HOW TO USE THE WEB BETTER

How Publishers Can Raise
Online Book Discoverability

O nline and mobile purchases increased 69% from 2006–11 and are projected to reach $409 billion in 2016.[1] More people are using the internet, in more ways, on more devices, from more locations, and at higher speeds, than ever before. It would be hard to argue that book marketers are ignoring this. Why, then, is the number of books discovered on the internet so abysmal? According to a survey conducted by the Codex Group, while discovery in physical bookstores has dropped 50% in the past two years to 17%, discovery online hasn't risen significantly as a result—it's stayed relatively the same at 9%.[2] Yet, people must be discovering other products online, or else 25% of them wouldn't be using the internet to conduct research before a purchase.[3] Why is it that people can't discover books?

The discovery site of a book is commonly defined as the place a reader credits first learning about it. The discoverability of a book is how easy or hard it is to discover. In a bookstore, customers can scan the area and see displays of books with covers face-out. In an entire day, a person could roam up and down the aisles and look at every

book. He or she is in a place specifically designed for discovering books, and can have face-to-face communication with an employee paid to sell them to him or her. Those are clear advantages over online, where book-selling is a minuscule part of the landscape, and the glut of self-published titles, the rise in the volume of published books, and the unlimited shelf space for backlist units would make it impossible to look at every book in an online book-selling site before new entries entered the queue.

Lamenting how bookstores do it better isn't the answer. It's much more useful to determine the advantages of online marketing and play to those, because there are many: direct contact with consumers, unlimited categorization possibilities, easier access to direct markets, more opportunity for less costly promotion, and the convenience of discovering books from home, to name a few. Unlimited shelf space is an advantage, too, when properly handled. What publishers need are new strategies to raise online discoverability for books, and to do that they should start by focusing on the internet's uniqueness as a marketing medium.

THE INTERNET IS NOT TV

On television, advertisements occur during commercial breaks that are clearly separated from the content. There's only a handful per show and, as a result, they are seen and remembered by more people. On the internet, there are no breaks and there is little separation between advertisement and content. Distractions and unfiltered noise constantly compete for a person's attention. There are so many advertisements that it's impossible to remember or even register them all.

The power of the internet isn't as a broadcast medium, unlike television, or radio, or print. The power of the internet is in connecting people together: it's the ability to talk to people—not at them—and build direct relationships. A woman in small town Missouri can read a Facebook post a company made in New York City, instantly after it's posted, and can comment on it, immediately. The company can

comment back. A man in New Zealand can see the same post. The company can talk to him, too. Publishers can tell their message to millions of people at once, and then instantly communicate further with individuals. The first part isn't new in marketing. The second is.

An author can't visit every bookstore, but she or he can, for much cheaper, reach everyone with an internet connection. Instant, expansive, two-way communication is not possible in any other marketing medium. To get, and keep, people's attention, publishers need to exploit this advantage in more ways. Sending paid ads out into the world works for some people, but a direct connection works for more, and lasts longer.

It's important to note that there are many differing opinions on what the word "discoverability" actually means. When marketing professional Brett Sandusky says that discoverability isn't a problem because "the real aim is not in eyeballs, or awareness, or algorithms, or billboards, or discovery... it's in relationships," for instance, what he's saying is that making sure people merely see the cover of a book online is a useless problem for publishers to try to solve.[4] There's little to argue with there, but I would assert that discoverability—how easy or hard it is to find a book—and building relationships are intrinsically connected: if publishers want to get readers to discover their books in a way that lasts, they have to build a relationship with them first. This can be through coaching the authors to do so or by building a brand around the company. Without a reason, readers won't remember the book, and if they don't remember the book, there's no point in making them aware of it in the first place.

Sandusky's concern is that publishers keep talking about discoverability, but in reality, there's nothing publishers can do to raise it. I argue that for each relationship forged, discoverability is in fact raised thanks to the momentum of word-of-mouth. To build relationships, publishers have to hook the right readers in, which is discussed later on in this paper.

In "the internet as broadcast medium," raising discoverability would mean putting a book in as many places as possible online and hoping someone is *pushed* into stumbling on it. In "internet as the

medium of direct communication," raising discoverability is *pulling* people in by putting a book in the right places, with the right promotion, for the right people, and using those people to push it further outward to their social graphs. Readers, bloggers, reviewers—all can push the message, and the more that do, the higher the discoverability of the book. This isn't just theory: one in five adults say they are likely to be "effective viral agents," or push what they see on social networks outward. One in ten even say that they see "social networking explicitly as a means to spread the word about companies and brands that they like!"[5] Combine this with the data that purchases caused by exposure to products on social networks are *twice* as high when that exposure comes from friends (10%) as opposed to advertisements (5%), publishers can conceivably create online hand sellers for their books by building genuine relationships with readers.[6] Those readers can use their own relationships to get a publisher's book face-out everywhere that they can online.

Online marketing through strategies like trying to game the algorithm of online booksellers and using paid ads is a fish surfacing in the middle of the ocean and hoping someone spots it. Online marketing through building a relationship with the appropriate readers is a fish jumping into the air and landing with a big, ripple-causing splash. Some people will spot the fish surfacing, but many more people will see the jump and the splash, and even if they don't, there's still the momentum of the ripples.

The internet is huge; anyone who says they know for certain that people will come to their webpage and see their product is lying. Making a splash increases the chance people will find your product, and making the ripples increases it exponentially more.

Don't push a product outward yourself; pull people in and use them to push it out. Personal recommendations from family and friends will always be the best way to get people to discover books, because people trust their friends and family more than advertising. Build loyalty to your company, or help your authors build loyalty to themselves, and you'll have engaged and excited readers tapping into their networks, filtering out the noise, and raising the discoverability of your books.

THE INTERNET IS NOT PSYCHIC

Readers are not as worried about discovering the next book to read as much as the publishing industry would like to think they are, that's true. That's another reason building a relationship with a book's audience is important. If publishers can create an atmosphere around a book that makes the targeted reader feel like they can't live without it, it doesn't matter how many books that reader already has when they discover it, they're going to remember it, buy it, and ideally promote it to others. The first step in raising online discoverability is to find those people that will feel like they can't live without the book: find the target audience.

In a bookstore, a customer can enter the building and directly ask an employee what book he should read next. That customer can have no idea what he's looking for, and the employee can still try to wrestle out some idea of what he might like and recommend a book to him.

When people don't know what a problem they have is, they ask an expert for help. Physical bookstores are great for this. Algorithms on the internet just aren't that far yet: Google and Amazon's product search engine are not experts. They can't have a conversation with you the way a human bookseller can. Online, people aren't coming to booksellers like they would in a bookstore, because the internet isn't just for book-selling. To reach people, publishers have to come to the internet users.

Out:think owner and founder Tim Grahl, whose online marketing company has produced several *New York Times* bestselling authors, talked with me about a client he worked with to help tap into an unlikely audience that had discovery potential. Tim found that parents who homeschool were interested in how to help their children learn. They didn't necessarily know that a book about neuroscience was what they were looking for, but Tim knew it would interest them if he got it in front of them, and sure enough, after marketing to parents who homeschool, sales of his client's book increased.[7]

There are billions of webpages online. It's unlikely a person with no reason to buy a book will end up in front of a book he had no previous

interest in, recommended by a computer, and want to buy it on the spot. Instead, start with a problem, find the people that have it, and target them. As long as you know a problem and what customer has it, you can use the internet to find that audience, put a book in front of them, and build a relationship.

Publishers can more effectively raise a book's discoverability by focusing on the specific audiences that they know enough about to target. When those customers discover the company's book, they'll be much more likely to find it useful and pass along the word. Customers may not know the problem they have, but if the publisher does, they can communicate with those customers.

NINETY-EIGHT PERCENTERS

Tim Grahl had endlessly useful data to share with me about his experience marketing books online. Perhaps the most and least surprising figure was that, when given a choice between which online bookseller to buy a book from, people clicked on the link to Amazon 98% of the time *over all other options.*[8] To phrase it a different way: 2% of book buyers would not rate Amazon.com as their first choice for purchasing a book.

Amazon is an enormous force, and not only that—consumers love them! According to a study by faberNovel, Amazon has 152 million customers, is ranked eleventh in internet traffic, and is rated the number one retail brand by consumers.[9] It would significantly impact a book's sale to not be listed in Amazon's online catalog. Interestingly, though, Amazon is not a huge part of book discovery.

According to research done by Douglas McCabe, COO of Enders Analysis, 48% of book buyers know what they're going to buy before they even get to Amazon. Staff picks, recommended books, promotions, and bestseller lists individually account for a small fraction of how people choose the books they do on a book-selling website. McCabe extrapolates that Amazon is only the end of the funnel for book purchasing—it's the destination you send your fans to, but not the place you find them, hook them in, and build relationships.[10]

Forbes contributor Suw Charman-Anderson further comments that these figures show that "you should focus not on trying to woo Amazon's algorithm, but on building awareness outside of Amazon... no one can search for your books [on Amazon] if they don't know you exist."[11] Rather than spending time trying to get a book noticed on Amazon with no direct control over the situation, publisher's should spend time finding out where a book's audience makes buying decisions and engage with them there. Instead of focusing on the people who go online to buy books with a purchase already in mind, the question becomes how we can get people to discover books simply by being online.

The fact that 52% of people do find books on Amazon is nothing to slouch at, but by building a relationship with customers outside of Amazon first, bestseller lists, recommended books, and staff picks can be more significantly affected than by starting on Amazon and hoping people find out your book exists by algorithmic chance. You have more control over discoverability outside of Amazon, so find your audience and engage with them before they get there.

HOW TO CREATE RIPPLE-MAKERS

In *The Referral Engine*, author John Jantsch proposes a path of customer events—Know, Like, Trust, Try, Buy, Repeat, Refer—that he calls the Customer Referral Cycle. By focusing on moving customers along this path, a company can consistently "generate referrals like a well-oiled machine."[12] Likewise, the farther a publisher gets the consumer to go down Jantsch's path, the more the consumer is going to help raise a book's discoverability.

The goal is to get people to talk about your books online, but how do you get someone initially interested? How do you even get to Know? Data from the Codex Group's study on where book buyers credit discovering books holds some clues on what sites work best for starting at Know, and which have a higher chance of leading as far along as Buy.

The Codex Group's data shows that 72% of people surveyed visited Google in the past week, the largest percentage of any digital media, but this only resulted in the discovery of the last book a person purchased in 1.1% of those visits—the second lowest conversion percentage. Inversely, author sites have a much smaller reach, only 4% of people visited an author site in the last week, but 76% of those visits—over double the conversion rate of the media that came in second place—resulted in the discovery of the last book a person purchased. People don't attribute Google to where they discover books, but they do attribute author sites. Whether or not people remembered that Google was where they started is up for debate, but from this data publishers can reasonably conclude that leading a book buyer to an author's website gets them a 76% chance that the reader will make it to Buy on Jantsch's scale. While using Google alone only results in a 1.1% chance that the reader will make it anywhere on the scale, the reader is eighteen times as likely to be reached using Google as they are an author's website.

The greatest potential in this graph for publishers can be argued as trying to affect the media with the most views, Google, to get it more yield, and trying to affect the media with the most yield, author websites, to get them more views. The only way to start a customer relationship is through getting them aware of your product, and for that, Google has the widest net. How can publishers better use it to funnel readers to the Buy point via the place with the highest discovery yield, author websites?

It's important to note that Buy is not the end goal you should be after: Buy is only one of the steps toward the ultimate dream of getting the consumer to Refer. Once publishers get readers to an author website, they have drastically more control over moving readers further down the scale, but the problem still is that publishers need to find a way to get more than 4% of people to the website first.

It seems obvious, but here's the next step: help your authors build their brand online!

AN AUTHOR IS A PUBLISHER'S BEST FRIEND (BUT IS NOT A DOG)

Because the vast majority of book publishers don't currently have a strong, recognizable brand accessible online, building a passionate following for a book starts with the person in the equation that has the power to create that brand and following: the author. Consumers, additionally, more often see the relationship between them and an author as more authentic than between them and a publisher. Most people can't even name two book publishing houses, but they can name several authors.

To get the right people passionate enough to help raise the discoverability of a book, digital media strategist and CEO of Shelton Interactive Rusty Shelton says that marketing with an author needs to start much earlier than it currently does. The moment a publisher signs the contract for a book, it's time to start building an audience.[13]

In the history of the author-publisher relationship, the advent of online and social media in the past ten years is relatively new. The line separating what an author should be responsible for and what a publisher should do is ill-defined at best across publishing houses, and authors can get anxious about this. Authors might be concerned their publishers are expecting them to be responsible for the entire book's marketing, when they see that as the publisher's job, not theirs. Rusty Shelton has this to say about the delineation of tasks:

> Most publishers don't necessarily expect [authors] to be great *marketers*, what publishers expect is for them to be great storytellers, and for them to produce really smart, really interesting content. The publisher's job is to get that content out there in the best way... As you grow an audience, this content gives people a reason to talk about you, your blog,

and your book. So it's not out of bounds for publishers to expect their authors to not only write a book but continue to extend the conversation with interesting content online.[14]

Shelton continues that because the growth of the internet and social media demand that the author participate in the marketing process, though publishers are not looking to authors for strategies, they are looking for them to be active participants in making those strategies possible. I agree. The publisher-author relationship (most often) starts when an author sends a manuscript to a publisher. The author is essentially asking for help publishing her book. A good publisher-author relationship starts with a publishing company recognizing its job as helper to the author—after all, with the rise of self-publishing, the author has other ways to get her book published if she so chooses. A publisher, however, can't do anything if they don't have any authors willing to work with them. This doesn't mean the author is in charge; it means that the most productive relationships are amiable partnerships between publisher and author. Both help the other sell more books, so instead of ignoring authors and treating them as a pet, forge a partnership that's in both of your best interests. Treat them like a human best friend and not a dog best friend.

When you have thousands of books, giving detailed focus to each author might be a challenge, but treating each book as its own individual platform with its own individual audience is the best way to get an audience behind each book. If their's not enough time to give every author an internet marketing plan tailored to their book's goals, still help your authors as much as you can. Be there to answer questions and help the author along so that they or their agent aren't doing all the marketing work. At the very least, give an author a packet with general online marketing tips, or better yet, give them a list of people they can work with themselves if they want to take their marketing further than the company can afford.

Because 76% of people who go to author websites discover a book once they're there, the most important help an online book marketer can give to an author in order to build a following is to facilitate the

creation of a passable website for the author. This is the place where consumers who've already discovered the author are visiting to find out what the author is all about: it's the central hub for making the case as to why your author is the best at what they're offering to readers. It should look good in order to encourage the author-reader relationship. If an author's website looks good, and the publisher only targets the consumers that will respond with enthusiasm to the message, what can consumers do but respond positively to the content on the site? Find out what customers want to do with the book and brand the website as the place to go to discover the solution to those problems.

After surveying 3,000 of their members, the social book-sharing site Goodreads found that 96% of people say they read books by authors that they already know.[15] Building a passionate following around an author takes time, but once time and resources are devoted to an author, it's in the company's best interest to keep that relationship. By helping your authors build a fan base now, you're guaranteeing big returns for the next book the author publishes with you. Even more, you'll sign better authors by building a reputation that you treat your authors well!

Build relationships with readers through authors, not books: start early, treat authors well, and provide them with the strategies and tools to build their brand online. Move up the Customer Referral Cycle as soon as you can with the author as the face of the product, not the publisher. Once you have a site that revs up the target audience, work on helping authors funnel the audience to it by using social media and Google to their highest potential.

DON'T LET SOCIAL MEDIA LEAD YOU DOWN A GARDEN PATH

A large part of starting relationships in any situation is being social, so it makes sense that social media would be an equally large part of raising discoverability online. As we saw in Codex's discovery graph, however, despite social media's reputation as a windfall in many

online marketing circles, people aren't discovering the books they buy on social media in any significant numbers. Only 3.1% of people who visited Twitter found their last book there, and only 2.4% of people who visited Facebook did the same.

Tim Grahl says that the data he's culled from being in the online marketing trenches for the past six years matches this bleak outlook of social media's discovery yield. He also emphasizes that discoverability isn't affected enough by getting a large number of followers next to your name for it to be a worthwhile pursuit. This corroborates with what was discussed previously: the internet's not about finding as many people as possible to pitch a message to, it's about finding the right people to pitch a message to. Just because a social media user follows an author on Twitter doesn't mean that user is going to pay attention to what the author has to say long term. Two-time *New York Times* bestselling author Dan Pink, one of Grahl's clients, is a great example of this. Pink has 200,000 followers, yet the average number of people that were clicking his links over a sustained period of time was 650 people. Grahl calls this an "abysmal" number, and he's right.[16] Getting a lot of followers might influence a few people through the social proof principle—that people will do things they see other people doing—but it won't have near the effect that a much smaller number of dedicated, passionate followers can have on the discoverability of a book online. Twitter may be the noisiest, unfiltered place on the web, and Facebook isn't far behind. Trying to get lots of followers is a waste of time if that's your only goal, because distracted people aren't going to engage with you in a meaningful way.

The point isn't, however, that social media is fruitless and we should abandon it all together. Instead, Grahl says to look at social media as the top of the sales funnel: use it to find people and get those people to build a deeper connection with an author. Unobtrusively direct them toward the author's website, and more importantly, the author's mailing list, because that's the most efficient place to move a reader down Jantsch's path to Referral. People may not know that building this initial connection with an author on social media was the first step toward discovering a book, but it is hard to argue that it had

zero effect in leading people down the road toward strengthening the reader-author connection.

Highlighting the importance of an author's mailing list is a passion of Grahl's. As it turns out, getting permission to contact a reader is tremendously more important than spending an excessive amount of time wrangling in Facebook likes or Twitter followers. Grahl has found that for every one book sold through social media, his clients can sell between four and nine through email.[17] Mintel's July 2012 *Online Living* report supports this: among adults with internet access at home, one in three individual said they would want to receive new product information announcements via email. From 2009 to 2011, the amount of email ads that resulted in a purchase tripled.[18] Of course, publishers have to give readers a reason to want to give the author permission to contact them—and let the author know what great, interesting content related to the audience the author should give away. Once they do, though, readers are much more likely to move up the chain toward Referral.

When I talked with Rusty Shelton, he explained the two separate categories he felt social media sites fell into. There are social websites for relationship building—or interacting with people you don't know, and social websites for relationship cultivating—or interacting with people that already know you. Blogs and Twitter are for relationship building; authors can follow new people and retweet what others say in the hopes that they will reciprocate and retweet the author's message, too. This can lead to new people discovering the author and starting a relationship.[19] Self-publisher John Locke did this by tweeting people who were talking about content related to his blog posts and asking them to check those posts out on his website. By promoting free content, the blog, instead of his book, he got people to go to his website, potentially sign up for his mailing list, and build a relationship with him that started from nothing.

Facebook and LinkedIn are for relationship cultivating; people are already fans of an author on these websites, so you don't need to worry about the person's discovery of him or her. Instead, focus on moving these fans toward, you guessed it, the author website. In this way, a

blog and Twitter are more important for raising *discovery*, but each of the two categories of social media can be utilized equally to build relationships and ultimately raise *discoverability.*

If you have a charismatic, likable author and want to put a book trailer or one of her speeches on YouTube, that's great. Make sure you put a link to that author's website somewhere in the description of the video. Want to take advantage of Goodreads giveaways, which are free and result in around 60% of giveaway winners reviewing the book they won? Do it, but make sure the author has a Goodread's profile and there's a link to his or her website somewhere on it.[20]

Give advice to authors on how to best use social media in order to make it as easy as possible for them to build relationships with readers there, but don't forget to let them know that social media is not a catch-all. Don't let social media lead authors down a garden path—don't let it mislead them—instead, use it to lead people to the author's website and mailing list.

GOOGLE IS A PUBLISHER'S BEST PUBLICIST

According to the company itself, more than one-hundred billion Google searches are made each month.[21] Combine this with the Codex statistic that 72% of people visited the search engine's site in the past week, and that's a lot of searches a lot of people are making. Only 1.1% of people who visit Google attribute it to the discovery site of a book, however, so how can publisher's take advantage of the huge reach of Google in order to generate a better discovery yield?

Rusty Shelton says that, if strategically used, Google has the potential to be a publisher's best publicist. He cites a George Washington University/Cision study that states more than "80% of journalists head online when researching stories."[22] When these journalists use a search engine, they are ostensibly searching for something. If you help your author build a coherent brand message and provide ideas for writing great blog posts on his or her website right from the beginning, you have a much higher chance of getting the website to show

up on the first page of Google's search results. If you succeed in this, you can effectively make your author the expert the journalist finds when searching for a story in the author's area. Getting the author's website to the first page of search results also doesn't hurt the Google-searching consumer's chance of discovering the author's book.

Shelton also found that around 50% to 60% of author-journalist connections originated from authors doing what John Locke did: using Twitter to find journalists within a topic area and sending those journalists links to the author's relevant blog posts.[23] It's the publisher's job to let authors know which journalists to connect with on Twitter, says Shelton, but once they do, authors can build relationships with bloggers and journalists via social media like they do with readers. This is the first step to getting the author's message onto the first page of the Google search around that author's name.

It doesn't hurt to make it as easy as possible for people who want to talk about your author on the internet to be able to do so. The more people that are talking about the author, the more people there will be going to the author's site, and the more people that go to the site, the higher it will be ranked on Google. By putting an author bio, headshot, book cover, blurbs, direct email, and direct phone number all in one place on the author website, you can encourage busy journalists and book reviewers to want to spread the author's message. A little goes a long way under tight deadlines.

Now that you've made it easy for the right journalists to notice the author, you can get the author's message noticed on the media sites where the target audience already is. Places like Forbes, the Huffington Post, Wired, and i09 are websites consumers visit daily. Finding your author's smart, interesting article on one of these sites might lead the reader to the author's bio at the end of the article. Put a link to the author's website in this bio and these articles become the on-ramp that gets people who just thought they were casually browsing the internet to stumble upon an author's website.[24] As long as you've attracted the right audience, these people are likely to slowly but surely become a loyal part of raising a book's discoverability.

While traditionally authors would pitch articles directly to journalists, instead of pushing a pitch, Google turns the relationship around by pulling an author's message toward the journalist seeking it out. This is critical in getting the author's message where the target audiences already are. As always, work with the author to provide a strategy for what journalists to attract with what type of blog posts. The less you focus on how to promote the book itself and the more you focus on strategizing how to get your author to join in on conversations that might lead to the book, the more likely people will be to find the author authentic and not realize the marketing that's going on. In order to funnel a larger group of the right people to an author website, publishers should invest in strategies to increase Google's discovery yield by taking advantage of its public relations capability.

Now that readers are on the author's website, what's next?

MAKE THEM GET OUT... THE MESSAGE

After publishers funnel the right people to the author's website and mailing list, how can they keep those people's attention long enough to get them to buy and promote the book to their social graphs? It's not easy to execute, but it's also not complicated: 1) give them more great, interesting content to get them hooked on the message, 2) give them a reason to promote the message or do something with the book other than just buying it, and 3) get them to leave and promote it.

Both Rusty Shelton and Tim Grahl say that finding a way for fans to openly and freely share content online as well as create outreach with this content pulls readers to the author instead of pushing them away. In order to both generate buzz and reward participants, this content must create value for the target customers—not the publisher. The more activities readers can do with a book once they're done reading it, the more likely those interactions will lead to them to intentionally or unintentionally promoting that book to other people. Creating an experience around the book that pulls in a community encourages the

extension of the message more than only talking about how good a book is. The point isn't to get the reader to Buy, remember, it's to get them to share and to Refer.

Mintel data, once again, supports Shelton's and Grahl's strategies: interactivity and reward-based marketing are the clearest solutions for attracting networkers.[25] Shelton had a few very successful examples of how publishers can do this. In the case of best-seller Ann Voskamp, whose debut novel *1000 Gifts* sold over half a million copies in 2011, promoting interactivity though social media was a huge factor in raising her book's discoverability.[26] Voskamp energized her fans by encouraging them to share the gifts in their life via a #1000gifts hashtag on Twitter. This put the book's title in front of people previously unaware with it and, if they were someone prone to be enthusiastic about the book's message, sparked their curiosity to learn more. These new potential-readers, without having yet read the book, were freely able to participate in spreading the reach of Ann Voskamp's message further outward to their network, and so on. Two years later, there's still a section on Voskamp's website displaying the latest tweets using the #1000gifts hashtag.

The other approach is foster the author-reader relationship by rewarding potential audiences with free content that they will find valuable. *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today,* and Amazon bestseller Michael Hyatt, another of Shelton's clients, clearly advertises a free ebook download of his in the top right corner of his website. This isn't a book he's promoting, it's bonus content to get readers hooked and start them on the path to referral. Getting it also requires that the reader sign up for Hyatt's mailing list, giving him even greater opportunities to continue to spread his message and strengthen the author-reader relationship. After signing up, Hyatt asks the user if she will share the availability of the free *Creating Your Own Life Plan* just freely given to her on her social media account. He gives readers content to share and makes it easy for them to share it, all while securing a closer connection to whoever signs up for his mailing list.

Any exclusive content like the ebook offered by Hyatt can be used to build trust between the author and reader, which moves them

forward on the Customer Referral Cycle. Strategize great content to give away and only make it available on the author's website. That way, readers have to come to the site to get it. Don't be afraid of giving away the author's best stuff. In fact, Tim Grahl says that this is exactly what you should be telling authors to give away! Imagine you're at a party and someone asks you about one of your books: what would you tell that person about it in order to get them interested in reading it? That's the content you want to tell your authors to give away online and through their email list.[27]

Don't think of giving away content as losing sales. It actually raises them—at least it does on Amazon. Books in the Amazon Search Inside program outsell books that don't by an average of 6.5% units, and one in three customers use the service before making a purchase.[28] People don't make commitments until they know what they're getting, so give them a preview of the author's book. It logically follows that the more publishers let readers in on the author's message, the more readers can share that message with others.

Enlisting others to promote a message will always be a more effective strategy than having your author scream at the top of his or her lungs and hope people care enough to hear. Once a publisher gets a reader to the author website, entertain or create an emotional connection with shareable, valuable content in order to get and keep the reader engaged. Once they're hooked, make them get out… and spread the message elsewhere.

THE NEXT STEP: BUILD YOUR OWN BRAND?

Once publishers have transformed all their author's web presences into referral-making machines, is there a next step? Maybe. All the steps to raising discoverability for books can be applied to doing so for a publishing company itself. By rebranding online, publishing houses can position themselves as a discovery site.

While the number two method of researching a product or service online is by checking reviews on Amazon or other review

sites, the number one place people go for research is straight to the source: the official brand website.[29] If publishers have made their author websites officially branded, why not move on to doing so for themselves? Of course, this is an enormous task, but if it would get an audience to come to a publisher's site for discovery instead of going to Amazon, wouldn't it be worth it? Don't try to replicate Amazon, though: the idea is still that attracting the right, passionate audience is better than attracting a large, distracted audience. For instance, don't build the most expansive book-related site on the internet, build a book site related to your brand specifically and then build a community around it. Blog about related book from other publishers, in fact. Pull readers through the Customer Referral Cycle by offering great, valuable content in exchange for signing up for a publishing houses' mailing list, then keep them by continually offering that content in email newsletters. If publishers don't make their company site about selling, but about creating knowledge around a specific branded subject, they can create value for the people that visit the site and give them a reason to share something of the publishers. Companies like Tor and O'Reilly have already done this.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The internet is different from other marketing mediums: communicating, not broadcasting, is the way to engage consumers to spread your message online. As Director of Self-Publishing and Author Relations at Kobo Mark Leslie Lefebre says, "Ask not what discovery can do for you, but what you are doing to be worth discovering."[30] By helping the author build a relationship with a target audience and target journalists, publishers can have a much greater impact on getting the right readers to share the author's message and raise the overall discoverability of books online.

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