

powerful websites for writers

website

interactive

social media

content

traffic



How to Make Your Author Website Really Work

Everpress Media

POWERFUL WEBSITES FOR WRITERS:

How to Make Your Author Website Really Work



An Everpress Media Publication.

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Introduction

by **Dawn Seewer**

Art Director for Everpress Media

Some say that a website is only as effective as it is beautiful. Others will argue that as long as it's functional, a website's aesthetics don't matter much. The truth, like most things in life, lies somewhere in the middle.

As a graphic artist, I believe that creating websites for authors is about creating art with a purpose. A website can be a visually stunning piece of art, but unless it meets the needs of its readers, it won't ever reach its potential as a marketing tool. For example, if your author website is visually captivating and wows readers with every click, but they aren't able to find the information they need, their minds will not be inclined to take the action you want them to take (buy your book).





On the flip side, a website that functions ideally but is not visually appealing runs the risk of being forgotten, or worse yet, it can turn a reader completely off. If the text is too hard to read, the color palette strains the eyes, or the layout doesn't follow a logical order, your readers are more likely to close your site than stick it out and muddle through the blinking, blinding design to find what they are looking for.

Knowing what your website says about you, how to make it really work, and how to turn visitors into loyal readers is key to turning your author site into an effective marketing tool. ●



**What Your
WEBSITE
Says About You**



Beyond the basics of design and functionality, it is important to understand that your website, while maybe not your first impression, will certainly create a lasting impression on your readers. The presentation of your website says a lot about you as a writer. Good design, fluid functionality, and a professional image present you as a serious author of high quality products, while bad design often has the reverse effect. Want to know what your website says about you? Step back and take a look at it from a reader's point of view.

Is this the website of a professional author?

The first view of your website by a reader says a lot about you as a writer and your craft as a whole. If your website looks cheap and self-made, then the reader is likely to make the assumption that your products (your books) are similarly cheaply produced. When it comes to dealing with readers on the web, there is a lot of competition. With each new book on the shelf and each new author in the spotlight, the average reader has more choices than ever. So many choices, in fact, that if you don't present yourself as a quality author, you may get overlooked for someone who does.

Is there something for me to do here?

Ask yourself, what are your readers looking for when they visit your website? Are they looking for information about your books? Are they looking to connect with other readers who enjoy your books? Are they simply curious about the life of a writer? The content of your website should provide readers with the information they are looking for. Fiction authors looking to promote their newest romance will want to develop a site that not only offers information on their book but also includes entertaining content that speaks to lovers of

romance. They may include excerpts of their stories, short reads, romance tips, and of course, glowing reviews from well-known reviewers, writers, or avid readers.

Can I stand to stay on this site?

In addition to being professional, entertaining, and informative, your website should be easy on the eyes, which essentially means that it should be as attractive as it is functional. If it's hard to read, if the layout is confusing, or if the imagery induces seizures in the readers, they will click off your site just as fast they clicked on it. If your website is easy to look at and to navigate without much effort, readers will want to come back. A good-looking website increases its traffic naturally because visitors will not only be more likely to return if the experience is a pleasant one but will also, more often than not, share the link with a friend.

Is this some place I want to visit again?

Attracting new people to your website is a key factor in turning those just dropping by into avid readers. Your website must be not only a place for your legions of already adorning fans to hang out but also a place where those with mild curiosity can find out more. You'll want to provide content that is current, entertaining, interesting, and most importantly, always changing. Nothing kills repeat traffic faster than a website that never evolves and content that never changes.

Educating yourself on the issue of website design and development is important when you are trying to do it on your own. If you find yourself overwhelmed, then you can always turn to a profes-


sional for the creation of your site. For many readers, your website is the only interaction they will ever have with you. And what they see, what they experience, and the way your website makes them feel will have them drawing a natural conclusion between you and the books you are trying to sell them. Your website should reflect you as an individual, as a writer, and as a contributor to the literary industry. Your readers should be able to get a sense of your style, your commitment to quality, and your professionalism. It should proudly state, “I am a professional author,” not scream, “Look at me, I write books!” Is this a little drastic? Perhaps, but then if it weren’t important, companies wouldn’t be spending billions of dollars a year on their website designs.

Remember that for an author, a website is about establishing a genuine relationship with your readers. It should present you in the best possible light. While social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, plays a large role in establishing thriving communities, your author website is the anchor that holds your image in place and the platform from which all other media extend. It is static and reliable, and it doesn’t sway with the social fad. Above all, the website is a visual extension of you, the author. So, what does your website say about you?

Takeaways

Review your current website and ask yourself:

- Does my website portray my professionalism?
- Have I offered my readers plenty to do on my website?
- Is my site design pleasing and does it encourage people to stay?
- Is there a reason for my readers to come back and visit again?



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