



Developing an Online Presence for Authors

“Digital real estate for your side hustle”

Who are we?

- The Writers Cooperative of the Pacific Northwest
- A collaborative group of professional, independent writers
- Work together to effectively market ourselves digitally
- Development of an on-line presence as a group and individually
- Focus on physical creation of books
- www.writers-coop.com

From a Hobby to a Business

- Business Mindset
- Taking your **hobby** (writing) and turning it into a **business** (Author)
- Running a business and marketing can be **harder than writing a book**
- Traditional Authors **still need to market** and sell their books
- Independent or small press publishers need to be a “**One Man Band**”

From the Lab to the Retail Shelves

- **Quality is king.** The struggle is getting your manuscript to a publishable work.
- **Editing** (learning to write effective stories). Do you understand story craft? Do you study story craft?
- **Clean manuscripts** by leveraging friends, professionals, and your community. Costly (**\$500-\$5000**).
- Do not think that one person looking at your work and you **self-editing is OK. OK?**
- You will “**miss**” something in your book no matter how hard you work and \$\$ you spend. Do don't let that paralyze you.
- Don't get lost in the “**I'll edit my book one more time and then it will be perfect**” cycle. Highly likely you are not Hemingway, Hughes, Lee, or Faulkner.
- Write, edit, publish, write, edit, publish. Get into the publishing cycle.

Key Takeaways

- The base level technologies you need to be successful
- Simple techniques every author business needs to build a community
- Beginner Marketing Theory
- Focusing your writing business around Conversion Rate, Driving Traffic, and Writing Fast (with quality)

'Digital Infrastructure'

The four things you need to start your *traditional or independent* author career

- **Website**
- Email list (Mailchimp/Mailerlite)
- Lead Magnet (driving subscribers to your email list)
- Facebook Page

Digital Real Estate is your Home

Do I need to pay a web development company \$3000 to build and host my website? NO!

- **Free route:** Wordpress, Blogspot, Weebly, Facebook, etc
- **Paid Hosting** with Prebuilt Template: Weebly, Wix, Squarespace (~\$80-100 per year)
- **Do it yourself**, URL + Hosting + Wordpress (\$80-150 per year)
 - Bluehost, GoDaddy, etc
 - Free or paid Wordpress themes
- **Which one to choose?** Gauge your technical skills and how specific you are in your creative endeavor.

Which one to choose?



- Gauge your technical skills and willingness to learn
- Are you a control freak for design?
- Are you a perfectionist?
- Suggestion is go the free route for new authors (wordpress or **weebly**)
 - **Most authors never get past 1-3 books.**
 - Do not commit large amounts of money unless you are committed to building your catalogue for the **long haul**

Where do I start? Weebly

- www.weebly.com
- Create free account
 - www.yoursite.weebly.com
 - Offers the best themes for author websites.
- Both allow upgrades
- Can upgrade when you grow
 - www.yoursite.com
- Great place to test and explore

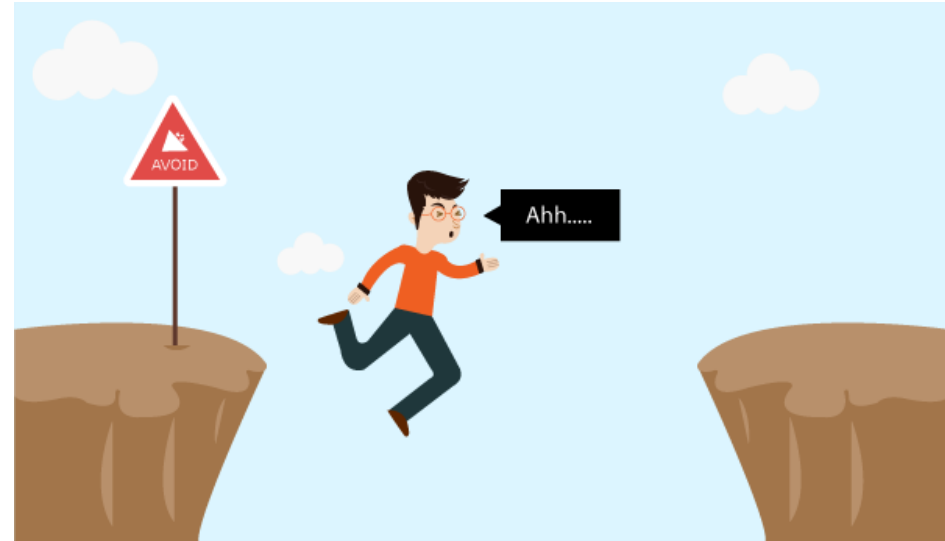
Free	Starter	Pro	Business
Basic Use	Personal Use	Groups & Organizations	Small Businesses & Stores
\$0	\$8/mo (when paid annually)	\$12/mo (when paid annually)	\$25/mo (when paid annually)

Key Requirement for an Author Web Page

- Email opt-in for your mailing list (**The Hook**)
- Showcase your portfolio (**Books, Writing**)
- **Connecting** to you
 - Email, social media, bio
- Blog (**very optional**)
 - Blogging is difficult for many reasons (commitment, time sink, focusing on writing books instead, etc)

Pitfalls

- Too many fonts
- Too many colors
- Confusing design
- Too many nested pages
- Buried content
- Hard to find the things I want to see



Keys to a successful web page

The goal of your web page is to get the user to perform an action

- Most webpages place all necessary information on the front page
- Lead magnet up front
- High resolution images
- Easy buttons to buy your books
- Be judicious

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Why does everyone talk about “Your List”

Why an email list?

- Mailing Lists are **the most powerful tools we have**
- Book sellers do not share customer contact info
- **Email is personal**
- Supports: **Reviews generation, Launching, Sales**
- Every successful indie published author says **“Build your list”**

“Email is a critical part of how I connect with my audience, as well as how I make income, because once you have a list of people who have opted in to hear about your work, then you can tell them when you have books and products available.” - Joanna Penn

What providers are out there?

- ConvertKit - \$29 per month
- Aweber - \$19 per month
- Infusionsoft - *if you are making enough \$\$\$ for this, then you should be giving this talk.*
- Gmail/Spreadsheets - Free, but will pick up as spam and it's illegal in some countries
- **Mailchimp/Mailerlite - Free! No spam issues.**



Mailchimp/Mailerlite are Free (to start)

- Mailchimp is **Free up to 2000 subscribers** or 12,000 monthly emails.
- Mailerlite is **free up to 1000 subscribers** and overall cheaper than Mailchimp
- Will not be picked up by spam filters (immediately)
- Widely used and lots of online help content (youtube, tutorials, web posts, etc)
- Send emails to your lists
- Automatic sign ups (Web and Embedded Forms)
- Deliver free content (lead magnets, opt in giveaways, etc)
- Build sublists (advanced)

Opt-in Forms/ Web Links

- **Each list** has its own opt-ins
- Emails can be added manually or automatically, **automatically is best**
- Can be embedded in emails
- Facebook links
- Webpages
- Blog posts
- Types of forms:
 - Embedded forms
 - **free landing page for every list**

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Lead Magnet

- Something to give away for **free** to get an **email address**
 - Book, novella, short stories, first book in a series, first four chapters, etc
- **Value for value** (Free item for an email)
- No one wants your ramblings, they want to taste the soup.
- It is expected to give away something for **free**



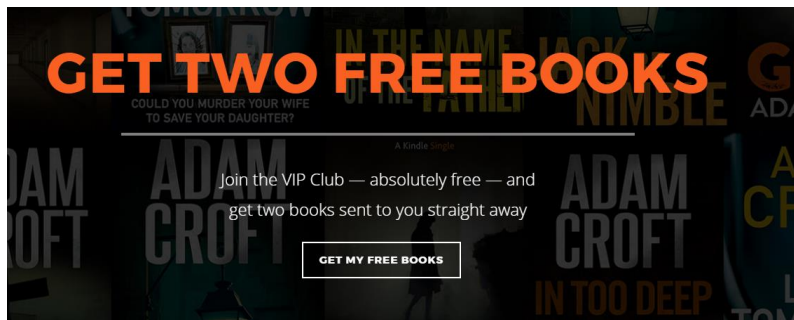
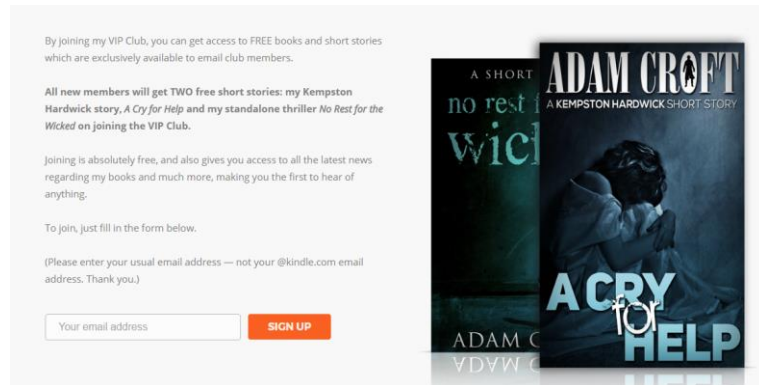
Mindset Shift - Lead Magnets



- “I want to make money not give stuff away for free”
 - **Old way of thinking.** You do not need to give away the farm.
 - The digital ebook revolution has changed what is **expected**. YOU have to come to grips with this else you’ll be battling uphill the entire way
- There are **millions and millions and millions** of digital readers out there
- The people signing up to your mailing list will be your **‘team’** that helps drive your author business
 - New Readers
 - Sales, reviews, etc

Where do I advertise my lead magnet?

- **Top** portion of your web page, first thing readers see
- Social Media **Links** (Facebook, Twitter)
- **Front and back** material of your book
- Custom Landing pages



Delivering the Lead Magnet

- **Final Welcome Email** from Mailchimp/Mailerlite
 - Provide a LINK to the user to download
- Direct link to Zip File (Booooooooo!!!)
 - Lots of tech problems from readers
 - “What’s a zip file” (I’m not kidding you.)
- **Instafreebie (preferred)**
 - Free plan allows you to create a private giveaway
- **Bookfunnel (preferred)**
 - \$99 a year and provides good support for readers



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Facebook

- The monster in the room. **2.07 Billion active users.**
- Constantly **changing**. No longer cat photos.
 - Get comfortable with **video-newest trend**. YouTube's biggest contender
- Be sure you are in an **appropriate category** and page layout
- Use high **quality photos** that look professional
- **Live videos** get a boost in Facebook's algorithm

Facebook 2

- On your Business Page, add **call to action**. It sits on the bottom right-hand corner of your cover photo. These buttons make it easy to make contact
- **RESPOND** to messages- Facebook is tracking
- **Join appropriate groups**. Can set yourself up as an expert and gain followers and name recognition
- Balance posting between **informative and annoying**.
- If you want to increase your reach, **commit to being personal** - talk about what you know and your experiences, and have **FUN**

Additional Social Media

- Twitter – **330 million** users and can be a great place to meet other gate keepers.
- Youtube – **180 million daily users**. Great place to share content (Book trailers, audio readings, event videos, writing vlogs)
- **Paid ads** (Facebook, Amazon AMS, and Youtube)
 - **Warning:** It takes a lot of work/learning to properly implement paid ads.
 - **Not** something to start with.

'Digital Infrastructure' (Final Summary)

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This will take time so do not think you will implement everything in a weekend

Key Takeaways (Continued)

- The base level technologies you need to become familiar with to be successful
- Simple techniques every author business needs to build a community
- **Beginner Marketing Theory with Authors**
- **Focusing your writing business around Conversion Rate, Driving Traffic, and Writing Fast (with quality)**

Putting your 'Digital Infrastructure' to work

Marketing Theory

- **What is success to you**
- Marketing Basics
- Conversion Rate (cover, reviews, review rating, price, blurb)
- Traffic to your book page (Instafreebie, bookfunnel, autoresponders, newsletters, newsletter swaps, Facebook ads, Amazon AMS ads)
- Speed of writing (what type of writer are you and are you in it for the long haul?)

Define what success means to you

Your choice will determine how much effort/money you put into marketing

- Is the act of publishing enough?
- Do you want a traditional publishing deal?
- Do you want to see your book on a shelf somewhere?
- Do you want to see your book on the library catalogue?
- Do you want to break even?
- Do you want some money in your pocket?
- Do you want to pay a small bill a month?
- Do you want to be a full-time writer?
- Do you want to retire and write on the beach the rest of your life?

Come to grips with the type of person you are

Your personal nature will dictate how you act and market

- Are you a **technophobe**?
- Do you like to **DIY**?
- Are you a **graphic arts** minded person?
- Do you have **thin skin**?
- Can you **engage** people in the real world or online?
- Are you **self-aware** or understand if you're being socially awkward?

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Marketing Starts When You Start Writing

- Write to **market** vs. write what you **want**
- **Stand Alone or Series**
- What is **popular** and can you incorporate that into your book? (**Unicorns, Dragons**)
- How am I going to get people into this book? (**Lead Magnet**)
 - Do I need a **prequel**? **Preview**?
- Going **wide** vs. Amazon **exclusive**
- What **genre** will you be targeting? (www.genrereport.com)
 - Is it crowded? Will you be alone?
- **Covers**? (www.goonwrite.com)
- Don't start marketing **after** you launch your book

The best marketing is to write the next book

- The best marketing you can do is to **write the next book**. (Series or Stand-Alone)
- If you only have one fiction book (non-fiction is different) go write the next book.
- Do not use your writing time to do publishing or marketing things.
- Independent authors need to write **fast** and write **often**. Success is better obtained through a large catalogue than one or two books.
- Three must haves: **Multiple Books, Great Covers, Great Descriptions**

You can't climb the marketing mountain in a day

Writing a book is to Engineering as Marketing is to a Jackson Pollock painting

- As a self-published author you need to learn and **execute many roles/jobs**
- The larger the author the more they look like a traditional publishing house
 - Big authors **outsource** all the things you need to do by yourself
- You're an author or writer you did not wake up and say you wanted to be a Marketer
 - Unless you are a unique flower and a generational writer you need to learn how to market
- The publishing/marketing side is about triage and ever-changing.
 - You **cannot** do everything.
 - Have a long-term plan and **do what's most important at any given time.**
 - Decide which things are most important for your career and give them a **priority.**

Don't live in a vacuum

Flowers only attract bees when they bloom. The same goes for you.

- Find other authors in your **genre**
 - Successful people will show you what you are missing
- **Watch** the market, learn, find, and discover
- You're **not** going to be successful living behind a computer and not engaging the reader/author world
- If you're **afraid** of technology or the internet then you need to rethink what success means to you

Marketing is like an onion, it's built in layers

- **Base** level digital presence
 - Website, Social Media (set it and forget it), Lead Magnet
- **Building** and **Automating** as you grow
 - Book giveaways, communicating with your mailing list, newsletter swaps with other
- **Tracking** and data collection
 - Mailchimp, link tracking, sales, traffic
- Being **agile** and ready to pivot to what is working

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- **Speed of writing (what type of writer are you and are you in it for the long haul?)**

Key Term (1 of 2) - Conversion Rate

- The **rate** at which a person is willing to buy your book
- Driven by **factors** (in order of importance):
 - Cover image
 - Value of the reviews
 - Number of reviews
 - Price
 - Book blurb
 - Everything else...
- Conversion Rate is **zero** without traffic...

Key Term (2 of 2) - Traffic

- The numbers of people who are **driven** to and **organically** find your book
- Ways to drive **traffic**:
 - Newsletters/Autoresponders
 - Paid Traffic (Facebook or AMS)
 - Organic traffic (rankings or search)
 - Search engine traffic (google)
 - 3rd party websites (youtube, blogs, social media, serialize publishing sites like wattpad or Inkitt)

Reality Check (Thought experiment)

Author goal is to pay a small bill and earn ~\$300 per month

- \$300 per month is **\$10 per day in earnings**.
- At \$2.99 you earn about **\$2 per sale**
- You need to have about **5 sales a day**
- That's about a sale every **~4 hours**
- Assume a conversion rate of **1%** (1 in a 100 people) means you need to send/reach **500 people a day**
- Does not include author costs (mailchimp, giveaway services, taxes, etc)

What should you be focusing on?

- **Expanding** the catalogue
 - Increase options to readers
 - Improve read through (series or genre)
 - Improving speed of production
 - Improving quality
- **Improving** conversion rate
- **Driving** traffic

How can I write faster?

- Write within a **series**
- **Cloud** Based Writing tools
- Driving good writing **habits**
- **Scheduling** writing time
- **Game-ify** your writing (points, savings/borrow, X words a day, writing sprints)
- **Dictation** (Dragon Dictate)
- Work within what you know and **incrementally** improve, don't just say 'I'm going to write 3000 words a day forever' when you struggle to write 300
- Good rule of thumb 1-3 books a year for indie writers

Key Takeaways (Revisited)

- The base level technologies you need to become familiar with to be successful
- Simple techniques every author business needs to build a community
- Beginner Marketing Theory
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Actions to take

- **Tonight (1 hour):**

- Plan how you market your book (Review “Marketing Starts When You Start Writing” slide)
- Do I need to create a lead magnet? What Genre am I in?

- **This week (3 hours):**

- What platforms can I get started with? (**weebly, mailchimp, etc**)

- **Next month (15 hours):**

- Find **10 independent authors** (big and small) in your genre
- Subscribe to their email lists, read their lead magnet books, view all of their copy, Amazon pages, blurbs, bios, analyze their covers, etc. Print it off and lay it out on the kitchen table. What do you like and what don't you like
- Do not copy, but allow these people to **INSPIRE** what you do

Wrap up

- **Never** Stop Learning
- Read writing **business blogs**
- Read **other indie authors**
- Get on **Kboards.com** and start reading
- Start small and grow in a controlled manner, **you are in it for the long play!**
- No one way is **right** for everyone
- The publishing world is changing so **quickly** what worked yesterday might not work tomorrow

