



# THE SELF-PUBLISHED BOOK MARKETING PLAN

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I remember when I finished my first book, a thriller called *The Golden Crystal*. I thought to myself, “this is it. I’ve done it. I wrote a book.”

And while I was, technically, correct (the book was, after all, finished), I wasn’t even close to being able to launch it into the world.

As you know, finishing a book isn’t the same thing as launching a book. One is a singular, independent activity that takes nothing more than dedicated consistency and a few good ideas. The other takes much more planning, administration, organization, and careful oversight.

It also takes a lot of work.

**...And that’s pretty much why authors don’t “launch” their books...**

Many writers (myself included, at the first few times out of the gate) think that “The End” is literally the end of their book-creation process -- it’s the culmination of months, even years, of hard work.

The problem is that if you’re writing to support yourself, or even just want to make a little money on the side, you need to be putting just as much -- if not more -- work into promoting your book(s) when they’re finished.

And that promotional work doesn’t start when you’re done writing: to properly launch a book, you should be thinking about your marketing plan and strategy long before the last chapter.

If you’re an author who...

- Wrote a book but hasn't sold as many copies as you would have liked
- Wrote a book, sold some copies, but want to know what's next (or what you're missing)
- Is writing a book and wants to make sure it's launched, not just released
- Or you're a huge nerd and just like reading about marketing, self-publishing, and books (welcome! You're in the right place!)

...This post should be helpful.

(Not to jump the gun or anything, but if you subscribe to the newsletter I'll send you the "official" PDF checklist of everything included in this post. Yeah. I'm cool like that.)

Read on, and market the crap out of your book.

## **Why shouldn't you just launch your book without a marketing plan?**

Great question.

You shouldn't "release" your book into the world until you've at least gone through this checklist -- or a checklist, for that matter. Basically, make a checklist of things you want to do during your marketing campaign, and stick to it. This list is based on my own background in marketing, a few years of writing books, and a few successful book launches under my belt.

(We do this stuff for Turtlesell Press, so sign up there too.)

You shouldn't launch a book without a marketing plan because you're missing out. Specifically:

- You'll make less money
- Your book won't benefit from "first week" promos (an Amazon phenomenon)
- You won't find nearly as many readers
- You won't get as many email signups (fewer follow-up sales)
- You'll make fewer connections with other authors
- Marketing is fun. You won't have as much fun.

With the (possible) exception of the last item, these are all very real reasons why you should consider an in-depth marketing plan for your upcoming book launch. Keep reading to discover how you can write, prepare, and launch your marketing plan effectively!

## What is a marketing plan?

Put simply, a "marketing plan" is just a guide -- or checklist -- to walk you through each stage of a book launch. This plan is meant to keep you focused on the end goal: getting your book into as many people's hands as possible.

In business, a marketing plan is a large, comprehensive (and usually pretty convoluted) document that states the overall goals, mission, and strategic plans to capture a certain market share in the industry.

For our purposes, we're going to focus on creating a plan that's simple to use, easy to understand, and focuses on getting you to take action. Since we're going for a marketing checklist rather than a full-fledged plan, we won't worry

too much about the Mission, Values, Vision, and other “business”-y verbiage.

Our marketing plan will be lean, mean, and right to the point.

And it will be in checklist form, so you won’t have to wade through a ton of text to get the meat of the message. You’ll be able to move things around, add or delete steps, and generally make it your own (and you should!).

Your marketing plan needs to represent your book, so don’t just take what I’ve done and copy it directly. While I certainly don’t mind if you do, it’s not going to serve you as well as if you take the time to analyze your own strengths, needs, and expectations, and then rework the plan to fit your book.

Alright, enough small talk. Let’s write a marketing plan.

## What your marketing plan needs

We’re just going to jump into it. A great marketing plan for a self-published book needs to analyze and prepare for three separate, specific areas:

- 1. In-book.** What are you doing to invite readers to check out your blog, sign up for your mailing list, and stay in touch? Your in-book marketing is as important as writing it, and it’s really easy to include links and enhanced media elements in pretty much any ebook these days.
- 2. Website.** You should have a great plan for your own website/platform (you do have a platform, right?). Things like how you’re capturing leads, sending people to your Amazon sales page (and other sales pages), and keeping up the lines of communication with your current subscribers.

**3. External Marketing.** Anything that doesn't fall into the latter two categories probably fits here, and this section is probably also the biggest. Most of your work will be done marketing your book on external blogs, websites, and through ads.

Finally, your marketing plan needs one important thing to succeed: careful, purposeful thought and planning.

Without it, you're doing what's called the "shotgun" approach. It's random, arbitrary, and it's almost guaranteed to fail. Try building a marketing starting with this checklist and see where it goes.

If you run into trouble, just leave a comment below and I'll respond!

## Example marketing plan (abridged)

Let's look at what a marketing plan might look like for my own book, *The Golden Crystal*, scheduled to be released soon.

(Yes, I've been saying that for almost two years now, but this time I mean. Seriously.)

So, without further ado, here's my work-in-progress marketing plan (checklist style) for *The Golden Crystal*. I've outlined the individual components of my actual marketing plan, then discussed them below.

### Step 1: Define Description and Purpose

**Description:** *The Golden Crystal* is a work of fiction in the thriller/adventure genre, and has been referred to as a work of "crossover" fiction, blending elements of the traditional genre thriller as well as science fiction.

The "Description" is exactly what it sounds like. Just answer these questions:

1. What are you promoting?
2. What genre/market will you promote to?
3. What else is unique/special about your product?

Answer these questions in one or two sentences -- keep it concise. Remember, this marketing plan is for you, not a huge corporation!

**Purpose:** The book is intended to be fun to read and provide entertainment value. The purpose of this marketing plan is to detail an action-oriented plan to launch the book into the marketplace, generate sales, and find ideal readers. A secondary purpose of this plan is to generate leads by way of the LiveHacked.com mailing list, through in-book and blog post signup invitations.

All of the above just describes in words what I want to do when I launch my book:

1. Sell books.
2. Get readers on my mailing list.

There's really not much more to it than that -- you can choose different purposes ("give the book away for free to as many readers as possible," "submit the book to as many book awards as possible," etc.), but you need to write down why you're marketing the book in the first place.

Having this specific purpose helps you stay focused and understand which channels/avenues you should be using to market your book.

## Step 2. Define Target Market (Demographics)

**Target Market:** *The Golden Crystal's* ideal reader is male, between the ages of 35 and 65, who travels often and wants a "quick read" for trips. The ideal reader is someone who enjoys action, fast-paced



dramatic elements of suspense, and watches movies and television shows similar to *National Treasure*, *Heroes*, *Person of Interest*, and other “Hollywood”-style pictures.

Your target market is literally just describing this idea of your “ideal reader.” An ideal reader is a description of a person (yes, it needs to be one person!) who would absolutely love your book.

You don’t need focus groups, surveys, or anything else to create a description of your ideal reader. Here’s a little secret: **The best way to create an “ideal reader” description is to start with yourself.**

That’s right: describe yourself, even if it’s a slightly different vision of yourself. For *The Golden Crystal*, I’ve been told it’s a great example of an “airport book” -- the kind of stuff you grab last minute on your way out of town. While that might not be the best interpretation of “writing a great book,” it’s still the ideal that inspired me to write the book in the first place.

**Reaching Target Market (Overview):** *The Golden Crystal* will be released first on Amazon.com in ebook (Kindle) form at a low introductory price. Leading up to the launch date (TBD), the author will send free copies of the book to “beta readers,” in exchange for an honest (yet not obligatory) Amazon review.

Advertisements on book websites and review sites will be purchased to drive initial traffic, and the author will “blog tour” (guest post on numerous blogs) during the first two weeks after launch. The first “Kindle promo” of 5 free days will begin during the third week after

launch, and advertisements at BookBub.com and BookGorilla.com will be purchased to drive traffic to the “free” sale.

Ongoing marketing will include (but is not limited to) free promotions via KDP Select, social media mentions, giveaways via blog tours, and additional advertisement purchases to drive strategic traffic.

The above paragraphs are just an overview of what the marketing plan will include. When you mention “advertisements,” you’ll give a detailed, step-by-step plan for when, where, and for how much money you’ll purchase those advertisements.

Again, this section is just going to help clarify your thoughts and streamline the rest of the plan.

## Step 3: Define Strategic Action Steps (Marketing Tactics)

### Strategic Action Steps (External):

**1. Advertisements:** Advertising will be procured via the following websites: BookBub, KindleBoards, Goodreads, and BookGorilla. The budget for these ads is \$600 (subject to change) over a 30-day period. The advertisements will send traffic to 1. The Amazon sales page for the initial book launch, and 2. The Amazon sales page for the “free promo” days. The advertisements will be a book description and front cover image.

**2. Blog Tour:** The author will write and submit requests to post

articles on relevant blogs, focused on helping authors write, edit, promote, and finish their books. These posts will mention *The Golden Crystal* and link to the Amazon sales page, but will not be overtly focused on selling. The author will prepare and write 30 posts for this purpose, and will attempt to publish at least 20 on relevant blogs. The author will try to schedule the blog post “go-live” dates for the first week after the launch date.

**3. Social Media:** Social media will play a supplementary role in marketing *The Golden Crystal*. Social media posts on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Goodreads, and brief mentions on the LiveHacked.com mailing lists will point to the blog posts mentioned in the “Blog Tour” section. This indirect promotion will strengthen the overall marketing strategy by cross-referencing posts, articles, and social media mentions.\*

**4. Interviews:** The author will seek out at least 20 interview opportunities both on podcasts (audio) and on blogs (written). 20 questions and answers will be pre-written, but the author will of course request that additional/alternative questions be asked. These interviews will focus on the subject of writing, including craft, style, planning, outlining, marketing, and promotion. The author will try to schedule the interview “go-live” dates for the third week after the launch date.

**5. In-Person Appearances:** The author will seek out local bookstores and shops in the Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo metropolitan areas, and will plan to schedule book signings and

meet-ups one month after launch, to coincide with the release of the hardcover and paperback versions of *The Golden Crystal*. Any hard-copy books sold in this way will include at least a bookmark, and possibly a printed postcard as well.

\*Read this for more information on using social media well: *The Ultimate Guide to Social Media for Writers*.

Promoting your book needs to happen in two general ways: externally and internally. I define “external” promotion as promotion and advertising that exists outside your direct spectrum of influence. For this reason, advertising and blog tours are probably something you should explore -- it’s pretty difficult to convince people outside your close circles to mention your book and how awesome it is without their having read it before!

“Internal” marketing, therefore, is just stuff that you originate from within your circle (social media could fall into this category if you’d like -- I consider it external because I can’t completely control the conversation). Your blog, mailing list, friends and family, “blog circle,” church, community, whatever -- are all examples:

**6. Mailing List:** LiveHacked.com maintains an email list of ~4,500 people, and mentions of *The Golden Crystal* and a small cover image will be placed at the bottom of emailings. These mentions will begin during launch week and continue throughout the first two months (at least) after the launch date.

**7. LiveHacked.com:** LiveHacked.com is a blog focused on providing

writers with marketing, promotion, and sales help. Prior to launch week, the blog will mention *The Golden Crystal* and where it will be available. Three to four weeks after launch week, LiveHacked.com will host a giveaway for two copies of *The Golden Crystal* in hardcover or paperback format. This giveaway will be hosted and managed by RaffleCopter.com.

**8. Facebook:** The author will post announcements, updates, and release/launch information on their personal Facebook page and the author page. These announcements will focus on keeping the author's close friends and family up to date with *The Golden Crystal*.

**9. Word-of-Mouth:** The author will ask friends and family to post links to *The Golden Crystal* on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media feeds, and will request that if they are going to buy the book, that they all purchase on launch day (to drive additional "early-bird" sales).

**10. Writing Courses Mentions:** The author is currently writing, preparing, and recording a writing course to be released on Udemy.com that will be an extension of the free Fiction Writer's Guide to Writing Fiction. Both courses use *The Golden Crystal* as examples of learning experiences, and these links will forward to the Amazon sales page for the book.

My list of external and internal marketing tactics is not exhaustive -- there might be things I want to do that I've forgotten, and things on the list that I don't want to do. The point is to write it down, though. By having this list of specific,

actionable tactics, you can then see the “big picture” of what your marketing plan will look like, and when you should start preparing everything.

The next section is to collect the “step-by-step” things into a long (yet manageable) list of to-dos:

## **Step 4: Tactical Breakdown (To-Do List):**

### **6 Weeks Prior to Launch:**

- Finalize eBook versions
- Send “beta reader” advance reader copies
- Set up follow-up emails to beta readers (asking for a review) to send 2 and 4 weeks from now
- Write 10 blog posts (for blog tour)
- Prepare 20 interview questions and answers

### **4-5 Weeks Prior to Launch**

- Purchase and schedule launch-week advertisements
- Finalize print book versions (and print giveaway copies)
- Submit 10 blog posts for blog tour, requesting “launch week” as publish date
- Submit 10 interview requests, requesting “launch week” as “go-live” date
- Write and schedule 20 tweets, Facebook posts, and any other

social media updates

- Write 10 blog posts (for blog tour)

## **2 Weeks Prior to Launch**

- Submit 10 blog posts for blog tour, requesting “launch week” as publish date
- Submit 10 interview requests, requesting “launch week” as “go-live” date
- Write 10 blog posts (for blog tour)
- Schedule print version book giveaway(s)
- Prepare internal blog posts and mailing list mentions
- Purchase and schedule “free promo” (week 3) ads

## **1 Week Prior to Launch**

- Review marketing/launch plan
- Review guest post publish dates (mark them on calendar)
- Review/confirm interview appointments/posts
- Send “launch week” email to mailing list
- Submit book to Amazon via KDP Select (don’t publish until 24 hours before your launch date!)
- Create tracking/sales spreadsheet

## **Launch Week!**

- Personal email to friends and family (let them know book is ready to buy!)

- Publish book on Amazon KDP Select
- Send email update to mailing list (launch announcement)
- Schedule follow-up update to mailing list for end-of-week (“Hurry! Sale ends this week...”)
- Respond to comments and discussion on blog tour posts
- Interviews
- Send update to beta readers (“Now’s the time to post your review!”)
- Begin Facebook posts to “word of mouth” audience

## **1-2 Weeks After Launch**

- Review first-week sales; alter/redesign advertisements
- Respond to blog tour and interview comments
- Send final follow-up email to beta readers (end of 2nd week)
- Solicit requests for in-person appearances (use reviews as social proof)

## **3-4 Weeks After Launch**

- First “free promo” on Amazon (5-day)
- Run “free promo” ads
- Twitter, Facebook, social media mentions of free promo
- Final giveaway of swag/hard copy book

## **Step 5: Calendar and Timeline**

The last thing you’ll need to do is write the schedule of everything above. The to-do list is great for getting through each week, but the calendar is a visual



aid, giving you a “bird’s-eye view” of what you’re accomplishing. I like a simple iCal interface, but I’ve also used a dry erase whiteboard calendar before. Your choice.

Write down everything you can -- blog posts going live, interviews, podcast interviews you’ll need to show up for, promos/ad days, launch week, etc. Everything.

Also, write down your “non-marketing” days. You still have a life -- don’t let this plan consume you. Schedule alone/free time, time with the spouse/significant other, kids, family, and friends. Also, if you’re like me, you’ve got a separate full-time job that has its demands as well. Don’t panic -- just know your bandwidth and limits. Consider bumping the launch week back a few weeks, or expanding it to a two-week launch to meet your needs.

This section of *The Golden Crystal’s* marketing plan isn’t filled out just yet because I’m not quite ready to announce an actual date -- but stay tuned. However, I’ll include something in the downloadable materials to help you out (see below).

**YESSSSS! We just wrote an entire marketing plan!**

Well that’s quite a marketing plan -- but it’s concise, step-by-step, and leaves the guessing out of it. It’s not perfect, nor is it a guaranteed victory but again -- it’s actionable, usable, and helps me focus on executing the plan flawlessly.

Whenever people market, build, launch, or create something according to plan, things will go differently than expected. That’s okay -- it’s still going to end up

better than just “shotgunning” your launch with no plan or a lackadaisical attitude (“well, I’ll just see what happens...”). A certain part of me wants something in this plan to fail miserably so I can analyze it, tweak it, fix it, and do it again.

One final note: your marketing will look different. You might have a smaller budget for ads (or a larger one!) and can thus increase or decrease the other tactics accordingly. Or, you might have a completely different market (“moms looking for safe teen YA fiction,” “elderly couples interested in fantasy roleplaying-type fiction,” or whatever). That’s fine -- you know more about those markets than I do, so just change what you need and go from there.

The point is, of course, to plan. It really doesn’t matter what you plan, as long as you plan something and stick to it. The second time, third, fourth, and on will allow you to tweak and change what didn’t work and increase/improve what did. The first time out of the starting gate, just do something.

## **Lastly: Download the Plan + Worksheet for FREE!**

If you’ve made it this far, congratulations. You’re a trooper. Here’s where you can grab the goodies:

I’ve prepared this blog post, a PDF worksheet, a sales/tracking spreadsheet, and the final example of my personal marketing plan for *The Golden Crystal* with calendars and to-do lists. Finally, I’ll include whatever blank templates I’ve created to work from.

To get it, just subscribe to the newsletter. Once you confirm, you’ll be redirected to a page to download the material!

What do you think?

I want to be available for questions you might have regarding all of this, so as usual, leave a comment on this post if you need anything.

You could also email me directly!