

Alliance Marketing

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What is alliance marketing?

Teaming up with peers to mutually promote the group's work, together & singularly

What forms can it take?

- Authors at similar points in their careers, in similar genres or categories, in the same geography
- Authors with similar backgrounds, day-jobs, or anything else in common
- Book industry folk with symbiotic roles/skills
- Any group with similar goals and a single identifiable audience

Why might you need it?

- Realities of book promotion today
- What your publisher will do may not be (probably will not be) enough

Benefits:

- Relief from self-promotion reluctance
- A catchy new angle or excuse to promote
- A much wider network of contacts
- A way to make the audience's lives easier
- Turn single-author signings into bigger events
- Shared expertise & experiences
- Supportive network of colleagues & friends

How to go about it: 10 Steps

1. Identify a unifying construct and scope: fresh, clever, entertaining; or provide value
2. Solicit (and possibly screen) members
 - a. Identify criteria
 - b. Identify "dues" if desired.
 - c. Identify tentative commitments prior to accepting members
 - d. Explore/set up a communication clearinghouse
 - e. Communicate
 - f. Make it desirable
3. Identify and prioritize target audience(s)
4. Set objectives. Solicit input and ideas.
5. Identify an end point. (You can always extend it.)
6. Detail commitments including schedules. Consider an informal contract.
7. Identify a leader or executive team and other roles as needed
8. Identify task leaders and/or committees, subject matter experts, etc.
9. Execute
10. Review results, refresh or find another construct to reach a different segment

Pitfalls & steps to avoid them

- Connections between books too vague
 - o Plan up front & solicit input

- Don't rush to accept members; expect attrition
- Too large or small a group for effectiveness
 - Min 5, max 25-30
- Reluctance/concern from the publisher
 - Point to successful groups, share concrete and professional plans, work with, not against
- Commitment levels, inequitable participation, & follow-through
 - Clear expectations up front
 - A contract
 - An identified task master or sergeant-at-arms/executioner
- Professionalism & the dangers of association
 - Recognize that if you are successful, you will be associated
 - Ensure professional members from the start
 - The more informal communication you have, the more likely members are to check with each other before going off half-cocked

Brainstorm:

1. What groups could you form or be a part of? What themes could you work with?
2. What networks could you use to test interest and find other members?
3. What skills, experience, or contacts do you have to offer? What holes would you like to fill?
4. What would you like to accomplish that that would be more difficult or impossible otherwise?
5. When would the timing be right for promotion to happen? What back-timing do you need to put the group into place before then? So when do you need to start?
6. What are you waiting for?