writers there because their vision includes what you are doing, give them that feedback. It creates immediate connection. Even if they didn't come not to buy your book, usually they will change their mind, just because you settled their curiosity.

3. Entertainment. Yes, you need to be entertaining. People do want that and they stick around (meaning they don't get up and walk out) if they get it. Show energy, use hand gestures, and please stop reading from the page (number one pet peeve). Over and over again, I saw people leave when the author continued to read his presentation from the page. People don't expect perfection. They had a heavy week, or day, and they want some way to lighten it up. Even if your book is a heavy topic, lighten it up. Comical anecdotes about yourself are great!

4. Oh, the old, "what's in it for me" discussion. What are the benefits for them to read the book? Is there some information that will help shift their thinking on anything? Use testimonials, ones that have some meat on their bones. Yes, you may need to make some assumptions on where the audience is at. Go ahead and do that. Create a few that cover a wider perspective and it will deliver to a wider audience.

5. There is nothing wrong with encouraging more sales. Who else might be interested in the book. Their boss, friends, sister, who? Go ahead, give gift ideas. What holidays or events can you tie the book to? Is Christmas, Mother's Day coming up? Tie your topic and the holiday together if you can. Mention the type of people who like to read this sort

of book. No, don't say everyone and anybody. This is sometimes hard for authors because they attach it to "selling." Drum roll...heaven forbid...selling. When an audience is so enthralled in a book and its story, their mind isn't on buying two books. They walk out with one and then when turning page three or five, a flash appears, "Ooops, I should have bought one for my boss." I guarantee you that it is very unlikely they will return to the bookstore to buy another copy at that point.

6. Do some things where you make extra connections with the audience. Just don't sit behind the table. Stand up, shake hands — no limp ones either, and look them directly in the eyes when you ask them, "Who would you like me make this out to?" Ask if they would like another book made out to someone else?

Here's a SECRET tip. It makes a BIG connection. The Japanese do this all the time. Put down the pen. When you hand over the book, hold it cover up facing them with both hands, present it to them slowly, purposely, as if it's worth a million dollars and a very special gift. Look deep into their eyes at the same time (okay this part is different than the Japanese), and say silently in your heart and in your voice, "Thank you." Watch them light up. Of course, smile.

7. As mentioned earlier, audiences come with a hidden agenda — to have a good time. To enjoy themselves. Create that space of joy and lightness for them. Don't think you don't have any control. The store wants you to succeed. Share with them what type of experience you want the audience to have. Ask for recommendations, ask for things that haven't been done before too. Give inspiration in language, in thoughts, and in stories. Stories that pulls the heart strings. If there isn't one in the book, find one.

8. There is nothing wrong with giving away a trinket, toy, item, that comes from one of the characters. Or even it isn't directly and just somewhat related. You don't need to spend lots of money on promotional items. Think. This might require approval by the host store. You will usually find that as long as it usually doesn't cost them anything and it increases book sales, they will encourage it. Give a

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gift if they buy two or three copies. Find a unique magnet, or something funny, something that doesn't cost much but it just adds to the incentive to buy more than one. Sometimes the book store is returning something and can give you a remainder sale price. Ask.

9. You can't say thank you too many times. Remember to smile, say thank you, and be there with a loving and open heart. This creates an attractive energy and pulls people towards you.

10. Share tidbits about how the idea of the book came to you. Did you write 15 minutes a day, a certain word count? Did you get help from others, who? Did you struggle with some part or something? Was there someone there for you that inspired your journey? Please not the spouse comment all the time. To singles this is boring and people said a turnoff. Share tidbits about your childhood. There is a child in all of us. Share your childhood with your audience. Especially funny screw-ups.

Well, I hope you enjoyed learning what audiences want at book signings. This process was definitely an eye-opener for me. It gave me a real taste of people and their expectations. Maybe another future survey would be to get people to tell me why are they leaving early.

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Sick of the Traditional Publishing Path?

By Judy Cullins

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A book coaching client recently emailed me that she was getting sick of traditional publishing because of so many costly requirements and so little payoff. Do you feel the same way?

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Fifteen years ago, I worked hard on a 60–page proposal for a top agent and after a year got "approval" to be his client. Then the kicker, he asked for a \$50,000 retainer to get the book marketing because I was an unknown.

Unknown, yes, but not a fool. A marketing maven for 20 years, I sold 20 self–help books at the back of the room for seminars taught at colleges and other talks. Why would I need to go the traditional route of low attendance book signings, travel to less than prominent spots to market the book at a cost that had to be paid back through royalties.

And royalties? Even selling 10,000 books, with the percentages that book stores, distributors, and agents take, what profit comes to the author?

As an author's advocate, I step out of the traditional box and encourage you talented writers to do so too. You can self–publish without spend \$1000's. You can write a saleable short book and it still will have merit and be readily accepted by your appropriate audience. No one today wants to read long books any more unless they are fiction.

All of this, and you can market and promote from you home office through the Internet. In just 3 1/2 years, online promotion has paid off hugely and brought me over \$3500 a month in sales. Depending on your book and audience, you can too.

Avoid the myths and get real information from a professional book coach of 20 plus years. See the once a month free book and business ezines offered in the signature file below.

Judy Cullins, 20–year book and Internet Marketing Coach, Author of 10 eBooks including "Write your eBook Fast" and "How to Market your Business on the Internet," she offers free help through her 2 monthly ezines, The Book Coach Says...and Business Tip of the Month at [http://www.bookcoaching.com/opt–in.shtml](http://www.bookcoaching.com/opt-in.shtml) and over 140 free articles. Email her at <mailto:Judy@bookcoaching.com>.



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