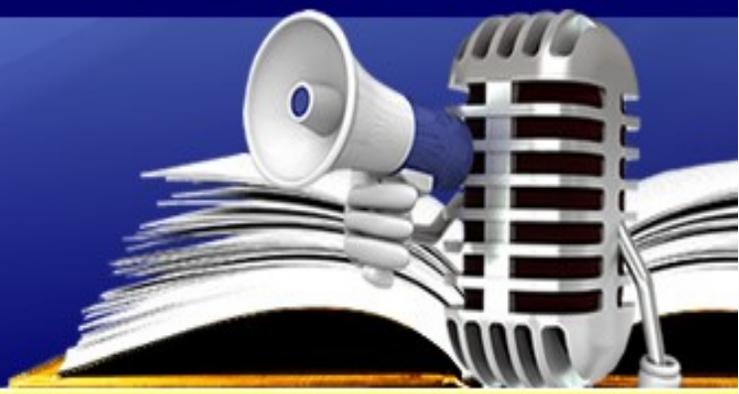


# BUILD BOOK BUZZ



## Author Book Signing Tips

By Sandra Beckwith

Nearly every aspect of the book publishing industry – including the traditional book signing and reading – is evolving into something different and more interactive. Authors can even do them virtually, using webinars to address large audiences and **Authorgraph** to sign their e-books.

In-person events are more engaging than ever, with demonstrations, question-and-answer sessions, and hands-on activities. If you've got a new book and want to do signings, don't expect to sit at a bookstore table and welcome a crowd of book lovers anxious to get your signature. Simply writing the book isn't enough anymore – you have to earn a book event purchase by interacting with people, whether the event is at a traditional bookstore or a different type of retailer.

With all these ongoing changes, it's hard to know what works and what doesn't. Here are six tips for planning an event that will sell books and leave you and your host smiling.

- 1. Plan an event, not a book signing.** You want to engage your target audience, whether your book is fiction or nonfiction. When Marcia Layton Turner did a book signing event at her local Barnes & Noble for [\*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Vision Boards\*](#), she didn't sit at a table near the entrance. Turner taught store customers gathered in a second floor function room how to create vision boards with materials provided by the author and the store. "I shared the book's message and showed how to apply it," she says.
- 2. Consider non-bookstore locations.** Go where you'll find your audience – and it might not be at a bookstore. Be creative – if your book is a vegetarian cookbook, schedule an event at a natural foods market or the produce section of a supermarket. Your new cozy mystery takes place at a museum? Talk to the most popular museum in your area about hosting a presentation and signing. When Irene Levine introduced her community to [\*Best Friends Forever: Surviving a Breakup with Your Best Friend\*](#), her hair stylist hosted a book signing at the salon. Their friends brought friends, too. Borders sold books on site to about half of the 150 attendees.

3. **Market to warm.** Are you an active member of a supportive group? Jackie Dishner, author of the regional travel book [Back Roads and Byways of Arizona](#), sold more than 60 books at the weekly meeting of her businesswomen's group. She kept members informed of her progress as she researched and wrote her first book, so they welcomed the opportunity to celebrate its publication with her. Do you belong to a similar group that might support you?
4. **Develop a signature activity.** Megan McCafferty, author of the wildly popular Jessica Darling young adult series, plays off the Barry Manilow songs featured in the series books by offering [Barry Manilow karaoke – Barryoke](#) – at her book signing events. It's irresistible.
5. **Don't approach a bookstore to discuss a signing unless you've written your book for a wide consumer audience.** Many bookstores won't host book launch events when it's clear that the audience for the book is too narrow – perhaps it applies only to accountants or nonprofit directors. Ask yourself if there's a better place to meet your niche audience face-to-face. Go where the people you wrote the book for are already gathered.
6. **Do your share to get the word out.** Don't expect your event host to do all the promotional work – collaborate so you reach as many people as possible. Contact the press, send an e-mail to locals in your address book and ask them to forward it, and [use social networking tools](#) such as Facebook events and Twitter to spread the word.

Be prepared to invest time. Planning, promoting, and executing a successful book signing takes time, thought, and effort. It will all be worth it, though, as you watch those cases of books empty and your hand gets tired from writing with your favorite pen.

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