

Local Book Launch

In the digital age, many business owners and authors have lost sight of the value of offline marketing and PR. The following program, on the surface, may seem like a fair amount of work for a small number of book sales. However, as you'll discover, the influence and impact one makes locally can spiral up to tremendous impact on your journey to author*ity.

GOALS

- Create a local book launch and become “slightly” famous in your own backyard.
- Establish authentic media coverage you can leverage to larger platforms on radio, TV, magazines, & podcasts.
- Develop relationships with potential joint venture and alliance partners.

Step 1: Approach your local bookstore

Search for your hometown's local bookstore. In most medium and in every large metropolitan area, there are still locally owned bookstores. The owners are often on site and easy to speak with. In some cases, you may find more than one. Approach them all in the same manner. Your approach and discussion need to embrace WIFM (what's in it for me?) language. When you approach the owner, keep in mind his store, his goals, his pains, and his needs.

Start with an in-person approach. While everyone on the planet has their eyes glued to their smartphone, outliers are doing the opposite.

Walk into the store.

You can follow up with an email or phone call. However, a first contact in person will be memorable and if you do it properly, is impossible to be ignored.

SCRIPT: (Do not use verbatim. Adapt to suit your style.)

You: ***“Is the owner in?”***

Them: ***“What's this about?”***

You: ***“I'm a local author doing a book launch and wanted to discuss increasing your floor traffic. If he's not too busy, I need just a couple of minutes. Oh, by the***

way, I'm not selling anything. (smile) I'm another local business owner-author who loves books”

If a clerk is well trained to rebuff the walk-in copier salesman, you'll need to disarm the idea you may be selling. However, you state it, be gentle and smile. Align yourself (I'm another local business owner...) with him.

Key phrase to emphasize is increasing their floor traffic.

THAT is what this is all about. WIIFM.

If the owner is not in, get their contact information and return when they're in. If they are rarely or never on site, get their phone number and email.

You: ***“Hi, my name is David Meine. I’m a local business owner and author and I’ve got an idea I’d like to float past you.”***

“I’ve recently authored a book Eating to Live and would like to do a book signing at your place. I’ll do all the marketing and PR. There is no cost to you. And, as you probably already know, people rarely buy just one book, so the book signing should also generate incremental sales. What do you think?”

Key phrases/concept: You are not a salesperson. You'll do all the marketing and PR. No cost to you. Incremental sales.

Them: *“Sounds interesting. How would it work?”*

You: ***“You and I pick a date, probably a weekend, where I could set up a small table and case or two of books. I’ll work with the local media, chamber, and other businesses to drive traffic here. What’s your standard markup on a book?”***

Key Phrases/idea: You and I. Small table. Local media, chamber. Markup.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

“What’s your book about?” (He’s making sure you aren’t selling crap)

“We don’t have the space”

(Emphasize the small table, do a sidewalk sale, or even a tent)

“Are you with a book distributor”

“No. Like you, I prefer to work independent & without a middleman. What is your typical markup?”

“We only work with our book wholesaler”

“That’s understandable. They need to track ISBN’s and all. I would be happy to supply that info to Bowker if needed. What is the downside to having us work together to move more of your current books along with mine?”

“When is good for you?”

(Set a date no less than 30 days & no more than 90 days into the future)

No matter what they say, be sure to answer in a positive manner. The phrase, “I understand” goes a long way. Equally important, NEVER answer an objection without an immediate follow up question. Conversations are controlled by the person who is asking question-not necessarily speaking.

Set up your date and maybe write up a brief agreement to ensure he gets his retail markup on your book and agrees to cooperating on the book signing where necessary. Reiterate you’ll be doing all the marketing and outreach. (NOTE: If he has an email database and/or a website, provide your book graphics, book signing date, and a list of the bonuses you’ll be providing.)

Step 2: Approach Neighboring Businesses

After you seal the deal with your local bookstore it’s time to take that agreement and leverage it. (You may have been wondering about that last line in Step1: “list of bonuses” Wait... what?)

Immediately after you’ve shaken the hand of your bookstore owner, go to his neighbors. Like all retailers, the mega storm of Amazon has probably put a dent in their sales. Your approach (WIIFM) will become a breath of fresh air and could leverage you much further than a simple book signing. No matter what the store is, you can create honest value and potential traffic for them during the launch... and beyond.

You: “Hi, is the owner available?”

Them: “What’s this about?”

(Adapt the follow up question a bit)

You: “I’m doing an event next store and wanted to prepare the owner for more foot traffic on that day. Is he available for a moment?”

(They will get the owner. If not available, schedule a visit)

You: “Bob Jones, from XYZ bookstore and I are doing a book launch on October 12th at his store, right next to you. We’ll be generating a good amount of NEW foot traffic and I wanted to invite you to participate... probably get you a bunch of new customers also. I am assuming you can accept more customers-right?”

(Wait for answer)

“Great! When we have this event, we are inviting neighboring businesses to offer a coupon, discount, or gift... it’ll all go in the ‘swag bag’ we give to everyone who attends the launch. In addition, for everyone who purchases a book that day, we’ll personally direct them to your store to redeem the gift, coupon, or register for your Newsletter.”

“We’ll take care of any printing or logistics for you. What would be a high-value item or discount you would like to offer?”

(Wait for answer)

“Outstanding. Do you have a website or email database?”

(if “no” move on. If “yes” ask the following)

“Great. In addition to the live event, we’ll be doing some online marketing and social media. Can we set up a time in a couple weeks to review the graphics with you, so we present your bonus to a few thousand new people properly?”

Shake hands. Autograph a brief agreement and have them outline, show, or give you an example of their bonus. If they balk at all, help them CREATE an offer. Printing up a 10% coupon is easy. Creating any type of freebie or physical product is always better, if possible. Ask them for one of their highest, but low-cost products if they are open to a physical product. If they are a service provider, ask them to make the offer unique and add an expiration date to add a bit of urgency for the redeemer.

Ask them if you can put promotional materials in THEIR business promoting the book launch event. Since it is a cross promotion, they nearly always say yes.

Visit and strike agreements with no fewer than 5 businesses, but no more than 20. There is an odd psychology of bonuses. Too few, and it looks weak. When the bonus EXCEEDS the value of the item purchased, sales almost always increase. But, going too far with thousands of dollars in bonuses can plant a seed of doubt into anyone. (Who gives \$1,000 in value to buy a \$20 book?)

Before you go: Ask the owner if he is a member of the local chamber of commerce. Make a note in your files for the next step.

Once you have your share of agreements, it’s time to go to the chamber of commerce.

Step 3: Go to Your Chamber of Commerce

Let’s assume you have your book signing scheduled and 12 businesses offering over \$100 in bonuses. Your mission is to leverage other people’s desires to lift your own.

This is core concept in discussions with every single person and organization in this program (and for nearly everything, for that matter).

What does the chamber want?

1. You could ask them
2. You can easily assume they want
 - a. New members
 - b. Goodwill
 - c. More revenue
 - d. Influence in local government

As in the case of the bookstore owner, it's probably best to walk into the chamber. However, if you do and the decision maker is not there, go ahead and email/call and follow up with an in-person visit.

You: ***"I'm David Meine. I'm a local business owner and author. I'm doing a book launch signing at XYZ bookstore and have about a dozen businesses supporting and offering bonuses for the party. In fact, a couple of them are chamber members!"***

We have X, Y, Z companies (your members) participating in the swag bag. Interestingly, we have a few partners who are not chamber members... this would be another touch point for you and with public attendance, the chamber could capture significant exposure, if you want to be involved."

Them: "What are you asking? What type of involvement?"

You: ***"That is totally up to you. We don't have numbers yet, but with your sponsorship, the exposure online, in-person, and in the media could be significant. You could contribute in-kind products, discounts, or even help with signage."***

What have you sponsored before?"

Get them talking about how they work and what they've done in the past. It will be much easier to replicate a previous sponsorship than create a new program for them. In most cases, they already do ribbon cuttings for membership. You may or may not want to join the chamber. If you have not, consider what your annual membership could be leveraged with the networking among members, especially since you are giving them free exposure and PR.

This will most likely take more than a single meeting, so give yourself some time on your calendar to meet and greet, plus go back with an agreement after you discover their level of interest.

Step 4: Go to Your Local Media

You've created an event! Congratulations. Out of thin air you have pulled together hundreds of new customers, perhaps a dozen businesses and you have created...

News.

In nearly every medium city there is still a local newspaper. Nearly all of these are also locally owned businesses. Like your new friends, they are always seeking new subscribers.

How do they do that?

In many cases they use syndication from the National News desks to report on the same story everyone else is talking about. However, their unique angle... the one thing they have over CNN, ABC, NBC, FOX and all the rest is what you have created.

Local news... an event.

Radio, TV, & Newspapers get pitched... a lot. Your best bet for your hometown media is a walk-in. As hinted at with the bookstore and businesses, this can work for so many reasons:

An in-person visit means:

- Your face & personality are in the conversation (impossible with email or phone)
- You have a dialogue-not a monologue (so you can adapt to them instantly)
- It is nearly impossible to ignore you (easy with email)

Scenario A

You: ***“May I speak with the editor (or producer if radio or TV), I have some local News that may be of interest.”***

Them: “What’s this about?”

You: ***“I am a local business owner, and we are hosting an event and book launch that has some fascinating human interest angles your readers (viewers/listeners) would really get into. In fact, one of my articles about my book went viral on social media.”***

“This is not only an event, but a local story that has all the elements of a movie. Who could I speak with about this?”

Them: “Just drop off a press release and we’ll see.”

You: ***“Thanks. I have one here for you. Who should I put it to the attention to?”***

Get the contact information of the journalist. They may give you one for events, human interest, or book reviews. Get all 3 if you can. Be sure to ask for their email and phone.

Scenario B

You get to speak to the editorial desk or editor in chief on your first visit. Have a press release handy, but talk about the event, the human interest, the local flavor first. Hand them the press release after you share your story.

In either scenario, if you don't follow up, your chances are slim.

Call, email, and snail mail them more than once if needed. Local media is generally hungry for local stories that showcase the community, so you should get very little pushback.

Approach all media platforms that are local, no matter how small. The spiral effect of starting with small and local media and leveraging it up to regional and national can work if you work it. We'll cover that in a moment.

Step 5: Package & Promote

You've done all the hard work. Out of thin air you've created TANGIBLE value for dozens of businesses and maybe over 100 employees and their families. I know it's a "groaner" but, regardless of the economy, you've created an accelerant to making your neighborhood a better place to live.

If you are an organized person, you are ready to package this event up, promote it, and run it. However, if you are a creative, right-brainer, it's best to get some help with the following. There are a bunch of moving parts and questions that need to be addressed.

Branding

Your event should obviously be branded similarly to your book cover, fonts, graphics, and images. Be sure to put your logo and contact information on every piece produced.

Insurance

Welcome to the offline world. Your bookstore may already have a policy that works. But, since you are responsible for this new floor traffic and event, it makes sense to call your insurance broker and ask for information on a policy that lasts one day for your event. These are usually very affordable.

Parking

Most retail establishments have ample parking. If you do an exceptional job of promoting, parking overflow could result. Ask your business collaborators to have their employees park off-site the day of the event.

Signage

At the very least, you'll want a tabletop display featuring you, your book cover, and your main theme and benefit. In addition, depending on your event you may want to print up:

Flyers. Put in the stores announcing the event and bonuses

Backdrop banner. With your logo for photo opportunities

Press kit. To be used for your media outreach

Speaker kit. Like your press kit, but oriented to offering speaking gigs

Business cards. Insert in your book and use to get other people's cards.

Book synopsis. A one-sheet to hand out in lieu of your book

Website

You'll want to have graphics made up to share on other websites and newsletters.

There should be a variety of sizes of graphics. Make 2 sets. The first set should announce the event with a specific date, time, place, and contact info. Your 2nd set should be timeless. No date, time, or place. Feature your book, an endorsement or specific benefit to a potential reader.

Social Media

In addition to graphic banners for websites, recreate your banner to fit inside the boundaries of social media platforms where your audience travels. If your book is targeting baby boomers and seniors, you can probably pass on snap chat or tik tok. Make up a full set for Facebook including sizing for events, posts, page banner and ads. For Instagram, consider not only creating a "story" but a few fast videos.

Email Marketing

Your launch may or may not result in a large amount of book sales. In fact, even with sponsors, you may end up investing more in your event than you can profit from book sales.

Is this a negative ROI?

Not if you focus on engagement and branding. Use your event (and all interactions) to focus on one thing.

Community.

People dislike being pitched. They adore belonging to a group of like-minded people. When you create your event and leverage the local PR with a well-designed email campaign, you'll create relationships.

These relationships can come in the form of potential joint venture partners, media connections and yes, readers.

Email sequence that captures attention and build trust and likeability have the following elements:

Story. Don't focus on selling or even "informing." Tell a compelling short story in your email and leave breadcrumbs and cliffhangers embedded inside your message. Get them looking forward to your next email—not unsubscribing.

Brevity. Short emails are read. Long ones, in order to work, have to deliver tremendous entertainment (story) or very useful information. Be brief and be relevant.

Links. It's best to have only one call to action (CTA) and that link should be to one action the reader can take. Make the action simple. Don't send them to a full chapter of your book. Send them to a short survey, a new checklist, or a short video to further engage them.

Dialogue. Rare is the email system that is not a monologue. Creating dialogues is difficult in an email. To create engagement, have the link in your email go to a platform that allows people to share their voice. This could be a chat room, webinar, event, or social media group.

One of my favorite things to do is include one of my clients in an email. By featuring them, I not only take the spotlight from myself, but the content naturally leads to the results and benefits of my offer. In the P.S. ask the reader to hit "reply" and have a one-on-one discussion. You can mention you are looking for your next case study and perhaps they would be open? (Appeal to everyone's desire for their 15 min. of fame)

Once the event is over, take the press clippings, radio interviews, and any podcast interviews and update your press kit. With your new press kit, you can reach out to larger organizations repeatedly.

Conclusion

In summary, doing a local book launch is simple, fast, and friendly. It is not designed to make a ton of money, unless you have the bandwidth for a larger event. Making real connections in the media, business, and potential partnerships can 100X the value and ROI of the event itself.

Your book launch event can become the seed to an increasingly larger pool of connections.