

PNBA Spring Tradeshow

Educational Session

Regional Tradeshow Orientation

March 15-17, 2006 • Seattle, WA

Orientation for Authors & Publishers

WHO IS HERE

Booksellers, Publishers, Authors, Regional Organizations, Distributors, Wholesalers, Publicists, Media, Librarians, Sales Representatives, & Industry Professionals.

### **Book Marketeer**

**Book Marketing and Promotion for Authors, Publishers, and Bookstores**

*Book Marketeer offers a variety of marketing services to help authors, bookstores and publishers sell more books. Our specialty is promoting sales through independent bookstores nationwide.*

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The tradeshow is a kind of paradox of partnership and competition. The industry, especially the independent bookstores depend on this interrelationship developed by networking. This session is to identify your goals and to maximize your tradeshow productivity.

#### BEFORE THE SHOW

**Show participation:** propose authors for autographing opportunities and advertise with PNBA if possible. They have mailing lists and several ad ops.

Decide if you are researching or are ready for a table.

Register early and sign up for as many events as possible for networking purposes.

**Getting ready:** read the catalog and mark your priorities.

Identify badge colors. Who is your target group? Make sure your badge is clearly visible.

Use your badge to hold your business cards, tickets and to carry a pencil or pen.

Wear comfortable shoes, carry water, a snack, and breath mints. Locate the bathrooms.

**Homework:** prepare very brief conversational pitches (50 words, I double dog dare you) for each target group: indie booksellers, chain booksellers, librarians, media, buyers, etc. Base your introductory book-o-mercial on what benefit can your book or product offer to their customers? How can you help them create excitement to push the sales of your book/item? Know who you are selling and what you are selling. Know your competition. Position yourself as a partner in their success (don't use these words).

**Authors:** communicate with your publisher before the show about goals. Or make a plan to research publishers, wholesalers, and distributors, if yet unpublished. Unpublished authors can check out appropriate publishers beforehand by checking Amazon.com, local bookstores, libraries, Writer's Market, and Books in Print. Do a simple market analysis and comparison of titles in your genre. What is your competition? Published by? What reviewers were used? Compare book jackets and content. Try google.com and see what you find. Ask booksellers to assess the market potential of your title. If you are already published, stocking information for books distributed by Ingram (ISBN needed) is available, 1-615-213-6803. For specific stock levels in Ingram warehouses, call 1-800-937-0995. Make sure your books are available at the wholesalers for future book signings.

## WORKING THE SHOW FLOOR

Plan your route using the show floor plan and your priority list. Make every step count.

1<sup>st</sup> pass: overview—go to every location on your plan in order, aisle by aisle.

2<sup>nd</sup> pass: hit the priority spots again, in whatever order you feel is efficient.

3<sup>rd</sup> pass: mop up, and spend more time on connections you discovered.

For a large show use a spreadsheet with booth #, contact, notes and intentions.

## NETWORKING TECHNIQUES

After your first pass, go back and check on the situations that seemed to be worth the time.

Your time is very limited, as is everyone else's, so be quick and courteous.

**Communicating with exhibitors:** identify to whom you wish to speak by asking who handles marketing or which editor might be willing to talk to you. Find out when it would be convenient. Whether you meet them or not, get a card and make a note for later follow-up. Don't waste time repeating your story to the wrong people. If you get a chance to make your statement, lead with your book's benefit for their store/company. Listen to what they say. When it is your turn to speak—respond to their statements and request continued contact, if applicable. Tell them you will contact them within two weeks, using their choice of communication—Email or phone? Continue your marketing research, make clear notes.

**Communicating with booksellers:** look at their badge and ask about their store. Offer a quick introduction and a question as to whether your title might do well at their store. What can you offer them? Listen to what they say, and if you have connected with an owner or buyer, promise to contact them later with a press kit and perhaps review copy. Be polite, helpful, and have some great ideas to offer. Ask about booking events, how many months ahead? What has been successful at their store? Do they have a newsletter and a web site? Who is their primary wholesaler. Remember a store is reluctant to order direct. If you are talking to a staff bookseller, ask questions about their store, inquire about the potential of your title to sell, etc. They have much information to share, and they will probably not be making the decision about the buy. Yet.

**Communicating with wholesalers and distributors:** If you don't have your distribution in place, make it a priority. Take yourself right over to P/W, B&T, and Ingram and see their stock adoption requirements. Be ready to answer questions about your promotion plans and advertising. They'll want to know. If you already have a wholesaler or distributor, be sure you understand how it works, exclusive or non-exclusive, who sells what to whom and at what discount.

**Talk to others:** authors, independent reps, house reps, book packagers, distributors, wholesalers, and publishers, and ask about their experiences and recommendations. Check out organizations that might help with your sales: PMA, BPNW, PNBA, NWABP, ABA, etc.

In general, browse a booth first and see what you can find out about the company. Check their book selection/product. Get a catalog for reference. Qualify the person you want to speak with to avoid wasting your time or theirs. Make a good first impression by being on target and very brief with an easy, casual manner. Do not get in the way.

## FIRST TIME EXHIBITORS

Keep yourself hydrated and fed. Use the bathroom when you need to, don't wait. Take breaks. Bring a kit of basic office supplies: pens, tape, scissors, packing tape, box knife, labels, etc. If you have handouts, be prepared to make more and find where you can make copies. Have a give-away or two. No junk. See what others gave that were successful. Keep a show journal and make notes on everything that you would like to improve. Talk to people, stand up a lot, come out from behind the table. Don't be pushy, be warm and welcome your guests. Ask questions and listen to your visitors. Get cards and write comments on the back. You can write postcards, responses and thank-you cards while at the show, if you have time. Keep a list of especially hot prospects. Offer special order incentives. Research packaging and cover designs. If you see a book you really like, find out who designed and printed it. Watch out for talkers who waste time. Be polite and see if you can move them along gently. Never burn a bridge. Chances are you will be dealing with the same people for years. Enjoy yourself, it is so refreshing to talk to someone who is having fun.

## PUBLISHERS

Research new vendors and suppliers, if applicable. (Bigger shows.) If someone owes you money, ask for a private chat. Resolve shipping issues. Court booksellers. Qualify the individuals with decision powers. Find out what you can do. Offer some unique and fun freebies, review copies, etc. If you have problems on the floor with attendees report it at the registration desk. Make sure your authors and books meet their commitments. Accompany your authors to events and socialize with booksellers. Look at everything with the question "How can this company/person help my book sales?" (And how can I make this fun?) Make it work for all concerned and your success will be inclusive and self-perpetuating.

## FOLLOW-UP

Research specialty wholesalers, library wholesalers, catalogs and dot.coms further. Look closer at the organizations you noticed at the show or in research that help market books. Answer every card you have collected within two weeks. Get a marketing plan shaped up if you haven't already. And a budget. Think about finding a publicist to help you—go on recommendations or get references. Set yourself some goals of contacting "X" number of contacts/stores per day. Have your follow-up pitch down cold, and be flexible in your responses. If they can't or won't deal with you, do not take it personally. Develop a database (Filemaker Pro, etc) and start organizing your data. Use it.

## THE NEXT SHOW

Now that you know some people, call to make appointments to meet at the show. Try a pre or post show mailing, and some advertising or promo opps from PNBA. Use your notes on how to make improvements next time. Try other regional shows. Expand your geographic range. Be sure to assimilate all that you have learned and make use of it.