

Publish to Promote; Publish to Share

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

This is the story of three women.

This is a story of their love of writing and publishing.

This is a story of the joy they get from helping other authors realize their potential.

This is the story of cross-promotion at it best.

Pat Avery, Joyce Faulkner and I had published writing-related books of one kind of another as well as other kinds of books, so we knew the writing and promoting challenges that all writers face. We wanted to publish something that would encourage emerging authors as well as seasoned ones. We wanted our project to be something that new authors with only one book could sell at book fairs and similar events to increase their profits--you know, so they could cover the expense of their booth. And we wanted it to be something that people would use so that participants in the effort would continue to be seen.

That is how the Complete Writer's Journal was born.

A journal would be something that everyone could use including artists, scribblers, writers, and journalers. It is also something consumable and any good capitalist knows the importance of that. Once conceived, we asked writers to contribute quotations from their writing or to make up new ones. The quotations could be inspirational, helpful, funny or serious. We used a true submission process. There was no charge to enter. We -- brilliant editors all three -- chose 100 quotations for publication and each of the 100, of course, wanted the journals for their own needs.

They wanted them:

- For their own use.
- To give to their relatives -- remember, for some this was the first time anything had ever been published! Many went into envelopes along with holiday cards.
- To sell as add-on sales (in addition to their own books) at book fairs, signings and other events. (The publisher, Red Engine Press (www.RedEnginepress.com), gives a hefty discount in quantity to any author who wants to do utilize these journals this way, not only the participants.) With discounts in large quantities they come out around \$6. each and the retail price on the back is \$14.95. A nice profit.
- To give as thank you gifts. I sent out hand-embroidered tea towels to editors and producers after they had run a feature or done some other nice thing for me. This handmade idea fit in with the sewing imagery in *This Is the Place*. I bought them wholesale and each gift cost about \$12. in gross quantities. I thought this was perfect but if I had access to this journal at the time, I could have afforded to send out many more gifts and I am certain the editors would have found journals more practical than tea towels.

- To use as promotion gifts rather than pencils or magnets. Those tend to get tossed into people's junk drawers. The journals are a little pricey but work well in instances when authors need only a few, say to gift the crew for a radio show.
- To encourage people at signings and events to buy more than one book. All that takes is a sign that says, "Buy Two Books: Get This Journal at No Cost" or maybe at half price. Whatever the author thinks he or she can do.

We also added a couple of pages of advertising in the backmatter. If you choose to produce something of this sort your ads can be for your books or may be sponsoring ads from other authors. More and more publishers of all kinds (yep! traditional) are beginning to do that. I haven't quite figured out how this would work for literary novelists but I can see real potential there for genre-types. Help me keep thinking! If an author spearheaded a promotion of this sort, the participants' purchases might cover the cost of the publication.

Now, every single time one of our authors sells or gives a journal, they put their names and those of all the other ninety-nine authors out there for others to see. Editors, writers, and, yes, readers. And we all know that is the best part of the project.

A similar collaborative effort might work for groups of authors. Organizations. PEN fellows. Critique groups. A project like this could just as easily be a calendar or a lovely chapbook of poetry or a little how-to book or even a book of humor.

Be sure to read the section in my book *The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't* on how I used an e-book (since then I've done several others) to promote. There is nearly no real cost involved but they, like this venture, come loaded with goodwill.

And that, like all good stories about promotion, is a story with a happy ending.

Carolyn Howard-Johnson is the author of THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T. For a little over 2 cents a day THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER assures your book the best possible start in life. This book is full of nitty-gritty how-tos for getting nearly free publicity. Carolyn Howard-Johnson shares her professional experience as well as practical tips gleaned from the successes of her own book campaigns.

Howard-Johnson is an award-winning author of both fiction and nonfiction and former publicist for a New York PR firm and a marketing instructor for UCLA's Writers' Program. THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER tells authors how to do what their publishers can't or won't and why authors can do their own promotion better than a PR professional. Purchase it on Amazon or many university bookstores. Learn more about the author at <http://HowToDoltFrugally.com>