

BUILDING
Online
RELATIONSHIPS

One Reader At A Time

LA SHAUNDA C. HOFFMAN



HERE'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT *Building Online Relationships: One Reader At A Time*

“LaShaunda’s book on promoting is a very detailed guide to getting your promotions on track. With years of experience, LaShaunda is sharing everything she’s done and giving you the inside track on how to stay on track for a whole year. You can’t go wrong with this informative manual, and it’s recommended for newbies as well as seasoned authors.”

—Barbara Joe Williams, author of *Forgive Us This Day*
Amazon author’s page: <http://goo.gl/hCOKBb>
Facebook: www.facebook.com/Barbarajoe22
Twitter: www.twitter.com/BarbaraJoe22
Website: www.barbarajoe.webs.com

“LaShaunda C. Hoffman is one of our literary legends! Her work with SORMAG has launched many authors on to greatest. If there is anyone capable of providing authors with a roadmap to success it’s LaShaunda. She has spent years cultivating relationships and marketing strategies that are needed to market and promote books. Her book, *Building Online Relationships – One Reader At A Time*, is a written legacy of those master years and a way for upcoming artists and authors to reach their full potential. If I were a betting woman, I would bet the house on LaShaunda C. Hoffman and all of her new adventures.”

—Ella Curry, President of **EDC** Creations
Black Pearls Magazine Online-Founder
Black Authors Network Radio-Founder
Social Media Expert - Internet Publicist - Brand Strategist

“Stepping out and revealing your book to the masses can be overwhelming and scary. LaShaunda Hoffman has been able to take that fear and turn it into action. The how is answered and the steps are given. I only wished that I had this resource when I first came out.”

—Tamika Newhouse

“I’m a fan of SORMAG, have been since LaShaunda Hoffman started her multicultural magazine in 1999. When I became a published author, SORMAG was first and still remains one of my main online book promotion sources. LaShaunda offers twenty-five, easy-to-digest lessons that not only will guide a newbie author, but the veteran author who has grown weary of doing the same old promotions with no results. I can guarantee she will start the book marketing juices flowing for many authors with her debut, *Building Online Relationships One Reader At a Time.*”

—Tyora Moody, Author of the Serena Manchester Series, Victory Gospel Series and the Eugeena Patterson Mysteries.

“There can never be too many books on marketing and promoting and this one should definitely be added to your arsenal when it comes to promoting your books. LaShaunda has done an excellent job on doing all the work for you, except the implementation. She has broken each chapter down by lessons (twenty-five to be exact) and each lesson has its own topic. She has covered most, if not all, of the topics that any author will be faced with when trying to promote their work. In the back of the book she has included worksheets and a calendar to keep you more organized and efficient. This tool will help any author use their time more wisely. Without a doubt, *Building Online Relationships: One Reader At A Time* is well worth the investment. Her years as a business professional have qualified her to be an expert in her field.”

—Paulette Harper, author and owner of WNL Virtual Tours

“I believe that when it comes to online promotion, LaShaunda Hoffman and SORMAG are one of the best in the industry! When I started out in the literary industry several years ago, LaShaunda was one of the people I wanted to emulate. She was featuring some of my favorite authors and I was so very impressed. I’ve studied and followed

LaShaunda and will continue to do so in hopes that I can one day be as proficient as she is.”

—Renee Spivey, Literary Signature Services

“All of her years of experience are DETAILED in one solid format. A clear and concise action guide for any author who is serious about promoting their book.”

—Debra Owsley of Simply Said Reading Accessories

www.simply-said.net

www.simplysaidreadingaccessories.blogspot.com

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“5 out of 5 stars! *Building Online Relationships: One Reader At A Time* is the most comprehensive guide for online promotions on the market today. Hoffman gives writers step-by-step tips on how to successfully promote their books online while continuing to focus on the primary goal of writing. There is a wealth of information, including how to successfully do a blog tour, how to create an online promotional budget, and figuring out who your reader is. Hoffman also includes schedules and worksheets to help the writer to achieve specific goals on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. This book is not something to be read in one sitting. The book is meant to be read in stages so that you can complete the worksheets and calendars according to the different goals you’re trying to reach. One of the many standout tips of this book is to not become a “drive by” author in different social media groups and forums. Many writers need to definitely take heed of this advice. *Building Online Relationships: One Reader At A Time* provides excellent information not just for writers, but other literary professionals can benefit from some of these tips as well.”

—Radiah Hubbert of Urban Reviews

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Although the author and publisher have exhaustively researched all sources to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in this book, we assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any other inconsistencies herein. Readers assume all responsibilities for their promotional ventures.

DEDICATION

This workbook is dedicated to newly published authors and writers with a few books under their belts who feel overwhelmed when it comes to online promotion. Hopefully, these lessons will teach you how to create a plan that will assist you in introducing you and your book to the reading public.

IN MEMORY OF

Brenda Joann Turner
(1947-2011)

My mother, best friend and number one fan.
Thanks for believing in me.
Until we meet again.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Thank you Renee Daniel Flagler, Pat Simmons and Sylvia Hubbard, who told me at the Fall Into Literature Conference in 2011 to write something to help writers learn how to promote. Advice taken.

Thank you to my St. Louis Christian Writers Group: Phyllis, Ellen, Suzanne and Terri for encouraging me each month. I'm thankful for our friendship.

Thank you Dr. Linda Beed, my writing mentor, whose weekly calls help keep my writing dreams on course.

Thank you LaTara V. Bussey, my business/life coach, for showing me that fear will always be there, but it doesn't have to control me.

Thank you Bridgette, Stephanie, Antoinette and Socrotiff for always believing your sister was a writer and one day there would be a book with her name on it.

Thank you Pamela Vega, Brenda Dirks, Michele Williams-Perry and Kate Swat, my sisters at work, for believing in my dream and for your encouragements over the years.

To my Virtual Tea Members: Danyelle Scroggins, Sheryl Lister, Tracee Garner, W. Parks Brigham, Dr. Linda Beed, Jeanette Hill, Maurice Gray, Cynthianna Matthews, Sharisa Robertson and Ashley Sauls. Thank you for taking me to my next level—coaching. As a teacher, I could not have asked for better students.

To my Indie sisters: Barbara Joe Williams, A'ndrea Wilson, Kianna Alexander, Angelia Vernon Menchan, Iris Bolling, Rose

Jackson Beaver, Shelia Goss, Marissa Monteilh, Tyora Moody and Michelle Stimpson, thank you for paving the way and sharing your knowledge with me. I truly appreciate sitting at your feet and learning about the business.

Thank you Jessica Tilles for helping me bring this book to life. Your encouraging emails made this a wonderful experience.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for being the stars in my life and helping my writing path shine brightly.

A special thank you to my family: Clyde, Nichaela, Clyde, Jr. and Sean. Prayers could not have given me a better family. I'm truly thankful you put up with my writer madness and understand why my face is glued to a laptop most days. Indeed, some days it drives you all crazy, but you've never stopped supporting my dreams and telling me that one day those dreams would become real. I love you with all my heart.

Last, but not least, I must thank God for seeing the writer inside me before I did. For whispering in my ear "You're still in control" on those days I was allowing fear to control me. I'm so blessed to have a Father like You in my life. Thank you, God, for carrying me on those days I couldn't carry myself. I look forward to the books we will write together because I know I can't do this career without You and I don't want to.

If I left anyone out, please don't take it personal. There's just not enough paper to say "thank you" to everyone, so I say it here: Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart.

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INTRODUCTION

You are probably wondering who I am and what I know about promotions. As founder and editor in chief of *Shades of Romance Magazine*, affectionately known as SORMAG, an online magazine promoting authors and books to a massive community of readers, I know promotions. This book was written for one reason: to share lessons learned on my journey of promoting SORMAG since 2000 so that you, too, can be successful with your promotions.

A few months after launching SORMAG, it welcomed eighteen thousand visitors, and was awarded *Writer's Digest's* "101 Best Writing Sites," which is a big deal for a new site. SORMAG has been featured in *Essence* magazine, and in 2014, it was nominated for an African American Literary Awards Show award.

For the last two years, I received the Black Pearls Literary Excellence award from Black Pearls Magazine so all that promoting was paying off.

For fifteen years, I have facilitated workshops, written articles, and monthly columns on what I know best—promotions. My online radio show and two podcasts—The Writer's Café and See Ya On The 'Net—Online Promotion Tips—are heard by thousands.

Aside from being a featured author in the *How I Met My Sweetheart* and *When Women Become Business Owners* anthologies, and currently writing a middle school fantasy, I am an ex-Navy girl working for the government who is happily married with children.

Over the years, I've learned the importance of promotion, a mailing list and online networking. These three things have

helped me turn SORMAG into an award-winning, online magazine. Online promotion works because of the power of word of mouth. People will talk about you and your book, and these lessons will help you to get people talking about you and your book.

Now that you know who I am, let's talk promotion!

WHAT IS PROMOTION?

For writers, promoting and writing go hand-in-hand. If you think differently, getting your book before readers will be very hard. If no one knows your book exists, you can't make a sale.

This workbook is a guide to helping you make the best of your promotion time. To do that, we must start with one simple question: *What Is Promotion?*

Promotion is raising customer awareness of a product or brand, generating sales and creating brand loyalty.

However, I define promotion as introducing a reader to your book, selling the book to the reader and adding that reader to your community as a loyal customer.

I've heard a lot from writers who are disappointed with their promotion, be it free or paid. They believe that if they don't make a sale their promotion has failed.

This isn't true. Promotion isn't about the sale. Promotion is about keeping yourself in front of the reader so they know who you are.

People buy from people they trust. If they don't know you, they have a hard time spending their money on you.

That's why businesses advertise, so you know who they are and feel comfortable enough to patronize them. The same goes for book promotion.

You do the blog tour, you buy ads in online magazines, you do the radio interviews and you do the blog interviews, so you can introduce yourself to readers or listeners who visit these sites, magazines or shows.

Now I want you to be the book buyer.

Do you buy the book the first time you see a promotion for it?

Do you click on the link and check out the author?

Do you look it up online in the bookstores for more info?

Do you ask a friend about it?

Do you read the reviews?

The next time you see a promotion for the same book—do you buy or click delete?

Sometimes it takes a few times to decide if you want to spend your money on a book. Sometimes it takes an instant. The blurb grabs you and you CLICK.

We all want our promotion to be in front of those readers.

This workbook will assist you to create your promotions strategy. No promises are made that it will make you a bestselling author, but it will help to get your name and book in front of readers.

Do I have all the answers? No, but I can help you create a strategy that will help you get in front of readers.

Like many of you reading this, I didn't know anything about promotions when I started SORMAG, but by the time I published the first issue, I had become a pro at the game of online promotions. However, I will be the first to admit that I seek to learn something new every day. What I've learned I'm now sharing with you.

Hopefully, your questions about online promotion will be answered, and you will be steered in the right direction to creating your own plan of action.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

After you've read this workbook, tackle one chapter at a time. Unfortunately, I can't possibly list every resource that's available to an author, so in addition to following the steps listed here, I

suggest expanding your plan to include several Internet search engines.

Before you're done with this book, your favorite search engine will be your best friend. Things change daily with the Internet. After you have created list after list, you will find they no longer exist when you need them. So, it is important that you learn how to locate resources and create lists that work for you.

There are three ways to use this workbook:

1. Do each lesson and set up a plan using each lesson.
2. Skip the lessons you know and focus on the lessons you need help in.
3. Choose the lessons you are comfortable with and create a plan.

Each lesson will include:

- *LaShaunda's Tip*
- *What you can do with the lesson yearly, monthly, weekly or daily*
- *What to schedule on your calendar*
- *How to get started*
- *How you can use the lesson in your promotion*

You should start with a fresh list, with new contacts, which is why I have you conducting your own research. You will always want to have current contact information when you want to introduce yourself to sites, magazines, etc. It's hard to get past the gatekeeper when they are receiving hundreds of emails on a daily basis, so knowing who you need to contact is very important. DO YOUR RESEARCH. You will be happy you did.

Before we begin, I want to thank you for purchasing this book. My goal is to help you get in front of as many readers as you can. You can write in this workbook. However, if you're

reading the ebook version, I've created worksheets you can print out. The worksheets are meant for you to use every time you create a plan for your books.

Please feel free to contact me at lashaundabooks@gmail.com for worksheets, or if you have any questions.

1 *Calendar*

Your calendar is an important part of your promotion. It helps keep you organized, and it's great to be able to see where you are or where you are going with your promotion.

Some writers prefer a desktop calendar or pocket calendars. Google's online calendar is also useful, and it synchronizes to your phone or tablets.

Don't move forward with this workbook until you have a calendar you can work with. Get one you feel comfortable using because if it's not what you like, you will not use it and I need you to use your calendar.

I use a pocket calendar I can place in my purse. I purchased it from Dollar Tree, who sells yearly calendars and I love the big spaces it has to write in. I carry it with me all the time, so I will know what's on the agenda daily. It has saved me many times when I had forgotten an appointment or deadline.

The best part about a calendar is I can see what I need to do and what I've accomplished. Some days it seems like I haven't done anything productive, but my calendar will prove me wrong.

You want access to your calendar daily. If you keep to

a schedule, you will find promoting to be simple instead of overwhelming.

What is the release date for your book? Schedule it on your calendar. This will help in setting the time frame for your promotions.

Don't have a release date? That's even better! You have time to work on your schedules.

I recommend at least *ten* promotions:

- *Three* promotions a month before the release date. You want to get readers ready for the book and stimulate possible pre-order sales.
- *Four* promotions the week your book releases.
- *Three* promotions after the release. You want to catch those readers who might have missed the previous promotions.

You can decide if you want to do more promotions, and how to break them up between free and paid. Your budget will determine this.

Ten promotions and you've started your promotion plan. That wasn't so hard. Now you're ready to figure out what promotions you want to do.

MY EXPERIENCE

Admittedly, I'm not the best when it comes to being organized. Having a calendar helps me become an organized person. I couldn't do SORMAG without one. A calendar keeps me on focus with what I'm doing daily, weekly or monthly. Once I learned more about promotion and getting organized, I started using my calendar more. I set up my yearly promotion plan, and I am able to focus on what I need to do. I can also see what I've

completed for the year and what I wanted to move over to the upcoming year or drop off my plan.

It helps me with interviews and articles I feature in SORMAG. When it comes to a magazine, the last thing I want to do is use repeated content. I always want to have new content. Knowing who I've interviewed or articles I featured help me keep SORMAG with new content.

You don't have to be an organized person to use a calendar. However, you will find yourself becoming better at being organized.



LaShaunda's Tip

Use colored ink pens to keep organized: blue for writing schedule, black for promotion, red for deadlines. You can glance at your calendar and know by the colors what's on your agenda for the day.

Getting Started

Determine which calendar works for you: a pocket calendar, wall calendar or online calendar. Pick a twelve-month calendar. You want to be able to look at all the dates for the year.

Schedule Your Calendar

- What is your release date?
 - Schedule ten promotion dates.
 - Schedule your next lesson: Online Promotion Plan Questions.
-

Need Help?

You can never put everything you know into one book, however if you find you need more help with your promotion, I would like to tell you about the program I created to help writers and businesses with their online promotion.

Virtual Tea With LaShaunda is a coaching program that works hand-in-hand with this book. You get the chance to work with me and receive more advance training in the different lessons or you can create your own plan.

I offer one-on-one or group training. If you would like to learn more about *Virtual Tea With LaShaunda*, contact me at lchwriter@gmail.com.

My goal is to help you reach more readers. Together we can create a plan that will help you get in front of the readers looking for your books.

See ya on the net,

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