

New Math Adds Up To FREE Publicity

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

(An excerpt from THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER:
HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T)

The new math for free publicity is: E-book + E-gift = Promotion. Oops. Error. Make the answer FREE promotion!

There are three magical concepts to this e-book formula

1. Accidental
2. Free
3. E-book.

My best promotion ever, a free e-book called COOKING BY THE BOOK, accidentally fell into my lap and it uses all three. I'll share more about these three promotional potions a bit later.

COOKING BY THE BOOK began when more than two dozen authors from several countries contributed to a book that would be given away free to anyone—as a gift of appreciation to the support teams it takes to write and market a book and to the legions of readers who cook but were probably never exposed to our books. Each invited author had written at least one kitchen scene in his book. Each segment of the cookbook begins with an excerpt from that scene, the recipe comes next and that is followed by a short blurb about the author..

This cookbook e-tool is a cross-pollinator. Each contributing author was to publicize it any way she chose. Participants promised to promote it and not to charge for it. That way each contributor benefited from the efforts, the lists, and the contacts of the other authors. We had some superior promoters among us:

- Most of us set up a page on our websites.
- Contributor Peggy Hazelwood promoted it in her newsletter for book lovers.
- Mary Emma Allen featured it in the columns she writes for New Hampshire dailies, The Citizen and The Union Leader.
- David Leonhardt, (<http://thehappyguy.com/>) author of CLIMB YOUR STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN, incorporated the cookbook into a Happiness Game Show he uses in his presentations.

- We gave away coupons for this book at our signings. Because it costs nothing, it can be given to everyone, not just those who purchase a book.
- I use them as thank yous to people who visit my site.
- Some include information on these freebies on the back of business cards and bookmarks.
- I query site editors whenever I run across another place that seems as if our CB Book would interest their audience.

Reviewer JayCe Crawford (<http://www.authorsden.com/jaycecrawford>) said, “For a foodie-*cum*-fiction-freak like me, this cookbook is a dream come true.” That review has popped up in places we didn’t know existed.

Our most startling success came from sources we had no connection to. It was featured in Joan Stewart’s The Publicity Hound, in Writer’s Weekly, on MyShelf.com, in the iUniverse newsletter and more. I had the highest rate of interest I’d ever had when I queried radio stations for interviews and that was in competition with a pitch for THIS IS THE PLACE just before the 2002 games in Salt Lake City and an intolerance angle on the same novel right after 9/11.

Wait, we're not through yet. Mother's day invites us to repeat our publicity blitzes every year, because -- if you haven’t noticed -- mothers tend to do lots of cooking. This book was so successful I collaborated with Sarah Mankowski on a similar one called SEASONED GREETINGS for holiday promotional blitzes.

Back to those three magic words:

1. **Accidental:** I don’t take credit for knowing a good thing when I saw it. What I learned from this experience is to never dismiss something that is placed on your desk without careful consideration-- even if it seems vaguely hokey. I nearly did just that. “E-book indeed,” I said to myself. I was worried that association with this concept might taint my literary works. Hubris can be very self-defeating.
2. **Free:** This charmed word convinced editors to offer our cookbook as a freebie to their readers. Usually the contributing author who pitched it was privileged with their own promotional site’s URL being used as a link but when some editors chose to place the entire cookbook download on their own sites, we all benefited just the same.
3. **E-book:** An e-book is easy for readers to obtain. The author need not budget for postage or processing expenses. In the invitations, queries, and releases I sent out, I emphasized a no strings attached attack: I assured everyone that they would not be expected to register to the site, sign up for a newsletter nor purchase a thing. The E-book concept is also important because—though it may not be new to you and me—the media is still infatuated with it.

Here is a fourth magic word. *Cookbook*. It has universal appeal. You might find something else that works better for you.. I've been thinking of doing something similar utilizing the subject of genealogy because my novel is based on the stories of my own ancestors--four generations of them. It is not necessary that the freebie be knitted to your primary title; you may benefit by a theme that reaches out, draws in those who might not otherwise be exposed to your work. Your idea may appeal to a narrower audience but niche markets work, too. Everyone loves something that is FREE.

COOKING BY THE BOOK and my other e-books are like hospitality gifts. Only better. That's because they promote not only my work, but that of others. Those who are interested in how these books work can download samples at www.authorscoalitionandredenginepress.com. Click on the free e-book link.

Carolyn Howard-Johnson is the author of the award-winning *This is the Place, Harkening, and Tracings* . She is also the author of the How To Do It Frugally series including *The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't*, the winner of USA Book News' Best Professional Book 2004 and the Irwin Award and the soon-to-be-released *The Frugal Editor: Put Your Best Book Forward to Avoid Humiliation and Ensure Success*. The author was honored by members of the California Legislature as Woman of the Year in Arts and Entertainment and was named outstanding woman of the San Gabriel Valley in California for her "literary activism" by the *Pasadena Weekly*. Learn more about the author at: <http://HowToDoltFrugally.com>.