

HOW TO SELL  
*a*  
BOATLOAD  
OF BOOKS

10 PROVEN STRATEGIES TO  
MAXIMIZE SALES AND GET  
YOUR MESSAGE HEARD



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**E**very author wants to sell a million copies. In fact, speaking as a former publisher, if I had a dollar for every time an author or agent said they thought their book would sell a million copies, I'd be set for life.

When I first started in publishing, it was common to hear insiders say that the average book sold about 5,000 copies. The truth is today that number is a lot lower. It's not uncommon for a book, even from a major publisher, to hit the market and sink without a ripple.

The reason people have inflated hopes about how many copies their book will sell, and the reason so many books sell only a few thousand copies, is the same—the author hasn't thought through what it takes to actually sell a boatload of books.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON MARKETING YOUR BOOK

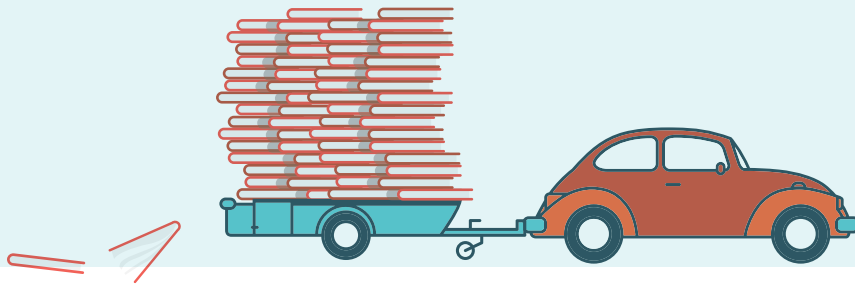
When I was the CEO at Thomas Nelson, one of our A-list authors told me his job was to write the books and our job was to market them. That makes sense on the face of it. But not even A-list authors can afford to think like that any longer, not if they want their book to move.

Here's the reality: Whether you are working with a traditional publisher or self-publishing, the most important person marketing your book is you. I know, that's a lot of responsibility. It can feel daunting—maybe impossible. Where do you even begin?

The good news is that there are at least ten strategies you can follow to maximize your book sales. Whether you are a first-timer or already have a few titles under your belt, these proven strategies can move the needle for you and your next book.

As a former publishing executive with more than thirty years of experience, as a *New York Times* bestselling author myself, as the founder of Platform University, and as a careful observers of what other successful authors do to sell a ton of their books, I can say that these ten strategies work. And they could very well be the difference maker for you and your book. Do you want to sink without a ripple or sell a boatload?

# 1. DRIVE PREORDERS



**B**ookstores and publishers have limited resources, and nobody wants to have their cash tied up in inventory. To solve that problem, everyone has figured out how to move fewer copies faster. We used to say in the business, *stack 'em high and watch 'em fly*. Nowadays it's more like this: *print a few and see what they do*.

Retailers will only buy to the demand. They take a conservative guess upfront and adjust as they need when customers actually start buying. It's not uncommon for Amazon to purchase just a few dozen copies of a book for the launch! To make matters worse, the publisher will only print to the orders they get from retailers. It's like a race to the bottom.

That means if you want to sell a boatload, you have to create demand and drive sales weeks and months before your book hits stores. How? You need a preorder campaign.

The idea is to capture as many sales as possible early on. That way the retailers know you mean business and order a sufficient quantity. When they do that, the publisher will print more copies. And the important thing for you is that you're building sales and promotional momentum before the book is even available.

More and more authors have figured this out and have sold a boatload. Some of my favorite recent examples are [Jeff Walker](#) and [Jon Acuff](#). When Jeff released *Launch*, he had a very targeted presale campaign that generated tens of thousands of preorders, which provided the book a huge boost right out of the gate. Jon followed the same strategy on his books, *Start* and *Do Over*. Both Jeff and Jon were communicating about their books in advance through their email lists and social media to help drive sales well before the book was available on shelves. And both of them landed on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

## 2. CREATE A LANDING PAGE



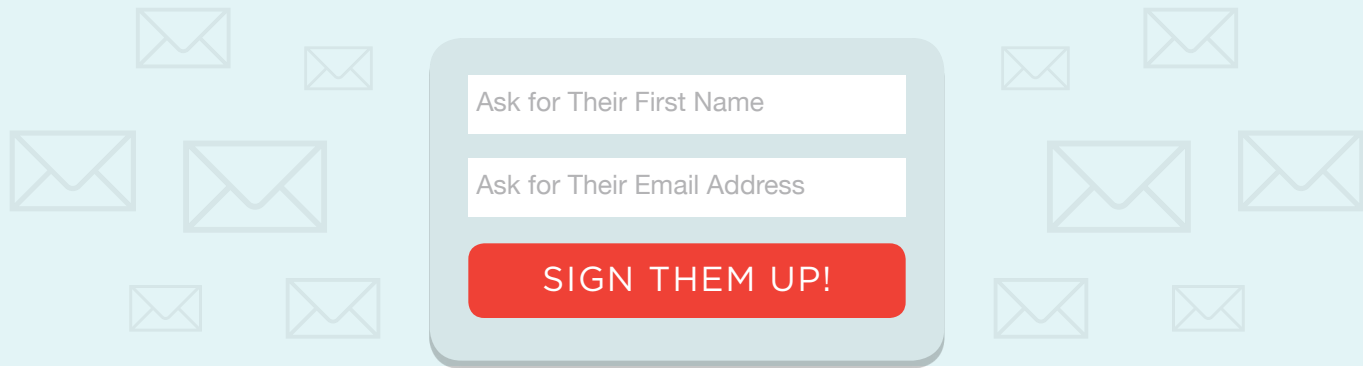
One of the most important ways to drive preorders is to drive traffic to one location where you can control the presentation of your book. This is the message about your message—do you want to leave that to the publisher or retailers when you can do it yourself?

Amazon and other retailers will give potential readers a one-size-fits-all treatment. It's basically the same for every book they sell. A landing page is your chance to personally customize and shape the experience of a potential reader by utilizing high-quality images, video, sales copy, excerpts, blurbs, and more.

You can host this on your blog or create a new site with a URL specific to your book. The important thing is to send everything—your emails, ads, social media links, and so on—to this page. It's also a great place to build your email list because you can offer special downloads and other freebies in exchange for opt-ins.

Some killer examples include: [Tim Ferris](#), [Chris Ducker](#), and [Jefferson Bethke](#). Each of these pages create an experience around the book, while providing all necessary information to get someone to purchase the book.

### 3. USE YOUR EMAIL LIST



One of the things I teach in Platform University is that your email list is one of your most important promotional assets. Here's an example of why that's true.

Whatever its size, your email list consists of people who have already expressed interest in you and your message. If you think in terms of technology, these are your early adopters. Before your book hits the street, you want to let your subscribers know what you're up to so they're ready to move when you need.

Make sure you're growing your email list prior to launch by offering attractive opt-in bonuses or magnets. This can be especially effective for magnets that connect to the message of your book. It's a great way to deliver valuable content that creates interest in your book.

You'll want to communicate about your book to your list as often as you think makes sense—it depends on the expectations of your subscribers. You'll want to tell your list the book is available for preorder (and drive them to your landing page). But you'll want to do more than that. Enroll them in the process. Tell your fans the story of your book, how and why you wrote it. The more invested they are in the story, the more likely they are to get behind the book when it's available.

[Donald Miller](#) did a great job of this for the prelaunch of his book, *Scary Close*. As a result, there was a tremendous amount of intrigue about the book itself the moment it hit shelves. During the last six weeks before release, Donald sent multiple emails with different objectives. He provided sample chapters that weren't available anywhere else for his audience to read. He shared behind-the-scenes stories of his experience writing the book and the challenges he overcame.

This helped the potential reader to feel as if they were having a conversation with him on a couch, not just in their inbox. This was one of the primary driving forces that allowed *Scary Close* to hit the *New York Times* bestseller list for multiple weeks after release.



## 4. GROW YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA



**S**ocial media is a central part of selling a boatload. But to do it, you need the right strategy. For one thing, don't work every platform you can think of. I see people all the time who are draining their efforts in four, five, even six different social media platforms. Resist this temptation, especially at this stage.

Focus on just one or two, and get as familiar, proficient, and influential as you can. To do that it's a good idea to focus on where your audience is already gathering and talking. For instance, if you're targeting a younger female audience, try focusing on Pinterest. Older female? Go Facebook. Millennials? Instagram. Business? LinkedIn and Twitter. But most importantly, go where you're already meeting most of your fans, wherever that is.

Along with sharing useful content and insights, make sure to tease content from your book. Share quotes, memes, stats, and stories. And don't forget to link back to your landing page. When I think of authors that have done a great job of growing (and leveraging) their social media to sell books, I think of [Jeff Goins](#), [Lysa TerKeurst](#), and [Judah Smith](#).




## 5. GATHER A LAUNCH TEAM



**N**obody launches a book solo and succeeds. You need a launch team. By this I mean, you need a core group of early adopters who will also become evangelists for your book. You don't need an army. A small number of dedicated fans is enough to put wind in your sails and help you sell boatloads.

What you're after are people who will take your message, talk it up, spread it out, and raise the awareness you need to launch strong.

The easiest way is to start with your existing fans. Work your email list and favorite social-media channel, and ask for partners to help launch your book. A few pointers:

-  *Be directive.* Ask them to post Amazon reviews, share their thoughts on social media, and so on.
-  *Equip them.* Supply your launch team members with easily sharable memes, sticky quotes, and so on.
-  *Be available.* People will sign on because they believe in you and what you're doing. Give them access. Consider setting up a private group or forum with you. This will not only motivate your team but can provide you useful feedback on your message and the launch.

Blogger and author Jen Hatmaker wrote a [post](#) to invite readers to join her launch team for the August 2015 release of her book, *For The Love*. It's a great example of how to talk about your book and get people excited about helping you spread the word. Jen has a big social media and blog following, but any author can do something similar. It doesn't have to be thousands. A small but eager team will go a long way!

## 6. PACK IN SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS



I love public speaking. I'm not crazy about the travel, but standing in front of an audience who wants to hear what I have to say is empowering. If you're like me, you'll want to take advantage of this at every turn.

First, pack your schedule around launch. Make sure it's coordinated with the publisher's marketing plan if you're going the traditional route; you don't want to be out of pocket if they land you a significant publicity opportunity. But get out and get heard.

Any audience for your speaking is likely a natural book-buying audience. This includes businesses, churches, bookclubs, whatever. They're showing up for you and your message. A book is an easy way for them to memorialize the event. Almost any event will let you sell books onsite. And corporations usually have budgets to buy books for employees; sometimes they'll trade speaking fees for books. The trick is to make a compelling offer for people to buy the book onsite.

Few people I follow do this better than [John Maxwell](#), [Bob Goff](#), and [Gary Vaynerchuk](#).



## 7. LEVERAGE KEY INFLUENCERS



In the old days, any reference to influencers was limited to getting a blurb and hoping for a good review. But you have far more power than that. Today the trick is leveraging those influencers to not only blurb your book, but more importantly to talk it up from their platform.

Some of those influencers may be traditional journalists, experts, or others you have access to. But these days we're also talking about people with social authority: bloggers, social media voices, and so on. Work with your existing relationships and then identify others you'd like to enroll.

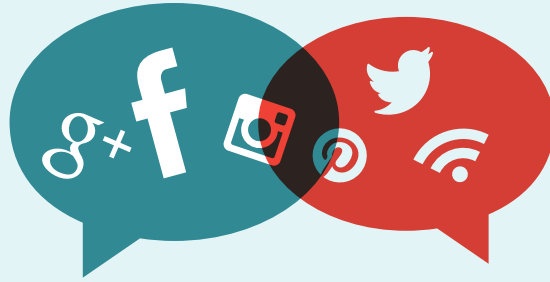
Share your content with them, tell them what you're hoping to do, and then make it easy for them to help you. If it's a cause or a message they agree with, many will be happy to endorse, share announcements, host Q&As, and write reviews. The goal is to make it easy for them.

To do that, create an influencer packet with quotable portions and extracts from your book, prefab memes and quote cards, author and book images, and so on. Create enough variety for them to pick what will work best for their audience or spark their own creativity to work on your behalf.

Also, work with these influencers (or their teams) to schedule stops on a "tour," both real and virtual depending on their platforms. This could include guest posts and articles, Q&As and interviews, in-person events, and more.

Authors I know who have made this strategy really work for them are [Brendon Burchard](#) and [Jeff Goins](#). They have been intentional in making it easy for other influencers in their space to authentically share about them and their books.

## 8. ENGAGE SOCIAL MEDIA



**N**ow that your book is published, you'll want to make the same sorts of materials available to everyone in your audience. Use your landing page or blog to offer sticky statements and quote cards so anyone who latches hold of your message can easily share it. The key is to try to keep the links pointed back to your landing page so you can control the messaging and make the sale.

Other tactics for leveraging social media include:

- Sharing any news or PR article that mentions your book.
- Engaging with your audience for real time feedback as they read the book.
- Strategizing ways to provide value to your social media audience in exchange for their email addresses.

I've seen many authors do this very well. One that stands out in my mind is [Fawn Weaver](#). She drove massive social media engagement around her book, *The Happy Wives Club*, and hit the *New York Times* bestseller list on her first time out the gate.

## 9. INCENTIVIZE PURCHASE



Creating additional value for purchasers of your book is also a proven strategy. This has been a growing trend the last few years because it works. Consider how you can make it worth the while of consumers to buy your book early on with time-sensitive freebies and giveaways.

It could be an extra downloadable chapter they can get if they buy the first week of publication. Other options include: the ebook or audio edition, a digital copy of a previous book you've written, a workbook or discussion guide, an assessment or online course, even a limited number of personal appearances.

The trick is to set a value on the giveaways so people can get a full sense of the prize for purchase and also a deadline for action. It's not uncommon to offer \$100, \$200, even \$300 worth of product for the purchase of a print book. And the deadline is essential because it provokes response. Without a deadline, there's no urgency to purchase and take advantage of the incentives.

This strategy has helped many authors sell boatloads. Some authors who have been especially effective at this strategy include [Jon Acuff](#), [Jefferson Bethke](#), and [Gary Vaynerchuk](#).

## 10. CONSIDER CAUSE-DRIVEN MARKETING

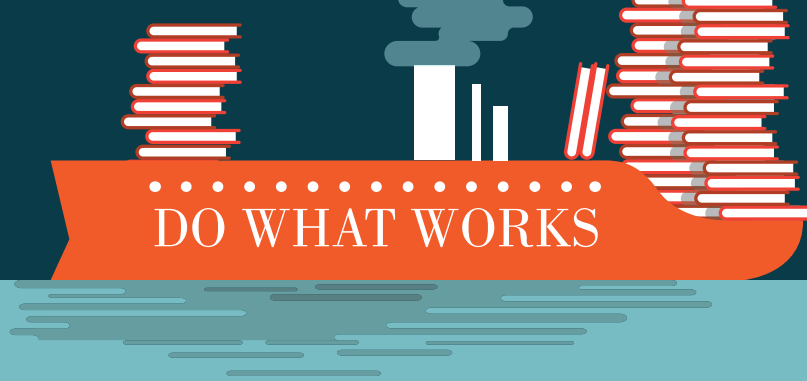


**T**his one is often overlooked, but if you have any connection to a cause that connects to your message, you can position your book to sell boatloads and do good. How?

I know many authors who have contributed portions of their sales to a particular cause. When you do this, you're not just selling your book; you're also enabling people to support a worthy charity, ministry, or other cause.

When [Tony Robbins](#) launched his book, *Money: Master the Game*, he partnered with influencers and others to feed families—and not just a few. What's astonishing is that the marketing effort helped pool resources to give away millions and millions of meals. Generosity is a core part of Tony's message, and the marketing not only helped sell books, it also helped average readers participate in a massive charity drive.

Other authors have done the same thing to sell books and help others. Lysa TerKeurst [did this](#) on her recent release, *The Best Yes*. A specific part of the campaign was to donate all the proceeds for a specific timeframe to support a cause near and dear to her heart in Africa. This created a lot of buzz and made the story more about an opportunity to give back rather than just purchasing a book.



There are a lot of ways to sell books. Some work better than others, and I can say with certainty that these work because I've personally employed most and reaped the rewards.

When I launched *Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World*, I put these strategies in play and not only sold enough to hit the *New York Times* list, but I also ensured my book would be the go-to resource for anybody with something to say or sell. That's what sales can do—get your message heard and create the impact you dream of having.

The important thing to remember is this: Dreams take creativity and effort or they just drift away unfulfilled. If you want to get your message heard, you need a proven plan to sell your book. And these ten strategies are all you need to get started.

## DO YOU HAVE A DREAM OF GETTING YOUR BOOK PUBLISHED?

I'm releasing a brand new video series called [Breaking the Publishing Code](#) just for you. After thirty years in the publishing industry, I want to share how you can demystify the publishing industry, create an irresistible book proposal, and get your message out to the world.

Sign up for my brand new video series [Breaking the Publishing Code](#) to ensure that you get the first video delivered to your inbox.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**M**ichael Hyatt is the former CEO and Chairman of Thomas Nelson Publishers. He has seen every aspect of the publishing world—as an executive, an agent, a marketing director, and as a two-time *New York Times* bestselling author.

Today, his blog receives more than half a million visitors a month.

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