Website Tips for Non-Fiction Authors

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Author websites are a great way for introducing audiences to you and your book(s) and enabling different ways for you to interact with potential readers, fans, reviewers, media, etc. It's your base to let people know more about you and your work, and how you like to communicate—blog, newsletter, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Goodreads, etc.

While some viewers may be interested in you, audiences need valuable content in order to stick around. What's in it for them? Know who your readers are and what they want. Ideally, you want people to share your website's content, comment on your work and book, and come back for more.

We recommend you visit websites/blogs of your favorite non-fiction authors, especially ones covering similar subject matter. You don't have to reinvent the wheel! Sometimes if you are too creative, it may be confusing to audiences used to looking at standard categories of information. When someone visits an author website, they are looking to learn more about your ideas, solutions, news, and topics related to you and your book.

You can be flexible with how you organize these elements, but here are some features to consider adding to your author website:

Make it easy for people to buy your book
- Showcase your book cover on the home page, offering links to retail sites (Amazon, B&N, IndieBound, etc.).
- Let readers know all the formats available (hardcover, paperback, ebook, audiobook).
- Ideally your purchasing links should be on every page, even if small
- Offer contact information on bulk purchase options; this is especially important if you are a speaker.

About the Book/Bonus Material
- Sample chapters, table of contents, and/or introductions are KEY to attracting interest in a book.
- Testimonials, professional reviews and reader reviews are great to give your book credibility and help potential readers learn more about your book.
- Bonus information is great for giving people a reason to visit your website. Examples include white paper or article downloads, blogs, podcasts, author interviews, research reports related to your book, worksheets, case studies, links to articles and interviews, etc.

About the Author
- Add your bio—some people have a long and short version. Include your professional and educational backgrounds, add humor and any personal hobbies and passions. People like to connect with people. Let your personality, voice and writing shine. The "About the Author" section is one of the most popular pages on an author website.

- If you are available for speaking engagements, add information about the topics you speak about, and who to contact! If speaking engagements are a serious goal, then add a tab about speaking, offer links to short (less than two minutes) and long videos of you speaking, topics you can speak about and contact information
- Consider including a headshot of yourself as well so visitors can put a face to the name!

Media
- Add press releases and offer them as downloads.
- Add your book covers to download (high resolution and low resolution options), your photo (high resolution and low resolution options). Online outlets/bloggers use low resolution for faster download speed. Print media use high resolution for higher quality printing.
- Add your publicity contact information, email and telephone. If you are not working with a publicist, still offer a contact name, email, and telephone. You want to make it as easy as possible for people to reach you.
- Add links to media placements and reviews as they come in.

Appearances and Events
- Let people know where you will be! Add photos and feedback from events. Invite people to sign up for news on upcoming appearances.

Newsletter/Alerts
- Email address of people interested in your topic is your number one asset. Your website should be set up to allow you to capture the details of your visitors (ask them to sign up for a newsletter) to build a direct and long-term valuable relationship. Newsletter can include tips/news/content about your experts, which can also include news about your next project, media appearances or events.
- Use a service like AWeber, ConstantContact, MailChimp, and iContact to help you look professional and easily manage email addresses/opt outs.

Selling the Book Yourself
- Some authors choose to sell books from their website (which, if you are self published, will make you more money). If you do set up a way for people to buy your book directly from you, using PayPal for example, give them incentive, perhaps with an autographed copy, extra chapter, worksheet, etc. Note: It is very hard to entice "strangers" to purchase a book from an unknown retailer.
- Mention if any of your book's profits are going to charity

Social Media
- Add icons of all the places you are active on social media. This will encourage audiences to follow you on the platform of their choosing. Remember, if you are offering a social media platform, you need to be regularly active on it.

Blogs
- A blog is a great way to show audiences your personality, provide insights into your area of expertise, comment on news trends, share opinions about other books, (hopefully

mostly positive). Fresh content—some say weekly or more—is key to a successful blog.

- Blog posts don't have to be long, even 200 to 300 words is great.
- Set an editorial calendar for yourself based on awareness months, seasonality, industry events and write a "bunch" of posts in one sitting. Then, when you have this foundation, you can more easily write and add more spontaneous posts.
- Industry statistic: websites with blogs receive 55% more traffic.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- If you are serious about being known for a specific topic, consider hiring a person or company who can help you add key phrases to add to your website and other tasks such as registering your website with different search engines to increase your organic search results—or, in other words, how high your website is listed in unpaid search results. Tips on making your website visible to Google can be found here.

More on Author Websites
- Don't be tempted to use a free website. With low quality graphics and bad ads, it's a turn off to viewers.
- Less is more. Busy fonts, too much text, flashing graphics and slow loading pages are sure ways to discourage people to stay on your website or blog.
- Depending on your genre and audience, offer puzzles, quizzes and other fun interactive content to engage viewers.
- Add photographs and illustrations related to your book and topic.
- Videos of you talking about solutions, ideas and trends related to your topic are an excellent way to communicate with audiences. Typically, they are under two minutes. If longer, offer a short and long version. These are great for to help SEO.
- Podcasts and links to interviews give audiences another way to get to know you and your work.
- Check your site on a regular basis to ensure it's not outdated. Sites that haven't been updated or have wrong dates, etc., can turn visitors off. You may want to consider setting calendar alerts for yourself to remind you to check your page.