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Co-operative Book Promotion

by Dan Poynter

Book promotion is expensive. The challenges are that books are a low-ticket item (they do not cost much so you have to sell a bunch to pay for the promotion), their subjects are targeted to a small group of people (an individual title is not *needed* by everyone), and there is no recurring consumption (customers do not buy a new copy of the same book every trip to the grocery store). Some savvy publishers are finding the answer to this cost-of-promotion challenge is to join together in mailings, exhibits and even buying advertising space.

Co-operative marketing allows us to lower promotional costs and save valuable time through the sharing of work. By sharing the expenses of promotion with other publishers we all get our messages to the customer more affordably. It is easy to participate in co-operative programs because most of the work is done for us for a fraction of the cost of doing the promotion ourselves. One person (who has done it before) does all the work. You just pay the money and then go on to other projects. Or, you may take in other publishers to share costs in your program.

Fortunately, very few books compete with each other. Since it is rare that a publisher feels threatened by another publisher's product, it is easy to band together with compatible, non-competing products to lower costs, save time and gain more attention in the market place. Even when books do cover the same subject, co-op promotion can be justified on the theory that customers should buy more than one book on a new area they are investigating.

For purpose of illustration, several cooperative marketing programs are described here. It is hoped they will stimulate your imagination so that you will not only take part in some of them but will come up with your own programs.

Mailings

Several publishers have joined to make mailings to special lists. For example, Para Publishing promoted *The Self-Publishing Manual* while sharing the envelope with seven other publishers of books on various aspects of publishing. They rented a Bowker list of 12,000 publishers. Since eight sheets of paper weigh-in at just under the first Bulk Rate increment, there was a tremendous postage savings. A mailing by a single publisher would cost around .55 per piece but when split eight ways, the cost drops to less than seven cents and most of this is for printing your own brochure.

If you find a good list and want to spread your costs, offer the service to other publishers of like books. Look for titles that complement but do not compete with yours. Keep the focus narrow. Make sure the mail house you are using can stuff eight folded flyers and ask if they want Z or letter fold. Equipment varies. Place a good teaser on the envelope. The Postal Service will provide a certificate of mailing when the mailing house makes the drop. It is good practice to send copies of the certificate to your mailing participants to prove the quantity you mailed.

PMA Library mailing. The Publishers Marketing Association mails a flat envelope containing individual book flyers to 2,500 public libraries across the U.S. which have a purchasing budget of \$25,000.00 or more. These are just public libraries and then only those that can afford to buy. Consider the type of library you want: maybe you just want school, medical, or law libraries or maybe you have a regional book and just want New England. Books are more likely to be suitable for public libraries than any others. You may enclose a flyer on one or several books. Cost for participation is \$160 plus your flat (unfolded) brochures. See <http://www.pma-online.org/library.cfm>

PMA Bookstore Newsletter. PMA mails a slick flyer offering 37 different titles to 2,600 independent bookstores. Each book is pictured and has a fifty word description including the publisher's address. Stores may order through regular channels or via PMA with a reply card. Cost of the program is \$160 per title. See http://www.pma-online.org/coopcats_bksllr.cfm

PMA Targeted Mailings. PMA makes periodic mailings for various classifications of books. For example, for cookbooks, a slick brochure offering review copies is being sent to cookbook reviewers and food column editors of national magazines and newspapers. A second mailing soliciting orders is going to gourmet shops and a third mailing will be to bookstores that specialize in food and cookbooks. A total of about 9,000 pieces will be mailed. Each book is pictured and has 100 words of sales copy. Cost of participation is \$160 per title. Future mailings will be for

other target groups such as health and fitness, metaphysical, children's, self-help and travel books. See

http://www.pma-online.org/coopcats_target.cfm

Package Stuffing

Many publishers stuff brochures from other publishers and associations into their packages. For example, here at Para Publishing, we stuff brochures from the U.S. Parachute Association and *Skydiving* magazine in with each parachute book we ship. Every publishing book shipped is accompanied by a brochure from the Publishers Marketing Association. Para Publishing wants to be known as a publishing information center and we find that new publishers are grateful for all the free information. This brochure stuffing builds good will, spreads the word on the subject and makes new and small publishing stronger.

You may wish to trade brochures with other publishers of books on the same subject. It does not hurt to package stuff each other's brochures once you have sold your book to the customer. (After you sell them all you have, why not let them know about other books?)

Some magazines will give you a free subscription for stuffing their brochure into your packages. And there is an added bonus, there is an implied endorsement of your book.

Toll-Free Ordering Number

Some publishers have joined together to share the costs for a staffed 800 telephone number which may be used by customers to order books. This is less-expensive than using an order-taking service.

Co-op Promotion

Books for Review. Six times each year, PMA mails a slick brochure offering 38 different titles to book reviewers at 3,500 major daily newspapers. Each book is displayed in its category along with its picture and a 100-word description. The book reviewers are invited to check off the books they are interested in reviewing on an enclosed reply card. This way, you send review copies only to those reviewers who have requested your books. Cost of the program is \$160 per title. See http://www.pma-online.org/coopcats_bfr.cfm

Book fairs: Book Expo America - BEA (late May, early June); American Library Association - ALA (late June); the Frankfurt Book Fair (late September and October), the London Book Fair (March), Public Library Association - PLA (every other March) and Fall Regional Booksellers

Shows. The Publishers Marketing Association rents blocks of space at these fairs and provides two services to members. Those members with just a few books may display them in the cooperative display area for \$65-\$85 each with quantity discounts for more than three books. A PMA representative staffs the booth and will represent your book for you. All participants are represented in a catalog and orders may be taken at the show for forwarding to you. Those with more books and wishing a greater company identity may take booth space in half-booth increments. This way, all the members are exhibiting in the same area of the trade center. See http://www.pma-online.org/exhibits_pma.cfm

Trade shows. PMA members who wish to staff a booth at specialized trade shows may receive support from PMA. PMA will find other members who wish to participate and will pay for the booth space and pick up much of your air fare and other expenses. The member is responsible for staffing the booth and must agree to show books of other members.

Cooperative advertising. PMA purchases space in *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal* and other trade publications by the page. Members may then purchase individual blocks of space as small as one-twelfth of a page at the full page rate; a considerable savings. For example, the normal one-twelfth page rate in a combined *PW* and *LJ* ad is \$715.00 while one-twelfth of the full page rate is only \$425.00. And, the PMA rate includes typesetting. This is a good example of a way small publishers can compete with the big publishers as all pay the same rate for advertising.

What is next?

Contact the Publishers Marketing Association for a copy of the newsletter. Visit

<http://www.pma-online.org/programs.cfm> See what co-op programs are being offered by the association and by individual member firms. Think about the mailings, exhibits and other programs you might run with participation from other publishers. Also contact Para Publishing for our latest materials on co-op and other promotion ideas. See <http://parapub.com/getpage.cfm?file=resource/promote.html>

By cooperating with other publishers, you add interest and breadth to an offer, save time and money, take advantage of the expertise of the project coordinator and increase the impact of your promotion. Sharing the expenses will allow you to increase the print run, enabling you to reach a wider audience. Co-op promotion makes good sense.

 **Writing periodicals:**

Dan Poynter does not want you to die with a book still inside you. You have the ingredients and he has your recipe. Dan has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. For more help on book writing, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

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Dan Poynter, the Voice of Self-Publishing, has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. Dan is a past vice-president of the Publishers Marketing Association. For more help on book publishing and promoting, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

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 **Professional Speaking periodicals:**

Dan Poynter has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. He is past-chair of NSA's Writer-Publisher PEG and the founder of the PEG newsletter. For more help on book writing, publishing and promoting, see <http://ParaPublishing.com>.

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