

Build Your Tribe of Influence

Several years ago, I was part of a big book launch for one of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul*® books. It was held in Sacramento, and we received a ton of media coverage on the morning of the event. The local morning news show and several radio stations interviewed us and promoted the event to our community.

We arrived at Barnes and Noble just before they opened and were excited to find our table just steps inside the front door. It was prime real estate and we were ready for the big day!



One of the book contributors was Shari Fitzpatrick, founder of Shari's Berries. She brought luscious chocolate covered strawberries for visitors to enjoy.

While the picture you see here looks like we're busy, the truth is that we weren't—at least not after all the free chocolate covered berries were gone. The shopper on the right is a friend of one of the contributors, and the shopper on the left is my mom.

Despite all that phenomenal media coverage we had, the berries were the hit of the day, not the books. Shoppers greeted us and thanked us for their treats, but the vast majority left without purchasing a single copy. After three hours, guess how many copies we sold? We sold just 11 books.

That was the day I swore I'd never do another book signing event.

How many books do you want to sell?

Book signing events at bookstores are a popular way many authors seek to sell books. And while you can certainly schedule events at retailers across the country, there's a harsh reality you will likely face along the way.... Most book signing events for unknown authors generate just a handful of book sales. They also require a ton of time and effort. (As a former bookstore owner and fellow writer, I speak from experience.)



Unless you promote your book signing event and drive people through the doors, you will likely discover that these events are a big waste of time. In fact, there's a good chance you'll spend more time helping customers find the bathroom than you will actually making sales. (Sad, but true!)

While it may sound fun and glamorous to sit in a bookstore autographing books, most authors quickly learn that's not the case. What's worse is that an event like this focuses on selling just one copy of your book at a time. And it takes a lot of effort to generate each sale.

Would you rather sell a single copy or many copies?

Making the shift to selling larger quantities of books involves building a community of people (your tribe) who can't wait to buy your next book, and the one after that. Your tribe can consist of all kinds of people—those who've attended your presentations, follow you on social media, read your blog, subscribe to your newsletter, listen to your podcast, or follow your YouTube channel. These are fans who will stay with you for the long haul.

So, instead of spending your Saturday driving to and from a store, sitting at a table, and hoping for a handful of book sales, *consider investing those five or more hours into cultivating your tribe*. Over time, your audience will grow and you can build a lucrative, satisfying, and long-lasting author career.

Now let's talk about how to get started...

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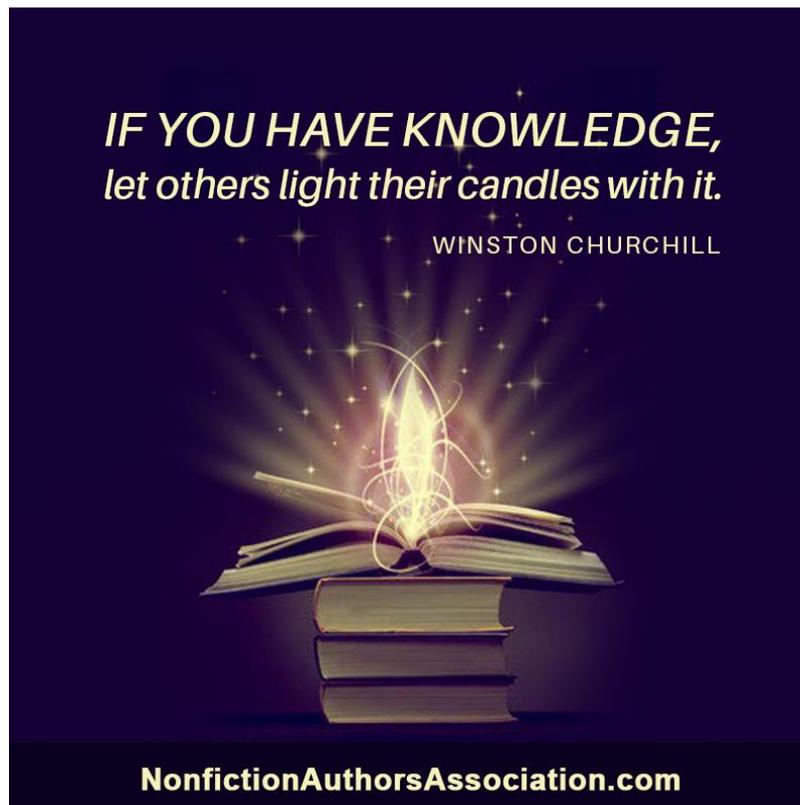
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Find Your Tribe

For an author, having a platform means that you have an audience of people who want to buy your books, as well as any related products or services that you offer. Nobody is born with a platform; it's something that you must build.

**Here's some good news:
Your platform is probably bigger than you think.**

The fact is that you know more people than you realize, and when you spend time digging into your contacts, you might just strike gold. Your Tribe of Influence starts with people you already know—people who can help you spread the word about your books. They may also help you build your author business in ways you haven't yet imagined.



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Ways Your Tribe of Influence Can Help

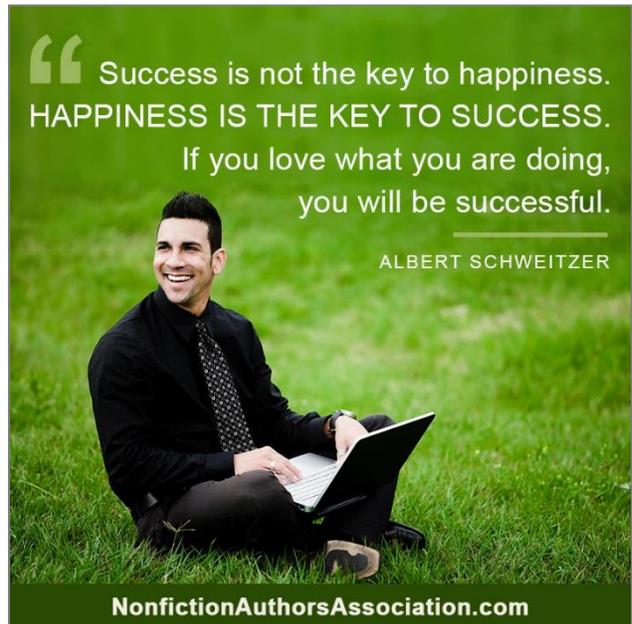
- ❖ **Book Sales:** Purchase copies of your book during your launch campaign.
 - ❖ **Endorsements:** Well-known authors in your genre can provide testimonials for your book cover, or contribute a foreword.
 - ❖ **Reviews:** Post reviews on Amazon, Goodreads, BN.com, etc.
 - ❖ **Beta Reader Support:** Provide editorial feedback, reviews, and promotion support.
 - ❖ **Industry Promotion:** Recommend your book in an industry blog, newsletter, or print publication.
- 
- ❖ **Guest Blog Posts:** Publish guest blog posts or book excerpts that you provide.
 - ❖ **Social Media:** Share book promotion messages across social media platforms.
 - ❖ **Podcast:** Feature you on an industry podcast, teleseminar, or webinar event.
 - ❖ **Speaking Opportunities:** Invite you to speak at a meeting, event, or conference.
 - ❖ **Bulk Sales:** Buy copies of your book in bulk to distribute to event attendees, staff, etc.
 - ❖ **Sponsorship:** Contribute to your book tour or campaign by donating funds or in-kind items, such as printing services or banners, in exchange for promotion.
 - ❖ **Connections and Introductions:** In addition to asking your tribe for the above support, you can also ask them, “*Who do you know who can help?*” Perhaps a former client has a great connection with a trade association, nonprofit, or an event planner for an upcoming conference. You’ll never know unless you ask!

Identify Your Tribe of Influence

When I consult with new nonfiction authors, one of the first homework tasks I assign is to build a list of their tribe of influence. This is important whether you already have a platform or not, because you might be surprised by how many people you know who can help support your book and your overall author-career goals.

Consider the following people:

- ❖ **Friends and family** – These shouldn't be your main review sources because you want your book reviews to come from objective readers. However, your closest family and friends may be able to connect you with people who can help you accomplish your goals.
- ❖ **Fellow authors** – Authors in your industry who have a large platform can have a big impact on book sales simply by recommending your book to their tribe via social media or their own email lists.
- ❖ **Influencers in your target industry** – This includes bloggers, podcast hosts, YouTubers, and social media stars.
- ❖ **Trade association leaders and members** – Trade associations that reach your target audience can be a powerful place to build your tribe. Do you know someone who can recommend you as a speaker at an annual conference or a monthly meeting? Or help you contribute guest content to the association blog or newsletter?
- ❖ **Online groups** – If you participate in groups that reach your target readers, ask the group owner if you can share book announcements or invite beta readers from the group. Facebook and LinkedIn groups that focus on your niche can be a fantastic place to build your readership.



- ❖ **Current and past coworkers** – Perhaps you worked with someone ten years ago who now organizes big corporate events or is a leader in your industry.
- ❖ **Current and past clients** – If someone has already enjoyed working with you in some way, they will likely be glad to support your new book launch.
- ❖ **Past readers** – Readers who liked your previous book(s), they will certainly be interested in your next one!
- ❖ **Social media followers** – This is one of the many reasons why authors should build a social media following. Think of this as a way to cultivate your author tribe and build relationships with raving fans.
- ❖ **Email list subscribers** – If you're not yet building an email list, you should be. This is hands down one of the best marketing tools you can have. Social media is passive and time-based, but email lands in the recipients' inboxes and is far more likely to be read.
- ❖ **Corporate and nonprofit contacts** – Who do you know at corporations or nonprofits that could connect you with speaking opportunities, consulting opportunities, or bulk book sales?
- ❖ **Media pros** – This includes journalists, reporters, editors, and producers on a local or national level, and those who cover topics related to your book.

Who do you know?

TRIBE OF INFLUENCE



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Build Your Lists of Tribe Members

Spend some quiet time brainstorming lists of people you can contact and ask for support. Your lists may include the following categories:

Review copy recipients and beta readers:

- Industry influencers
- Mailing list subscribers
- Past readers
- Clients, peers, family, and friends
- Members of online groups
- Members or trade associations
- Media professionals
- Book reviewers
- Book review sites
- Trade association staff
- Any person or company mentioned in your book



Book endorsements:

- Authors in your genre, including competitors
- Celebrities
- Corporate executives and other top professionals in your industry

Industry influencers who reach your target audience:

- Bloggers
- Podcasters
- Fellow authors
- YouTubers
- Association executives
- Social media stars

Media Pros:

- Reporters
- Editors
- Producers
- Hosts
- Local and national media outlets
- Industry-specific media outlets
(trade publications)



Groups where your target readers spend time:

- Trade associations
- Alumni groups
- Meetup groups
- Online groups (Facebook, LinkedIn, other forums)
- Nonprofits
- Sports organizations
- Religious/spiritual organizations

Connections to speaking engagement opportunities:

- Association executives
- Association board members or volunteers
- Event planners
- Corporate contacts
- Trade show organizers

Potential sponsors and bulk buyers:

- Corporations
- Nonprofits
- Trade associations
- Past clients

- Current clients
- Schools
- Spiritual organizations

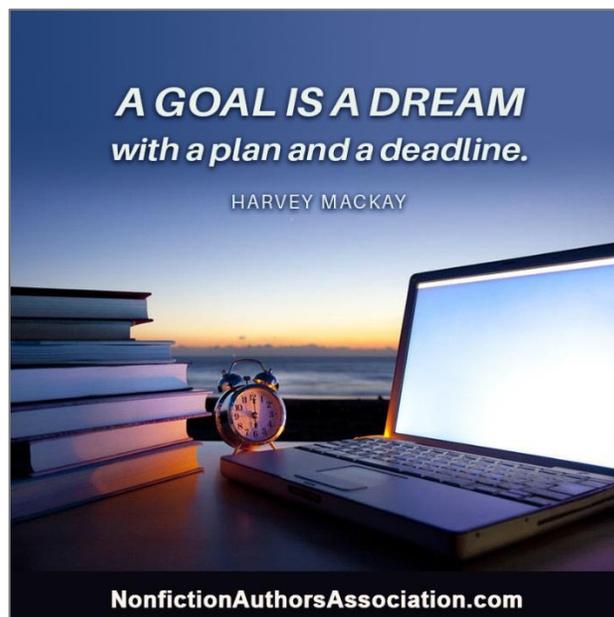
By the way, you don't have to know everyone on your list yet. Your list can include people you'd *like to know*, such as influential authors in your industry or event planners for a big conference where you'd like to speak.

You can download a pre-formatted spreadsheet to begin building your lists here:

<http://bit.ly/tribespreadsheet>

Once you populate your lists, your next step is to begin reaching out. Some people on your list should be contacted individually, while others can be contacted in groups. For example, you could reach out to members of an online forum you belong to and ask them to join your beta reader team. Or, you might reach out to a past client who works for a local nonprofit and ask for help getting booked as a speaker at their next meeting.

**Remember this: People you know WANT to support you.
Sometimes all you have to do is ask.**



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- Meet-the-Members program where you can share your book announcement with our email list, blog, and social media community.
- Discounts off our year-round [Nonfiction Book Awards](#) program, [author toolkits](#), and online courses.
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- Discounts with NFAA partners including Lulu, IngramSpark, Office Depot, PR Newswire, and more.

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