

# How to Outsell a *New York Times* Bestseller Without Breaking the Bank

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This seminar will present a road map of the basic actions a writer or publisher needs to do to create a bestseller. One of the greatest mistakes a writer can make is to think that everything needs to be done in the first week of a new book launch. Publishing a book is a lot like having a baby and raising a child. You have to work on the publication every day and build it step-by-step to maturity.

## **1. Start locally and let it build.**

*The One-Minute Manager* was self-published and became a San Diego success because the writers wanted a certain format but the publishers refused.

Joanna Lund, an Iowa housewife/secretary that saw her son go to war, decided to lose weight so she'd be alive when her boy came home. She lost 120 pounds with recipes she created. She then sold 30,000 copies in Iowa alone. Penguin picked it up. For many years, she was the bestselling author on the QVC home shopping channel.

## **2. The second way to roll out a bestseller is to do it city by city.**

The children's book *Old Turtle* was done that way. The publisher hired a publicist to organize a tour of one major city for one week every month. The author drove to the city in a Volkswagon Beetle decorated like an old turtle. The author did dozens of interviews, bookstore talks and signings, school appearances, and more. Voted by booksellers as a favorite book to hand-sell, *Old Turtle* hit the bestseller list and sold a few million copies.

That's a good strategy, city by city, and you can do it without a big budget. You can do it cheaper if you work with family members, etc, and can write off all your visits to those cities.

James Redfield originally self-published *The Celestine Prophecy* and drove from city to city doing publicity, speaking, and selling thousands and thousands of books. After a year of self-promotion, he sold the rights to a large New York publisher - and the book was soon a *New York Times* bestseller.

### **3. Build slowly. Do it over several years.**

Sandra Martz self-published and sold 4 million copies of *When I Am an Old Woman, I Shall Wear Purple*, a collection of short stories and women's poems. Sandra marketed the book to middle-age women via book talks, speaking, networking, and publicity. Two years after the book was published, it hit the *New York Times* bestseller list and stayed there for many months.

Greg Godek self-published *1001 Ways to Be Romantic* and spent \$25,000 a month marketing the book little by little. He was soon selling 50,000 copies every month.

If there is one key market for your book, work on it. Send the people in that market something every day. People become more aware during repeated exposure to you.

### **4. Get out there and speak.**

This is especially true for new age, self-help, romance, business, how-to, and religious titles. 95% of the *New York Times* bestsellers in these categories gained a lot of their sales momentum from the authors speaking over and over again.

Examples: *The Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, *Conversations with God*, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, etc.

Read the newspaper of the towns you go to, that will give you ideas as to how to best sell books in that town. Libraries will pay to have you speak. Some authors make more money speaking vs. book sales. Workshops, speaking engagements, professional associations, etc., create lots of opportunities to sell a book.

### **5. The packaging and branding of the book is important!**

Some books you pick up and don't let go; it's hard to describe why but the phenomenon is very real. You have to try to do that: does the

book “feel right?” The cover design, title, content, and interior design are all important in creating a bestseller.

Examples: *Girlfriends*, the *Mars/Venus* books, *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, and *Worst Case Scenario Handbook*.

The *Mars/Venus* books did better when John Gray stayed with his new brand.

*Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*  
*Mars and Venus in the Bedroom*  
*Mars and Venus in the Boardroom*  
*Mars and Venus Together Forever*  
*Venus on Fire, Mars on Ice: Hormonal Balance -  
The Key to Life, Love and Energy*  
*The Mars and Venus Diet and Exercise Solution*  
*Why Mars and Venus Collide*

*What Your Mother Couldn't Tell You and Your Father Didn't Know*

## **6. Timing is everything.**

Smaller publishers can get a jump on most new market trends. *The Beanie Baby Handbook* was a bestseller by a small publisher. The bigger publishers came in and couldn't do a better job. The self-publishers were the first to come out with a book on Beanie Babies and then kept their book so updated that no other publisher could compete.

*50 Simple Ways to Save the Earth* beat the 20th anniversary of Earth Day by 6 months. The self-publishers did it early and had the only books available when the media wanted to write about it. They got a lot of coverage. If you're going for a significant date, get it done early.

## **7. Pick a perennial topic.**

If you want the topic to be current 10 years from now, pick a perennial topic.

*The Microwave Cookbook* has sold over 1 million books. Every time the self-publisher had to go back to press, she printed 50,000 more copies.

Other examples: *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, *1,001 Ways to Be Romantic*, *The Joy of Cooking*, *The Small-Time Operator*, etc.

## **8. Use the Internet to create word of mouth.**

If you have a novel, one of the best ways to promote it is to put the text on the net. Give away content to get word of mouth.

Other Internet keys: viral marketing, email newsletters, search engine positioning, video marketing, online article submissions, social networks, knowledge sites, blogging, guest blogging, blog tours, podcasting, Facebook fan pages, iPhone apps, and more.

Seth Godin gave away ebook copies of *Unleashing the Ideavirus*. By the time he was ready to publish a print version of the book, he had give away half a million copies with the help of a lot of online friends. When he published the book, it flew up the bestseller lists within days.

## **9. Work with bookstores to sell more books.**

Buy up-front space or end-cap display space in the chains. The chains won't sell it to you unless the book will succeed there. Learn how to make use of in-store merchandising to sell more books, especially with the chains. Also bookstore catalogs, newsletters, etc.

## **10. Sell to corporations and associations.**

Corporate sales are the easiest way to sell thousands of books at a time. But it takes time to set up and make the sales to corporations (many layers of decision making). Sell premiums, membership bonuses, sales incentives, corporate gifts, catalog sales, etc.

## **11. Keep knocking.**

Develop your Kremer 100 list and work it every month. Build relationships. Do something every day for the books you love.