

The Web Savvy Writer

book promotion with a high-tech twist



## Your Author Website: 21 Content Ideas for Profit and Publicity

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## Why Every Author Needs a Website

The web is where you want to be if you're serious about promoting your books in the 21st century. More than one billion people worldwide use the Internet and over 200 million of them have bought a book online. Many more have learned about a book online and purchased it in a local store. Online book promotion is the best way for authors to reach this large, global audience at a low cost.

A website is the core and starting point of any online book promotion campaign. Despite the current popularity of blogs, podcasts, and ezines, your website is still your primary online "home" for information on your book and other products and services.

The following are some examples of what you can do with a focused, quality website:

- Drive book sales for commercially published books
- Sell supplemental products, such as audio CDs, courses, special reports, and consulting
- Sell self-published books directly to the public
- Develop a community for your readers
- Position yourself as an expert on a specific topic
- Display an online portfolio of writing samples if you also work with editorial or commercial clients

Creating a website that generates results is all about content. In this special report, you'll learn about 21 types of content that develop your expert image, drive traffic, add pizzazz, and earn advertising and affiliate revenue, all with the goal of generating more profits as an author.

## Setting Goals

Before you create your website, you need to set goals for what you hope to achieve. Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, publish through a commercial publisher or self-publish, you obviously want your site to promote your books and help you earn more money. But you need to be more specific than that.

Are you primarily interested in selling books? Or do you want to sell other products and services as well? Are you hoping to garner major media coverage or establish yourself as a professional speaker? Write down your target audience and goals and keep these in mind as you plan and create your site.

## Content That Positions You as an Expert

One of the primary reasons that many authors create a website is to position themselves as experts in their field. Here are eight content ideas to help you do just that.

### #1 Book Information

The core component of any author website centers on the books you've written. Regardless of what else your site promotes, your book is essentially your "calling card" and you must present it strategically on your site. How you position this depends on what drives your site and how many books you've written. Obviously, if you've written a single book then that book should be the main focus. If you've written multiple books, you'll probably want to highlight your latest book on your home page and have a link to information about each of your other books. In addition to basic book information such as a book summary and purchase details, consider including the following:

- A book excerpt
- Table of contents
- Book reviews
- Multimedia book presentation
- Reading group guides



The most common format for online book excerpts is PDF, which stands for Portable Document Format. If you published your book with a commercial publisher, ask if you can post an excerpt on your website. Many publishers will provide a PDF excerpt for you. If you self-published your book, you might be able to get a PDF from your typesetter. Otherwise, it isn't difficult to create your own PDFs. To create a PDF, try the Create Adobe PDF Online service ([createpdf.adobe.com](https://createpdf.adobe.com)).

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## #2 Your Biography

A bio is a critical part of any author website, and every site should have one. Whether you're trying to reach readers, the media, or potential clients, people want to know who you are. There are essentially two types of bios:

- **Traditional bio.** A traditional bio is useful for authors who want to emphasize their credentials. Most nonfiction authors fall into this category.
- **Narrative bio.** The narrative approach works particularly well for authors of fiction or creative nonfiction who essentially want to tell a story through their bio.

When writing your bio, consider your audience. If your goal is to sell books on financial planning (as well as fill your seminar seats and get hired for speaking engagements), your bio needs to reflect your expert qualifications as a financial planner. If you're trying to encourage potential readers to buy your mystery novel, create a bio that piques the interest of a mystery fan.

Also, consider creating both a long bio (multiple paragraphs) and a short bio (a few sentences) to use for different purposes.

## #3 Résumé and Credentials

Many authors include a résumé or a list of credentials on their websites. This is particularly important for nonfiction authors whose credibility relies on solid professional expertise or authors who offer consulting or related services. If your work history is important to potential clients, create a traditional résumé that includes a list of your writing credits. Another option is to create a backgrounder. It's similar to a résumé, but emphasizes qualifications and writing credits over jobs held. A backgrounder could include the following:

- Name and contact information
- Areas of specialties
- List of book credits
- List of article credits
- Summary of work experience
- Other relevant skills
- Professional credentials

You can include a résumé or backgrounder in text format on your site, as a Word document, or as a PDF. Text and PDF are the most common formats, and some

authors include both. To create a PDF, try the Create Adobe PDF Online service ([createpdf.adobe.com](https://createpdf.adobe.com)).



Remember, anyone on the Internet can read what you post in an online résumé or backgrounder. Pay attention to the level of personal information that you include. In general, it's best to avoid listing your physical location unless it's a business address. Renting an inexpensive mailbox is one way to provide address information without disclosing the location of your personal residence.

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#### #4 Online Media Kit

Creating an online media kit is essential for any author looking to get the attention of the media. The content on your site may be appropriate for both your readers and the media, so you'll have to decide how to organize for maximum value.

One way to handle this is to target your site to readers and then create a special section for the media to which you link from your home page. This online media kit can contain special content just for the media as well as links to content that's appropriate for multiple audiences.

Your online media kit could include the following:

- Basic book information
- Book excerpt
- Table of contents (for non-fiction books)
- Author bio
- Press releases
- Sample questions for the author
- Media clips
- Author interview
- Reviews
- Story ideas for journalists
- Multimedia book brochure
- Author audio and video

## #5 List of Services

If you offer consulting, coaching, speaking, or other writing services related to your area of expertise, create a page that describes your services. For some authors, their book is merely a promotional tool for their other products and services. In this case, provide even greater emphasis on this information on your site.

## #6 List of Credits and Clients

Listing writing credits and clients is another common content component on an author's website. It can also help define your expertise in a particular specialty. For example, let's say that you're a sports nutritionist and that in addition to publishing books on your specialty, you contribute to major magazines, give speeches, and offer consulting services. A list of credits in this field can help potential clients and editors decide that your background is a good match for their project as well as further position you as an expert in your particular niche.

## #7 Testimonials

Have you amassed a collection of stellar testimonials about your book? Has a well-known expert or celebrity given you a positive endorsement? Include these words of praise on your website. However, be sure to ask first so that people aren't surprised when they see their name online.

## #8 Contact Information

Even with great credentials, you can lose sales and potential clients if your site visitors don't know how to reach you. Make it easy for readers, editors, agents, and other potential clients to get in touch. In general, prominently displaying your email address is probably sufficient contact information, but if you have a business you may want to add your phone number as well. Contact information can be at the bottom of every page on your site or on a special contact page. You can also use a form to let your site visitors contact you.

## Content That Drives Traffic

In many cases, it's the quality of your site's traffic rather than the sheer quantity that makes the difference in your success. After carefully determining the target audience you want to visit your site, consider these four content ideas that will drive traffic.

### #9 Blog

Do you have a blog to promote your book? If not, get one. Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, a blog can help you develop and communicate with an audience for your writing. Although a blog can't replace a traditional website, it's a powerful online marketing tool, and you should make the most of it. You can incorporate your blog into your existing website or host your blog on its own domain and link to it from your main site.



Not familiar with the details of blogging? A weblog, more commonly known as a blog, is a web-based journal with frequent, dated postings. Blogging started as a popular online pastime, but has now become a viable business tool as well.

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Some blogging services to try include:

- ▶ **Blogger** ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com))
- ▶ **TypePad** ([www.typepad.com](http://www.typepad.com))
- ▶ **WordPress** ([www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org))

### #10 Resource Center

As a service to site visitors, many authors include a list of related links. This can be as simple as a single page with categorized groupings of links. Alternatively, you can devote a multi-page section to links and resources. Some authors even create a separate website related to their topic of interest. Including affiliate links in your resource list is a source of additional revenue for many authors. Some examples include:

- A cookbook author includes a page on his site with links related to his favorite cuisine, Asian fusion, which would be of interest to his target audience.

- The author of a book on feng shui creates a section on her site with multiple pages of content related to her specialty.
- A travel writer who specializes in travel to Mexico creates two websites: one for her travel writing and one for travelers to Mexico that contains solid information of real value to her target audience. On the Mexico site, she mentions her travel writing expertise in this area and includes links to purchase her books.

### #11 Message Board

If you specialize in a particular topic, you might want to consider creating a message board for your audience to communicate with each other. In general, most website message boards get little traffic unless the author or topic is very popular, so consider carefully before investing time in a developing a message board.

### #12 Ezine

An ezine or online newsletter is another way of communicating with your target audience and, in many cases, is more effective than a message board. You can quickly and inexpensively set up a basic ezine and start sending it to subscribers on a regular basis (such as weekly, biweekly, or monthly). By posting past issues on your site, you can generate more web traffic and reach an even wider audience. Some email marketing services to consider:

- ▶ **Aweber** ([www.aweber.com](http://www.aweber.com))
- ▶ **Constant Contact** ([www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com))
- ▶ **IntelliContact** ([www.intellicontact.com](http://www.intellicontact.com))

## Content That Makes Money

Naturally, you want your website to help increase your profits. But there are also other ways to earn money from your site. Here are three of them.

## #13 Advertising

Certain sites can profit from the careful use of advertising. One of the easiest ways to start generating advertising revenue from a small site is to join Google AdSense ([www.google.com/adsense](http://www.google.com/adsense)). Google AdSense enables you to insert preformatted HTML code into your web pages that displays as blocks of advertising on your site. The content of the ads directly relates to the content of the web page, so if your page contains information about travel in London the ads will too. When visitors click an ad, you generate revenue.

It costs nothing to sign up for AdSense. Advertising won't generate a fortune in most cases, but can help offset the cost of your site.



It's important to keep in mind when advertising is and isn't appropriate, which is a judgment call for most authors. Personally, I don't recommend using ads on pages designed to showcase your book, background, or services, but they can work nicely on resource or informational pages.

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## #14 Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing programs enable you to receive commissions by referring your site visitors to other sites where they can make purchases. One of the most popular affiliate programs among the author community is the Amazon Associates program ([www.amazon.com/associates](http://www.amazon.com/associates)).

With Amazon Associates, you can provide links from your site to any product available on Amazon.com, such as books you have written or other products you recommend. You're paid a commission when a site visitor clicks the link on your site and purchases the item from Amazon.

Amazon may be one of the largest affiliate programs, but it certainly isn't the only one. Other programs to consider are Commission Junction ([www.cj.com](http://www.cj.com)) and LinkShare ([www.linkshare.com](http://www.linkshare.com)), which enable you to sign up as an affiliate for multiple companies. Although you can make money as an affiliate, it's important not to go overboard. Choose the programs that best match the interests of your target audience.

## #15 Ecommerce Functionality

If you want to sell print books, ebooks, booklets, CDs, or other material directly from your site, you'll need ecommerce functionality. Before setting up your own online store, however, consider your options. If you want to sell books that you published with a commercial publisher you may simply need to join a program like Amazon Associates.

If you do want to set up your own ecommerce system, you can implement a robust, full-service ecommerce solution, or simply sign up with a credit card processing service to enable you to take credit card payments from site purchasers. For most authors, the second option is more suited to your sales volume and more cost-effective as well.

Some choices to consider:

- ▶ **ClickBank** ([www.clickbank.com](http://www.clickbank.com))
- ▶ **PayPal** ([www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com))
- ▶ **1ShoppingCart.com** ([www.1shoppingcart.com](http://www.1shoppingcart.com))

## Content That Adds Pizzazz

Want to spiff up your site even more? Here are six extras that add pizzazz and interest to your website.

## #16 Audio Messages

If you think you can reach your target audience through the spoken word, consider posting a recorded audio message. For example, you may want to post a website greeting, introduce the topic of a book you published, or read a passage from a work of fiction or poetry.

One technique to avoid, however, is having your audio message automatically play as soon as visitors reach your website. Studies have shown that automated audio messages tend to annoy rather than entertain most site visitors. So keep your audio optional for best results.

Audio recording and hosting services to check out include:

- ▶ **AudioAcrobat** ([www.audioacrobat.com](http://www.audioacrobat.com))
- ▶ **AudioGenerator** ([www.audiogenerator.com](http://www.audiogenerator.com))

▶ **Flash Audio Wizard** ([www.flashaudiowizard.com](http://www.flashaudiowizard.com))

## #17 Video Messages

A video message is another option to consider. You can post a video clip you already have, such as one of you presenting, speaking, or doing something related to the subject matter you cover in your writing. Or if you have a camcorder, you can record your own video message. Some interesting ideas:

- A travel writer could post a short travel video of a favorite destination
- A food writer could record a video of cooking techniques
- The author of a book on skiing might create a video illustrating some of the ski techniques discussed in his book



Remember that video takes up bandwidth, so focus on creating short clips that serve as a marketing tool rather than long instructional clips.

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Some video options to consider:

- ▶ **InstantVideoGenerator** ([www.instantvideogenerator.com](http://www.instantvideogenerator.com))
- ▶ **SWiSH Video2** ([www.swishzone.com](http://www.swishzone.com))
- ▶ **Visual Communicator 2** ([www.seriousmagic.com](http://www.seriousmagic.com))

## #18 Images of Book and Magazine Covers

Small graphic images of the covers of your books or covers of magazine issues to which you've contributed give site visitors a clearer idea of your accomplishments. Your publisher or editor can usually provide you with JPEG or GIF images of your book covers or of magazine covers of the issues in which your article appears.

## #19 Calendar of Events

If you do a lot of personal appearances to promote your writing, speak at conferences, participate in radio or TV interviews, or conduct training seminars, posting a calendar of your activities is a must. You can get creative and design an actual calendar with search capabilities, but a simple list will suffice for all but the most active speakers. Listing your prior appearances also helps promote your professional reputation.

## #20 Your Photo

An author photo enhances your website and helps you reach out to your audience. In general, an author photo is a good idea unless you have strong issues regarding privacy, for example:

- You simply don't feel comfortable posting your photo online
- You write under a pseudonym and don't want to reveal your identity
- Your image doesn't match the type of writing you do (for example, you're a woman who writes books for teen boys under a masculine pseudonym or you're a 90-year-old great-grandmother who writes steamy romance novels)

## #21 Multimedia Book Presentations and Brochures

Creating multimedia presentations and brochures for your book is an investment in both time and money, but there is a solid payoff for many authors. Multimedia combines audio, video, text, and still images and can attract visitor attention better than static text alone. A multimedia ebook creation program to consider is Desktop Author ([www.desktopauthor.com](http://www.desktopauthor.com)).

## About The Web-Savvy Writer

*The Web-Savvy Writer: Book Promotion with a High-Tech Twist* shows you how to develop a cost-effective, targeted online book promotion campaign, assuming no prior technical skill other than basic computer knowledge.

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[www.websavvywriter.com](http://www.websavvywriter.com)



"The Web-Savvy Writer is an indispensable guide to the very latest trends in online book promotion, a must for any author who wants to succeed in today's competitive publishing environment. This book is jammed with information on everything from online promotion basics to emerging technologies such as podcasting, blogging, and RSS, offering detailed guidance on how to promote both your book and your career as an author."

—Dan Poynter, author of *The Self-Publishing Manual* ([www.parapublishing.com](http://www.parapublishing.com))

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Filled with tips, resources, examples, and hundreds of live web links, this essential tool will help you:

- Develop a website that drives book sales
- Create an online book promotion strategy that reaches thousands more potential readers than any in-person promotion
- Use the Internet to develop your author platform and expert image
- Profit from new technologies such as blogging, podcasting, and RSS
- Quickly create digital products based on your book's content and automate their sale on the web
- Create an attention-getting online media campaign that attracts both the press and potential readers
- Save time and money by choosing the most cost-effective products and services and automating your online book promotion campaign

"What is impressive about Rutledge's guide is its happy blend of analytic overview and practical detail about becoming web savvy. Every page has numerous easy-to-understand suggestions that will assist an author with marketing in this web-dominated era."

— Lee Foster, Lowell Thomas award-winning travel author ([www.fostertravel.com](http://www.fostertravel.com))

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## The Web-Savvy Writer on the Web

### The Web-Savvy Writer Website

The “go to” website ([www.websavvywriter.com](http://www.websavvywriter.com)) for any author interested in promoting online, this site keeps you up-to-date on the ever-changing world of online book promotion. It offers:

- An extensive collection of resources, links, and free content
- Special reports, workbooks, and audio seminars/CDs
- News on upcoming teleseminars and classes

### The Web-Savvy Writer Blog

The Web-Savvy Writer blog ([www.websavvywriter.com/blog](http://www.websavvywriter.com/blog)) provides the latest news on online book promotion, commentary on industry events, and tips and techniques you can use in your own book promotion efforts. Read the blog directly from the web or subscribe to its RSS feed at [feeds.feedburner.com/websavvywriterblog](http://feeds.feedburner.com/websavvywriterblog).

### The Web-Savvy Writer Podcast

You can listen to the podcast directly from The Web-Savvy Writer blog ([www.websavvywriter.com/blog](http://www.websavvywriter.com/blog)), subscribe via your favorite podcatcher, or download to play on your iPod or other MP3 player.

### The Web-Savvy Writer Ezine

Each issue includes a feature article, the latest news on online book promotion, useful tips for authors, and subscriber-only discounts on upcoming products, services, and classes. Sign up for your subscription at [www.websavvywriter.com](http://www.websavvywriter.com).

## About the Author

[Patrice-Anne Rutledge](#) is a bestselling author, successful technology journalist, and online book promotion expert who uses websites, blogs, and other online marketing techniques to promote her books and writing career. Patrice has authored 24 nonfiction books for leading publishers including Pearson, Macmillan, Prentice Hall, Random House, and Ziff-Davis Press.