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Top 10 Tips for Marketing a Book Using Social Media

By Jeff Furman, PMP

Many book authors today boost the marketing of their books using Social Media (SM). And more and more publishers are starting to appreciate and even expect these efforts, and to consider a writer's *platform* as part of their selection criteria when choosing an author, meaning: his or her website, number of followers, blogging history, SM choices, and overall Internet presence.

Toward helping other authors get published and more effectively market their books, following is my own personal Top 10 SM recommendation list, based on the marketing actions which have been the most successful for me so far with my book:

“The Project Management Answer Book,”
published by Management Concepts (Vienna, VA, 2011).

And note that you don't have to be Bill Gates to use these tips. They are easy to copycat from my hands-on examples below. And they can be used for marketing other goods and services, NOT just books.

Tip #1 – Start With Building A Professional Website

Publishers, as well as potential employers and prospective customers, will judge your website as a reflection of you and your future writing. So it's worth putting some good effort into your site – here are a few suggestions:

- It's probably worth it to hire a professional to build your site
- Choose a web-designer who comes recommended by someone you trust
- Take a look at some of the sites they have created, and make sure you like them
- Make sure you will be enabled to make future updates to the site yourself. For instance, verify up-front which program they will be using to build your site, and make sure it's one of the well-known products like WordPress or DreamWeaver (and not some esoteric software that may be less accessible / less user-friendly).
- Make sure you will know how to update your site, and will be granted update access, before you give your final sign-off.

Tip #2 – Pick A Couple Of Great Mentors To Model From

There are some awesome PMs who are also great marketers, and it's well worth it to *watch and learn* from them.

Examples: Three five-star PMs I have learned a great deal from are: **Elizabeth Harrin**, **Cornelius Fichtner**, and **Andy Crowe**:

- ⇒ Elizabeth Harrin, PRINCE2, FAPM, is a popular PM book author and award-winning blogger. A quick look at her blog: “*A Girl’s Guide To Project Management*” at: www.PM4Girls.com immediately reveals the high quality of her content, plus the exceptional level of *interactivity* she enjoys with her followers (a key success metric). This year, Elizabeth interviewed me several times for *blog interviews* (and also in-person for a video interview, at the PMI North American Global Congress in Dallas).
- ⇒ Cornelius Fichtner, PMP, is the creator and talented host of several industry-leading podcast series: [The Project Management Podcast](http://www.PM-Podcast.com) (www.PM-Podcast.com), “The PDU Podcast,” and “The PM Prepcast”). Cornelius interviewed me virtually using Skype, and also in-person, for several *podcast interviews*.
- ⇒ Andy Crowe, PMP, PgMP, is well-known for his best-seller: “*The PMP Exam: How To Pass On Your First Try*,” as well as for his other books and for Velociteach, the training company he is founder and president of. Andy Crowe wrote the foreword for my book, which was a great honor for me.

Tip #3 – Help Market Others (And Others Will Help Market You!)

Every day on the Internet, hundreds of people rediscover the old chestnut that the more you give, the more you receive. But with SM, the returns can be at warp-speed!

Example you can try...

- When someone blogs about your book, or interviews you, thank them by sending out a Tweet linking to their site (instead of yours)

In return, you may get a nice surprise, like...

- They RT (ReTweet) your Tweet, and
- Their *followers* RT *their* RT, and
- Your network instantly expands!
(and with significant contacts -- not just the “*you follow me – I’ll follow you*” crowd)

Tip #4 – Blog, but also... Boost Your Blog-posts With Social Media

A blog is a great way to establish an online community and share content, which can help market your book. But it also helps to give your blog-posts a push with:

Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, or any of the other latest-and-greatest SM tools you may prefer.

Example: *TweetLaunch* Your Blogs –

To expand their audience, many bloggers launch each post with a Tweet providing a link to the post.

Twitter helps you out by shortening the URLs you imbed in your Tweets (freeing up room for the 140 character maximum). And Twitter also gives you the option to include *hash-tags* and *handles* (User IDs). These make your Tweets easily findable by search engines, as well as by human searchers scanning the *Twitterverse*. Here is an actual Tweet I sent out which includes 2 hash-tags and 1 Twitter handle, as follows:

5 great Agile Events in Manhattan next month! (some free, some offering PDUs)
<http://www.Jeff-Furman.com/2012/01/01> #AgilePM #PMOT @AgileNYC

In the above Tweet:

- #AgilePM – is a hash-tag used for attracting Agile Project Managers,
- #PMOT - is a popular hash-tag used by Project Managers On Twitter, and
- @AgileNYC – is the handle for a popular Agile users' group which offers monthly educational seminars in Manhattan (and which is further referenced in my blog-post).

Tip #5 – Use Metrics To Measure Your Marketing Success

Like anything else, you can increase your success rate by proactively measuring your marketing results against your plan. There are many ways of capturing metrics, but here's an easy (and free!) way to collect some basic stats.

Example: **bit.ly**

Bit.ly is well-known as a software tool which shrinks a long address into a very short and handy URL.

But did you know that bit.ly can help you harvest stats (*search analytics*) for free? If you use shortened bit.ly addresses in your Tweets or other SM posts, you can then check your account at bit.ly.com to view the number of hits you have received to-date at that address.

This feedback can help you see what's working and what isn't. And later, you might decide to explore more sophisticated capture and measurement tools, such as Google Analytics.

Tip #6 – Write Online Articles / Guest Blogs

A good way to market your book is to write articles for online magazines, and share the articles electronically using SM. But take care to avoid the tone of: “Hey, buy my book” as the overriding theme in your article (or your parents might be your only readers). A suggestion instead when planning an article is to get into the spirit of: “Here’s how my article (or book, or training) will help *you!*”

Similarly, when querying a publisher about an article or book, instead of, “Hey, I want to get published!” a better approach/attitude is: “Here’s how my article can help your magazine by offering content targeted to your readers.”

And another venue popular these days is the *guest blog*, which also helps increase awareness for your book. I was asked to write several guest blogs recently, after my book came out:

Examples:

- I wrote a guest post for Linky Van Der Merwe’s blog-site based in Capetown, South Africa: <http://www.VirtualProjectConsulting.com>. It was fun working with Linky and receiving comments from her readers 8,000 miles away!
- And I wrote a guest blog for Ivan Lee at <http://www.PMHub.net> on the subject of PMI’s changes to the PMP Exam effective August 2011. It was gratifying that this post has had almost 5,000 hits to-date, plus almost 400 Social Media shares (per the search analytics documented on the PM Hub website).

Tip #7 – Contribute To Book Anthologies / Other Writers’ Books

It might not occur to many authors to contribute to someone else’s book. But it’s a unique opportunity for publicity and to expand your network, and it shows the reading public that your knowledge has depth beyond the content of your own book. It’s also good experience (and fun!) to stretch your writing muscles and adapt to another writer’s concept and style.

Examples: I wrote short pieces in 3 books which were published this year:

1. *Successful Project Management* – by Bonnie Biafore, Microsoft Press.
2. *The Book of Road-Tested Activities* – Compiled and edited by Elaine Biech, for ASTD Press and jointly for Pfeiffer: An Imprint of John Wiley & Sons.
3. *Stories of Unconditional Love, Lessons and Laughter* – An eBook from www.WeArePetNation.com (produced by author and media expert Cindy Ratzlaff).

Tip #8 – Fun With QR Codes!

You may already be familiar with QR Codes (Quick Response Codes), those quirky little coded designs that appear in magazine ads, store-front windows, and even on Linked profiles. But a great many people I meet still don't know what exactly they are used for. So I recommend the following idea for its ease-of-use and novelty.

Example: QR Code Stickers For Your Business Cards

An easy way to utilize this new technology is to create a QR code that points to the publisher's link for your book (or book blog, or LinkedIn profile, or to any URL you like). Then, print out your QR code on stickers that you can put on the back of your business cards, and you'll have a unique card which will stand out in the crowd.

Every time you give out your card, it will create a bit of a fun learning experience for the other person. They'll see how easy it is for them to point their smart-phone at your QR code and magically branch to your site, without their having to do any typing. And they (and their phone) will remember you and your book.

Question for PM World Today readers: Have you used QR Codes in ways that could further help book-authors? Feel free to share your ideas as replies to this article.

Tip #9 – Always Remember WIFM

Remember to keep your audience's *WIFM* first and foremost: What's In it For Me.

In a word, this means VALUE. Whether you're sending out a Tweet or starting a LinkedIn Discussion, strive to always give your followers a chunk of good info which can really help *them* (and not just publicize *you*).

And put some effort into coming up with a tasty nugget to go in the middle, such as a link they will be glad they took the time to click on.

(The key is to avoid posts which suffer from the *buy from me because my kids need new shoes* syndrome!)

Tip #10 - SM As A Supplement, Not A Substitute

Beware of the false sense of security that comes with Social Media. With one click, you send your message out *to the world!* But this can make you feel like you are getting a lot more accomplished than you really are.

In SM terms, are your Tweets or posts just *pushes* (one way communications?) Or are they hopefully also *pulls* (generating replies, responses, customers, and profit?) If you

are not getting the right quality and quantity of responses, you may need to rethink your SM strategy.

And it's good to keep in mind that *direct* connections are often the best. In-person is the ultimate, but one-to-one email, or direct messaging via SM sites, can also be very effective (much more so than mass-mailings, or status updates to SM sites, which both lack the personal touch that more direct communications bring).

CONCLUSIONS:

- Don't rely on only one approach or form of SM.
- Network as much as you can – both in-person as well as via SM.
- *Combine* SM + in-person networking where possible.
I have found that it can work equally well whether you connect virtually first and meet in-person later, or the other way around. But both is definitely best.

Best of luck to all authors and bloggers. And I'll be glad to connect, and to answer any questions I can for you.

About the Author

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Jeff Furman, PMP® has 15 years experience as an IT project manager for Fortune 500 companies in the NYC area, with specializations in application change management, infrastructure upgrades, and development tools support. He also has extensive experience as a corporate trainer, and in the past four years has trained more than 550 project managers toward their PMP. And in his Train-the-Trainer classes, he has helped more than 225 instructors sharpen their skills and attain their Certified Technical Trainer certification (CTT+) and Microsoft Certified Trainer (MCT). Jeff is the author of “The Project Management Answer Book,” published this year by [Management Concepts](http://www.managementconcepts.com) (www.managementconcepts.com). He can be contacted at: Jeff@Jeff-Furman.com and by phone at (201) 310-7997. His website is: www.Jeff-Furman.com, and info about his book can be found at: http://web7.pmds.com/mConcepts_ebiz/ProductDetail/tabid/55/Default.aspx?ProductId=338.