



## Online Marketing Tips

By **R.W. Ridley**, Author of the IPPY Award Winning Young Adult novel *The Takers: Book One of the Oz Chronicles & Dèlon City: Book Two of the Oz Chronicles*

You've done it! You've gone through the publishing process and you have a self-published book that is the next *War and Peace* or *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Pat yourself on the back. Light a cigar. Dream of Gatsby-like parties with the likes of James Patterson, Patricia Cornwell, and Mitch Albom. While you're at it, pack your bags and catch the next flight to Chicago because Oprah has surely booked an entire half-hour on her show just to talk about you and your book. All this and you haven't even started marketing yet.

Marketing? Wait a minute. You're not in marketing. You're a writer. You shouldn't have to go out and peddle your book to the masses. You've got to lock yourself in your office and crank out the next book, right?

The truth is, as a self-published American, you have to fight for everything you get. While some people will be in awe of your accomplishment, others will be critical because you didn't get picked up by a "mainstream" publisher. And, worse, others will never even know you've published a book.

The first step to overcoming these hurdles is to accurately assess the situation. You have a professionally bound, bookstore-quality book that you poured all your heart and soul into, but most brick and mortar stores won't touch it with a ten-foot pole. Why? They have to make a profit, and the odds are greatly stacked against a self-published book by an author nobody has ever heard of with a minuscule marketing budget.

Ten years ago this was a problem. Today, it's merely a bump in the road to success. Today, you literally don't need brick and mortar stores because there are virtual stores like Amazon. You've heard of them, right? Whenever CNN, Fox News, or PBS talk about bestseller lists, they talk about Amazon's sales rankings. It's become their source for gauging the success of a book. Amazon is a retail giant with a penchant for supporting the entrepreneur. In short, Amazon wants your book. Why would you go anywhere else?

Amazon has created a community of book lovers who are open to discovering new talent and offers free tools to help you get noticed in an almost endless sea of books. You can use AmazonConnect to create a blog that can be updated on a whim. You can use "Listmania" lists and "So you'd like to..." guides to showcase your book in "best of" type fashion. You can make search word suggestions to Amazon so they can help

customers discover your book. You can make every word in your book searchable by including your book in the Search Inside! program, and allow customers to get a sample of your writing at the same time. All these tools are designed to help you get discovered and they cost nothing. That's right, they are free. (And, for mere pennies, you can join Amazon's Shorts program to sell your short form work and introduce the masses to your writing.)

As a self-published American, I have found these tools to be invaluable. They have helped me be discovered by hundreds of customers who would otherwise never have found my book. Amazon has leveled the playing field for me and it cost me nothing more than time.

Have I done anything else to market my book besides "working" my Amazon account? Yes. I've done readings, created a website, visited schools, organized signings, given away hundreds of books, entered (and won) competitions for "independently" published books. I've taken advantage of some of the marketing services offered by my self-publishing company, BookSurge. I've begged my friends and family to tell their friends and family about my book. I've done all these things and would do them again. You have to get your name out there every way possible. Just don't overlook the power of your Amazon listing.

Best wishes!