

Using Book Promotion Newsletters to Increase Sales

by Mike O'Mary

I ran a small publishing company for seven years and published 13 books, including three *New York Times* Bestsellers, three Hoffer Award Winners, and a book that was optioned for a film. We averaged 6,000 copies sold of each title—including two titles that sold more than 20,000 copies each.

To put those numbers in perspective, I think a Big Five publisher would consider 5,000 copies sold to be “respectable,” and most small publishers would consider that to be a “home run.”

We achieved success without traditional distribution and on a shoestring budget. And one of the keys to our success was using newsletters and websites that promote books.

There are dozens of book promotion newsletters (more than 100 by some counts), and I used many of them as a publisher. In this blog post, I'll tell you why authors should include book promotion newsletters in their marketing plans, and why I launched my own such newsletter, LitNuts, despite the crowded playing field.

The Book Promotion Newsletter Industry

You are probably familiar with some book promotion newsletters. Some of the more prominent ones are BookBub, Bargain Booksy and eReader News Today. And for every prominent newsletter, there are many other smaller ones like Book Basset, the Choosy BookWorm and the Frugal eReader.

Most of these newsletters follow a similar business model in that they are free to subscribers, and authors and publishers pay to have their books featured in the newsletter. The cost to have a book featured in one of these newsletters ranges from as low as \$10 (even less in some cases) to several hundreds or even thousands of dollars (in the case of BookBub).

The newsletters are great for readers. In addition to being free, the newsletters mostly focus on bargains, and everybody loves a bargain.

The only problems from the reader's perspective are (1) the focus on bargains means a limited universe—not every great book is \$2.99 or less, and (2) uneven quality because the only requirement for most newsletters is payment—they are not looking at quality, which means there's a more-than-middling possibility that the 99-cent self-published

“bargain” ebook you just downloaded isn’t worth the time you spent to download it, let alone read it.

There are additional problems from the perspective of the author, including convoluted promotion “packages,” tiered pricing structures, and a maze of sometimes complicated order forms.

Submitting to Book Promotional Newsletters

Another thing that can be complicated from the author’s perspective is coordinating promotions. A lot of times, an author will plan (or “stack”) promotions with multiple newsletters in support of a sale—for example, putting the ebook edition of your book on sale for \$2.99 (or even free) for a few days or a week. You can set up the promotions yourself with each newsletter, but be prepared to spend lots of hours at the computer filling out online order forms.

There are some economical services that will handle submission to multiple book promotion newsletters and websites if you are giving away free copies of an ebook:

- [Taranko1 on Fiverr](#): Will submit free ebooks to multiple promotion services for as little as \$5.
- [Book Marketing Tools](#): Will submit free ebooks to multiple services for \$29.

That said, when it comes to submitting books that are on sale for \$0.99 or more, you’re pretty much on your own. Which is fine...you can do it! It just takes time. But I will tell you about a service that I recently came across called [Book Rank](#), which has two options: 1) “We Build It” Promotion Services, in which they select the book promotion newsletters/websites for you, and 2) “Build Your Own” Promotional Services, in which you tell them which venues you want to use.

I’ve not used Book Rank, and the “We Build It” prices are not cheap. But the “Build Your Own” service looks pretty reasonable. It’s \$50 plus 6.9% of the total cost of the sites you want to submit to. You can choose from 33 book promotion newsletters/sites, and your cost will be \$50 + the total cost of doing a promotion with each newsletter/website + 6.9%. That’s not a bad deal. But you need to know which ones to use.

Which Book Promotion Newsletters to Use?

There's a good list of book newsletter/promotion services on [Reedsy](#) and an even longer one on [Kindlepreneur](#)—but be careful. Many newsletters don't generate enough sales to cover the cost of doing a promotion with them.

Here are a few that I recommend that are likely to generate at least enough sales to pay for the promotion.

- [Bargain Booksy](#): Definitely one of the better ones. Polished newsletter and website. Easy to use order form. \$20-95, depending on genre.
- [Free Kindle Books & Tips](#): Straightforward newsletter run by Michael Gallagher. \$25-100. Links to Amazon only.
- [Hot Zippy](#): Umbrella for four newsletters. Well-established husband-wife operation. \$24 and up, depending on service. Amazon only.
- [Book Basset](#): From the website: "I hand-pick the best freebies available on Amazon.com. I pepper those freebies with a few stories about my anything-but-ordinary life, my kids, my cat and dog, and of course, my chickens and my bees." Feature your book for \$24+.
- [eReader News Today](#): The longest running daily e-book newsletter in the industry. \$40-130, depending on genre and price.
- [Choosy Bookworm](#): Multiple advertising options clearly presented, from \$20-100.
- [Kindle Nation Daily](#): Can generate sales, but has some of the most convoluted (and expensive!) promotion options. If you use KND, go for one of the lower-priced promotions.

And then, of course, there's [BookBub](#). BookBub is expensive, but it gets results. The catch is that you have to *apply* to be featured in their newsletter—and they are very selective. They only accept 10-15% of the books that are submitted to them. Some of that has to do with price; BookBub requires that your book must be discounted to at least 50% off the predominant recent price and your book cannot have been offered for a better price in the recent past. In other words, you essentially need to price your book at the lowest price in its history to have it included in BookBub.

BookBub looks at everything else, too: book cover, professional reviews, online reader reviews, awards, etc. BookBub doesn't give a number, but I tell people you'd better have at least 25 reader reviews averaging 4 stars or more on Amazon or Goodreads before submitting to BookBub (some say 50 reader reviews averaging 4.5 stars).

If you think your book will qualify, submit it to BookBub. Prices range from \$113 (to promote a free ebook to a very small audience) to as much as \$4,000 (to promote an ebook that costs more than \$3 to a large audience). The average price to promote a 99

cent ebook is currently \$600. That's a lot—but you will sell hundreds, if not thousands, of ebooks as a result of doing a promotion with BookBub.

A Different Approach

I decided to create my own book promotion newsletter, LitNuts, with several improvements in mind. One is that we don't solicit or accept book promotions from the Big Five publishers or their ~250 imprints. Our focus is on quality indie books from authors and small publishers. No other newsletter has this focus.

We also go “beyond bargains” in order to bring readers more choices. So while we have plenty of deals, we also feature books across a range of price points, including many new releases and award winners, as well as collections of short stories, essays and poetry—forms of writing that most newsletters exclude simply because collections don't usually sell as well as book-length works.

Finally, we've made things easier for authors and publishers: no convoluted “packages” to analyze, no tiered pricing, just a simple order form and a flat price for all book promotions.

One thing LitNuts has in common with the other newsletters mentioned in this post is a focus on quality. An unprofessional cover or a sloppy description will get you a quick refund. We also take into account reviews (professional and reader), ratings, and awards/recognition.

Parting Advice

Book promotion newsletters are a dynamic component of the overall book industry and should be part of any marketing plan. But as with all things, proceed with caution. Readers need to be wary of the disproportionate focus on “bargains” that may not be bargains at all, and authors need to do their homework on which newsletters actually get results and which ones are just taking your money.

Ideally, the book promotions will generate enough sales to at least pay for themselves. But even if an author just breaks even on a promotion, you can regard that as a “win.” You got your book into the hands of more readers, which should lead to more online reader reviews (worth their weight in gold) and more word-of-mouth marketing (the Holy Grail of book publishing).



Mike O'Mary is co-founder of LitNuts, a newsletter focused on books from independent authors and publishers. For more information, visit LitNuts.com.