

Introduction

I doubt my experiences are unique. When I first became serious about becoming a published author, I looked to the Internet for support. I soon discovered there was an overwhelming amount of advice online and plenty of it contradicted itself. However, one thing was clear: I had to learn to market myself.

We've all heard the mantra, "you must Tweet; you must Facebook." And, of course, you must blog. Not having a blog these days is tantamount to treason in this new age of author promotion.

So, like the countless numbers of unpublished and published authors, I heeded the call. I descended upon Blogspot and Wordpress (two blogs are better than one, right?). After painstakingly choosing templates, colour schemes, and styles, I cracked my knuckles and entered the brave new world of blogging.

And then I stared at my computer screens wondering what on earth I should do next.

In "No More Blank Screen," I aim to give fiction authors over two hundred blog post ideas, little nudges to get the creative juices flowing. The ideas and questions attempt to cover the full experience spectrum that is encountered along the path to publication and well beyond. Also, many ideas are designed to engage your reader-fans, so that you avoid alienating the non-writers who follow you, too.

Most of the blog suggestions I provide can be addressed in 500 words or less. Some can be stretched out over several days. Still others can be turned into themes, allowing for guest visits, reader discussions, and increased visibility.

While nonfiction authors can use many of the suggestions here, the focus of this book remains with those who write fiction. Blogs for fiction authors tend to be challenging for some. Someone who writes epic fantasy, for example, will have different challenges coming up with topics than someone who writes history textbooks.

Even though I've included nearly a year's worth of blog post ideas, I am in no way suggesting that you blog daily. Some people love blogging and their lifestyles make daily posting easy. Others prefer a couple of times a week. Still other authors struggle to squeak out a

monthly update. Whatever your approach, work with what best suits your schedule, personality, and readers.

Blogging should never become a painful chore.

BLOGGING IDEAS

Talk About Your Characters

Characters can make or break a book. They take on their own life and become creatures that readers wish existed, want to marry, or want to strangle. Good characters invoke visceral emotions from readers.

It's not surprise, then, readers want to know where these "people" came from. Celebrate your characters by talking about them!

1. Think about all of the different characters you've written. How did they arrive in your mind? Are they all alike?
2. Who were your favourite characters to write?
3. Are there certain types of characters you will not, or cannot, write? (I can't write a frilly female for the life of me!)
4. Have you ever worked the same job as one of your characters?
5. Have you job-shadowed someone or interviewed people to make a character more real?
6. Who are your favourite characters from your own works?
7. How about your favourite villains?
8. Have you ever written yourself as the main character of a story?
9. Does one of your characters make a choice that you found difficult to write about?
10. Do you ever include people you know in stories?

Bonus Idea: Do your characters pass the "Smurfette" and the "Bechdel" tests?

The Smurfette Principle is the tendency to have only one female amongst an ensemble of male characters. Also known as the "token girl." (For more information, check out <http://tvtropes.org>).

Bechdel Test (<http://bechdeltest.com>) usually applies to movies but I've found it can often be applied to books as well. The test evaluates if the work in question includes at least two women, who have at least one conversation, about something other than a man or men.

On my blog, I ran several of my published and unpublished works through the tests. This was one of the most popular posts on my blog, representing over 10% of the total visits to my blog in 2010! Not to mention, it really forced me to look at the relationships in my own works.

You, the Author

It took me a long time to use the label "author" to describe myself. I still find it strange. However odd I feel using it, many of my readers see me as one. They want to know more about Krista, the author. Though, I do wonder if they regret their curiosity after the fact. . .

Who you are as an author can shed some light on the types of characters and storylines you write. Not to mention, people love getting to know the person behind the "author" label.

Use these ideas as a starting point to help delve deeper into you as an author.

1. If your career could resemble anyone's, who would it be?
2. Are there any authors who have influenced your own writing?
3. What author(s) does your work resemble (or, at least hope it does)?
4. How have your life experiences influenced your writing?
5. Do you share your work with anyone before it goes to your beta readers/editor?

Bonus idea: Would you rather be the Steven Spielberg or Joss Whedon of the publishing world?

I doubt there is an English-speaking moviegoer who doesn't know the name Steven Spielberg. Joss Whedon, however, might not be recognizable, even if his works have been

elevated to the stuff of cult legend. I wager you've heard of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel, Firefly, Serenity, or Doctor Horrible's Sing-Along Blog.

Is being a household name important to you? Or, would a following of loyal fans who will attend conventions all over the world to discuss your work be more in line with your dreams?