

## Exponential Promotional Expansion

# New Math Adds Up To FREE Publicity

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The new math for free publicity is: E-book + E-gift = Promotion. Oops. Error. Make the answer FREE promotion!

My best promotional effort was not my idea. It accidentally fell into my lap. It is a free e-book called *Cooking by the Book*. There are three magical concepts in this paragraph: 1. **Accidental** 2. **Free** 3. **E-book**. I'll share more about these three promotional potions a bit later.

*Cooking by the Book* is a concept developed by Kathleen Walls, author of *The Last Step*. She asked more than two dozen authors from several countries to contribute to a book that would be given away free to anyone—as a gift of appreciation to the support teams it takes to write and market a book and to the legions of readers who cook but who had never read any of our books. Each invited author had written at least one kitchen scene in his book. Each segment begins with an excerpt from that scene. The recipe comes next and then there is a short blurb about the author. We believe that a whole new cookbook concept was born; an outstanding promotional tool was also created.

This E-tool was intended to cross-pollinate promotion. Each contributing author was to publicize it any way she chose. The only caveat was that it must the contributing/promoting author must not charge anything. This meant that each contributor would benefit from the efforts, the lists, and the contacts of the others. It turned out that we had some superior promoters among us. Joyce Livingston set up a page on her site promoting her book, *Lucy's Quilt*, as did most of the rest of us. Contributor Peggy Hazelwood promoted it in her newsletter for book lovers and I promoted in Sharing with Writers (subscribe at [www.howtodoitfrugally.com](http://www.howtodoitfrugally.com)). Mary Emma Allen writes novels and nonfiction but she's also a columnist for the New Hampshire dailies *The Citizen* and *The Union Leader* where the cookbook was a featured. David Leonhardt, author of *Climb Your Stairway to Heaven*, incorporated it into a Happiness Game Show speech that he'd delivered over a dozen times in Canada and elsewhere.

We all gave away coupons offering this gift at book signings. Because it costs nothing, it is a gift that can be given to everyone, not just those who purchase a book. Some had bookmarks made up featuring this offer. Reviewer JayCe Crawford said, "For a foodie-cum-fiction-freak like me, this cookbook is a dream come true," and that review has popped in places we didn't even know existed (one finds these pleasant promotion surprises by surfing the search engines.)

Our most startling success came from sources we had no connection to at all. It was featured in Joan Stewart's *The Publicity Hound* newsletter, in Writer's Weekly, on MyShelf.com, in the iUniverse newsletter and more. I had the highest rate of interest I'd ever had when I queried radio stations and that was in competition with a pitch for *This is the Place* just before the 2002 games in Salt Lake City and an intolerance angle on the book right after 9/11.

I'm not through yet: Mothers day is always an important holiday for marketers, and in case you haven't noticed, mothers tend to do lots of cooking!

Back to those three magic words:

1. **Accidental:** I don't take credit for knowing a good thing when I saw it. What I learned from this is to never dismiss something that is placed on your desk without careful consideration--even if it seems vaguely hokey. I worried that the other authors would not do their share of the promotion, as an example. Or that the recipes and excerpts might not be what I'd hoped. Our editor needed to work on some of the excerpts but the recipes were great--down to the last one.
2. **Free:** This charmed word often convinced editors to present our cookbook as a freebie to their visitors and readers. Many featured it on their home pages. Usually the contributing author who pitched it was privileged with their own promotional site's URL being used as a link, thus motivating those authors who hadn't publicized as actively as others to do more. Some editors chose to place the entire cookbook download on their own site.
3. **E-book:** This concept is important because it's so easy for people to obtain and is truly free. The author need not plan for postage or processing expenses. In the invitations, queries, and releases I sent out I emphasized a no strings attached attack: No site registration. No signing up for a newsletter. No purchase.  
The E-book concept is also important because—though it may not be new to you and me—the media is still rather infatuated with it. This aspect alone can be the hook for obtaining an article or an interview.

Oh, and there may be a fourth magic word. Cookbook. We found this word had universal appeal. You might find something else that works much better for you, ties in better with what you're doing. I've been thinking of doing something similar tied to the theme of genealogy because my novel *This Is the Place* is based on the stories of my own ancestors, four generations of them. A freebie promotional offer should not be knit too closely to the title of your book, but rather something that reaches out to draws in those who might not otherwise be exposed to your work. Cookbook. Genealogy. I'm sure you can find a general topic that is suitable.

Besides, everyone loves something that is FREE.

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