

Selling Books



As an author, I enjoy doing the research and applying it to the stories that my mind creates. With each book I write, I get better at writing. Being an avid reader, I believe I was ahead in the game than a novice author would be by the very nature of absorbing the styles of books I've read. And, of course, my favourite genre is historical fiction.

But then comes the administrative parts of editing, type setting, font decisions, cover design, and on and on. Some of this is best farmed out, like cover design. I am not up to the required digital art skills with my version of Corel PaintShop needed to make a fantastic cover. Those duties I leave to the great talents of Damonza, who have created all three of my covers so far. However, being fairly competent with Microsoft Word, I do all my own interior font and typesetting work after I had spent a few hours of measuring words and margins in several books. I also self-edit my first drafts, but still get three edit passes done by my editor, John Meyer. The great thing about the internet is John lives in North Carolina and Damonza is based in New Zealand. The world is our cyber-oyster.

Administrative work isn't as much fun, but it does result in a feeling of accomplishment when the printed finished product shows up from Amazon.

Then comes the part I don't like at all: selling.

I've never been a salesperson in my career. I've been an excellent wingman, as I like to describe myself. Every good salesperson should have a wingman who knows the product intimately and can explain it to a client clearly. This leaves the salesperson to excel at what he/she does best, sell. I have worked with many an excellent salesperson while in the mining industry who have made use of my talents and went on to close million dollar contracts. Unfortunately, there were more who considered me a threat to their commission (my costs were generally put on them, which was a poor company management policy), giving rise to politics and me being the first out the door when times get tough.

I've never aspired to be a salesperson. It's not in my nature.

I'm an author now. I have no boss to report to, which is nice. I have control over my creativity and my books. And, unfortunately, I have to sell. I know I suck at it because I don't like to be in people's faces. So, off to the internet I went to find out how people sell there. The first thing I found was authors should price their first book free to lead people to their other books. Well, I only had one book at the time, which I had spent a good year and a few thousand dollars getting written, professionally edited and a cover designed. But, I placed *The Locket* on Amazon for a week during its launch for free and 2800 copies were picked up. I thought, *Great! That was easy.* I then priced the ebook at \$2.99. Sales dropped to almost nothing. *At \$2.99!* You can't even get a Starbucks coffee for that.

I know how to research, so off I went to the internet again to find the magic method to move books. As in real life, however, there is no magic. There was that *keep your first book free* note which I ignored. I came to the realization that most of those 2800 copies that went out probably never were read, so the method wouldn't really lead people to any of my future books. I spent about \$400 on a course of Facebook ads, which didn't really tell me anything I didn't already know. This was right around the time Facebook changed its algorithm that limited the range ads could reach unless you paid a bunch of extra money to *boost* them. The money I spent did not give me anywhere near a decent return. Nor did Amazon ads, although *they say* you have to be persistent with the ads over a long period of time for them to work (i.e. a few thousand dollars type period). Yeah, there's a lot on the internet and a lot of it doesn't help. One bright spot seems to be the Book Funnel promos I have been joining. That \$100/yr is actually paying for itself.

I'm hoping this hasn't sounded too much like a rant so far. I just want to make it clear that marketing is hard, I suck at it, and successful marketing on the internet is a crap shoot.

Finally, there's the email list, with all you lovely people. Initially started as another way to sell more books, what this really gave me was another outlet for my creativity. Putting together these blogs and the back stories of my book characters for my email list subscribers has been perhaps second on my list of enjoyable pastimes after writing my main novels. Adding people to my email list has been relatively easy. Engaging you, not so much. As I've said more than once, I suck at sales. But I promised you all a blog once a month and no in-your-face marketing campaigns (like BUY MY BOOKS!!!). I do enjoy writing them, though, and will continue to as long as my list friends continue to click them open. And I love it when a few of you respond with notes of encouragement. It really makes my day.

I'll end here with a big thank you to all of you from this introverted, possibly mildly Asperger-ish (enough to be weird, not enough to be a genius), bagpipe playing author for being part of my writing journey. Also, a big hello to my more recent list additions from the Book Funnel promotion that ended almost two weeks ago. I look forward to continuing to entertain you in the future. If you know anyone really famous who would like to read a good book, please recommend me. Maybe *The Locket* will end up in Oprah's hands one day.

One can dream.