

How to Host an
Off-The-Charts
Book-Signing
Event
for
Maximum Exposure



the publishing CIRCLE

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Introduction

So you wrote a book, huh? Excellent!

Now is when the real work begins.

Your new job—as you may have already discovered—is as book promoter. You'll be coordinating interviews, writing guest blogs, and doing a host of other activities designed to get the word out about your new book.

And the best way to create a buzz and get people excited about your book? A good old-fashioned book signing. Imagine a crowd of eager fans all waiting for you to appear to read a bit from your latest bestseller and answer questions. It's the scene that's filled many would-be authors' daydreams, and now that you have a book, it can become your reality.

All it takes is a little planning and organization.

It All Begins With a Book

Does that seem obvious? Maybe not. Here's why. There are dozens of ways to produce a book today, but few of them are suited to an off-the-charts book signing event.

- Kindle
- Self-published eBook with other eBook distributors
- POD publishers
- Traditional publishers (the kind with a big imprint)

When your reader steps up to your table to buy a copy of your book, you want to ensure she has the absolute best first impression you can give her. That means top-quality writing, editing, and printing.

Sure, you can do it all yourself. Amazon and others make it easy and cost-effective to print a book, but will your book portray the image you want? Or will it scream "amateur" author?

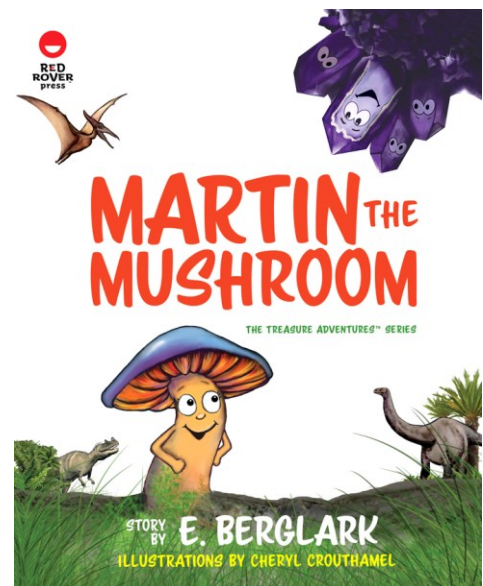
Before you even think about scheduling your first signing event, let's make sure your book is ready for the big leagues.

Writing and Editing

You likely already have your book completed, and as you may have discovered, it can be nearly impossible to edit your own work. You're simply too close to it to be objective.

Instead, it's a good idea to put your book to the test by:

- Sending the manuscript out to a select list of beta-readers for feedback



- Hiring a professional editor to suggest changes to content flow, grammar, and punctuation

Creating a book worthy of a rock-star book signing is truly a group effort, and well worth the time and cost as well. Remember, your book will often be the first impression someone has of you. If it's riddled with spelling errors (or even one or two, for that matter) people will automatically think less of your expertise.

Make sure your book-signing event creates the best impression possible by starting off with a professionally written and edited book.

You Really CAN Judge a Book by Its Cover

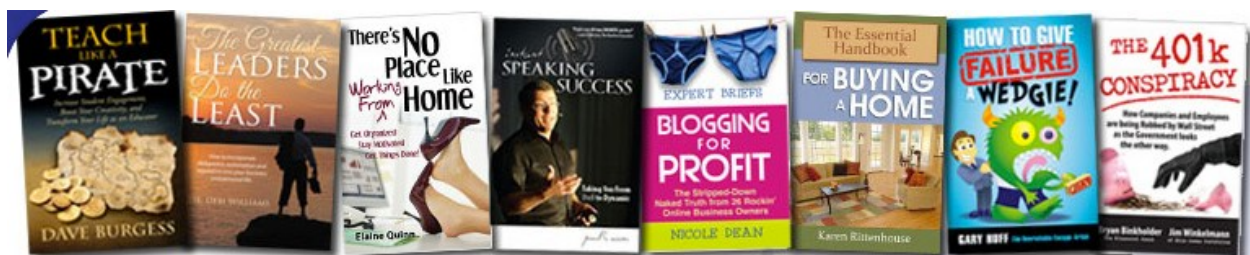
It's true. Sometimes the only chance you get to make the sale is in the three seconds a visitor takes to glance at your book's cover. Make sure it gives the right impression with:

- Easy-to-read fonts
- Eye-catching (not headache-inducing) colors
- Complementary graphics that don't distract from the title

Keep in mind that bold colors and large fonts are a popular choice for better readability at any size from thumbnails on Amazon to poster-size event decorations.

For printed books, the cover is even more important. Remember, your readers will be holding this book in their hands for days, maybe even weeks. You want it to look as good as possible, because that's what will make YOU look good.

Not only that, but your book's cover needs to be easily reproduced in large format for posters, banners and other print materials you'll use to decorate your signing table or the area behind you for your virtual event.



The back cover is perhaps even more important than the front though, and this is where a lot of authors make their biggest mistake. Your back-cover blurb is quite often the only part of your book that hurried browsers will read. Be sure it's professionally written and compelling enough to encourage sales. For nearly all authors, that means hiring someone else to write it for you, since there is a huge difference between a good book and great sales copy.

Don't be afraid to outsource the things you are not good at, such as cover creation and sales copy, so you can instead concentrate on writing the best book you can.

Thinking Outside the Bookstore Box

When you think of a book signing, do you picture a bespectacled author sitting at a table in the back of a bookstore, patiently waiting for customers to notice her?

That's what a lot of us think of when we consider a signing event, and while that used to be the norm, today's book signings look different. Your event can be anything you want it to be, because you have complete control (unless your publisher is footing the bill, in which case, follow their lead). Online events are the new norm, allowing people to share in the excitement of your book release virtually. In this way, family and friends from around the world can join you.

Your event can be:

- Online
- Casual or formal—you set the tone
- Indoors or out—imagine a book about healthy living with a reading in the local park
- Structured or not—freeform readings and Q & A sessions can be more inviting than a strictly scheduled event



As you can see, your book signing can be whatever you choose to make of it. Bookstores are just one option, but there are many others, depending on where your market likes to hang out and the specific topic of your book.

For example, if you've written a book about your life as a pro golfer, book-signing events on a driving range or in the clubhouse are a natural fit. If your subject is how to build an online business and live the laptop lifestyle, consider a beachside signing instead.

Here's something else to consider: where is your audience? Ideally, you'll want to host your book signing where it's convenient and comfortable for them. Some popular options include:

- Bookstores
- Libraries
- Boutique markets
- Industry conferences
- Festivals

You may find that you have better luck booking events in off-the-wall locations. The reason is that big bookstores often have deals with publishers in which they get paid to host events. If you're not willing to pay—and the cost can be steep—you likely won't get large booksellers to host you. There are three ways around this:

1. Opt for smaller venues. Approach independent bookstores instead, since they're less likely to have prior agreements with big publishing houses.
2. Speak directly to the store manager and make it clear that you want to do an impromptu event, not a formal signing. You won't get the advanced press you might otherwise get, but you'll make up for it in walk-in traffic.
3. Present a media plan that shows how you're going to bring traffic to their store.

Whatever you do, the bookstore must be able to order copies of your book, so be sure you're working with a publisher that allows that option. Sometimes you can offer to bring your own stock if the bookstore will allow it. If you do this, be sure to advise the bookstore that you'll be giving them the standard 55% commission. Naturally, you take away any unsold books. Most bookstores will want the books in advance so they can enter them into their system. The only downfall with this is you may end up peeling their labels off the backs of any books you don't sell through them. Start at least two weeks in advance when you're working with bookstores—a month is even better.

Of course, all of that can be avoided by being a little more creative with your signing location, as mentioned above.

While you're considering your location, don't forget to keep timing in mind as well. If your book is closely tied to a holiday or other event, you'll do well to schedule your signing accordingly. For example, if your book is all about how to romance your husband after years of marriage, January and February are the perfect choice for your signing events, since you can easily tie in with Valentine's Day. On the other hand, if you've written about crafting for holiday bazaars, July is ideal, since that's when most people will get started with their holiday sales plans.

Getting the Word Out

Long before your event takes place, you'll need to start building a buzz about it. Letting people know—and then reminding them often—is critical to your event success, and the more press you can get, the better.

Start With the Basics

This includes your own blog and social media accounts as well as your email list. Create an upcoming events' page on your site and list all the locations where you'll be speaking or where you'll have a book signing. Create social friendly images to share on Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter. Write blog posts about your book and be sure to mention your next events.

If you don't already have a Facebook page for your book, now is the time to set one up. Create Facebook events for each book signing, and personally invite Facebook friends who are in the area. Steer clear of mass invites of everyone you know, however. Local, offline events can realistically only be attended by those in the area, so inviting people you know won't be able to

attend is just annoying . . . but ignore that recommendation if you're doing a celebratory launch solely online.

Once you've got a base of operations set up with your blog and social media accounts, it's time to branch out.

Hit the Guest Blog Circuit

This is still the single best way to get your face (and book) in front of a much wider audience. The truth is, guest blogging is not a link-building exercise, but rather an opportunity to be heard by an entirely new market.

For best results, you'll want to start looking for opportunities to guest blog in advance of your book signing. Be sure you're ready for the "introduction" by creating an irresistible [opt-in gift](#) and driving your guest-blog traffic to an opt-in page made just for them. This will allow you to build your mailing list, which will in turn help you fill your book-signing event with raving fans.

You can research potential guest blogging opportunities by:

- Checking Technorati.com for top blogs in your niche
- Browse the top sites by category on Alexa.com
- Do a search on Twitter.com for popular personalities in your market
- Search YouTube for top channels in your category
- Set up Google alerts for your most-used keywords

Create a Media Kit


Your next order of business is letting the press know about your upcoming event, but before you do that, it's important to be prepared. You want members of the media to be able to find all the info they need quickly and easily, and the best way to do that is to create a media kit or media one-sheet.

You'll want to have both a print piece and a place on your website that contains a variety of information specifically for members of the media. You should include:

- Professional headshots
- Book cover images in various sizes
- Contact information
- "Talking points"
- Book blurbs
- Rave reviews

Make your kit easy to find, and be sure to include a link to it in all your press releases and other correspondence with the press.

BOOK



Just Released:
CHATting or CHEATING
How to Detect Infidelity, Rebuild Love, and
Affair-Proof Your Marriage
by Dr. Sheri Meyers, Psy.D.

Is Your Partner Falling In Love With Someone Else? Are You?

You can avert a crisis of INFIDELITY BEFORE it hits or SAVE your relationship if it already has.


Whether you're the one who suspects your partner of cheating, or you're the one who is engaging in a secret affair, **CHATting or CHEATING** will guide you through the process of discovery, confrontation, confession, and healing.

In this book you'll learn how to...

- Take off the blinders of affair denial and become affair-aware
- Confront your cheating partner without losing your cool
- Confess the truth without breaking your partner's heart
- End the affair and stop the obsession
- Survive betrayal, heal your heart, and restore the trust
- Repair your relationship, revitalize your romance, and safely love again

YOU CAN SAVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND MAKE IT EVEN BETTER THAN BEFORE!

The good news is that the discovery of infidelity doesn't have to be the disaster you imagine. An emotional, cyber or physical affair doesn't need to lead to a divorce or break up if you know the steps to take. You can turn it around. You can rebuild your trust, affair-proof your relationship and safely fall in love again. **CHATting or CHEATING** takes you by the hand and guides you each



Sheri Meyers, Psy.D.

"CHATting or CHEATING is an informative, practical guide for dealing with infidelity. There are wonderful sections on instructing the cheater how to confess and to end an affair—also on how 'the betrayed' can recover. This book is filled with useful, straightforward instructions to heal a wounded heart."
—Judith Orloff MD
Author of Emotional Freedom

"CHATting or CHEATING vividly illustrates some of the slippery pitfalls that lead a person from seemingly innocent flirting (over coffee or over cyberspace) to actions that damage families, loved ones, self-esteem, and the course of one's life. **CHATting or CHEATING** is a must read for anyone who wonders about the health of their committed relationship. I'm very impressed with the tremendous contribution this book will make to our profession."

BOOK

**YOU CAN RECOVER
AND EVEN THRIVE
AFTER AN AFFAIR!**

Dr. Sheri shows you how.

"Dr. Sheri Meyers has written a profound and powerful book that is a must-read for anyone wanting to protect your relationship, heal it if it's on shaky ground, or recover from the heartbreak of infidelity. With deep insight, clarity and compassion, she offers you an essential map through the murky maze of the most painful issues a couple can face. **'CHATting or CHEATING'** will be the answer to many prayers."
Barbara De Angelis Ph.D.
#1 NY Times Bestselling Author of *How Did I Get Here?*

"CHATting or CHEATING is a lifeline, giving hope and effective strategies that can help couples recover and rebuild a healthier, happier, more deeply intimate relationship after an affair. I highly recommend reading this book."
—Daniel G. Amen, MD
Author of NY Times Bestseller Change Your Brain, Change Your Life

"CHATting or CHEATING has the most-accurate 21st century clues and insights on why people begin to stray and what can be done to strengthen your love and closeness. If you've ever started to wonder if your relationship is in even the slightest danger, this book can help you sort out truth from self-deception and teach you the ways to build the kind of trust, intimacy and satisfaction you've always longed for."
—Leonard Felder, Ph.D.
Author of Make Up or Break Up: 8 Crucial Steps to Strengthening Your Relationship

"Read this book BEFORE you have an affair. Read this book if you've ever fantasized about having an affair. And if you've had an affair, or suspect your partner, read this book to prepare yourself for a journey into intimacy. Thanks to this operation of Dr. Meyers and her assistant

Distributing Press Releases

Starting 6 to 8 weeks before your event, distribute targeted press releases to the media outlets in the location where you'll hold your event. Most sources will now accept emailed material. Check to see what's preferred. Some points to remember:

- Address your press release to a specific person
- Target your release to your market—the more specific the better
- Tie-ins with other local happenings and holidays increase your newsworthiness
- The headline is the single most important element of a good press release. Make it count.
- Know the audience. Newspaper readers are not the same people who listen to the morning shock jock. Tailor your release to the audience you're trying to reach.
- Include your full contact information.

One more tip when it comes to sending out press releases: be sure to cover all the local media, including:

- Radio stations
- Television stations
- Daily and weekly newspapers
- Local magazines
- Bloggers
- Local talk shows

Consider Paid Advertising

While it's definitely not a "must do" item, paid advertising spots can be a cost-effective way to get the word out about your event. With geo-targeting, you can purchase Google ads that only show to those in your local area, which helps keep the cost down. You might also consider paid advertising in your local newspaper or on local radio or television stations.

Your Hosts Can Help Spread the Word

Finally, don't forget about your venue and hosts. Two to three weeks prior to your event, be sure to send them advertising flyers to distribute. Bookstores and other shops should place these near the register or hang them up on a community bulletin board. Libraries can place flyers on the information desk and display them with their upcoming events. (Don't overlook having a presence here, as you want librarians to begin talking about your book to other librarians so they will make purchases. Libraries can be a lucrative market.)

If your host location offers an email newsletter, be sure to ask about including a short blurb about your event in the weeks leading up to your book-signing/reading date. Be sure to send them appropriate digital files, including your headshot, book cover, and any short copy you'd like to have included in the newsletter.

The Big Day

Unfortunately, unless you have a big publishing house behind you and an instantly recognizable name, you can't just breeze in on the day of your signing and settle in to autograph some books. You'll likely also need to do some of the setup and prep work as well, and you'll need to be sure you've got plenty of supplies on hand. For starters, bring with you:

- Pens
- Bookmarks
- Postcards
- Flyers
- Water
- Candies
- Books
- Credit card system/cash for change
- An assistant
- Snacks for the staff

Be sure to arrive at least a few minutes early so you can get to know the location. You'll want to know where the bathroom is, where you can stash extra copies of your book or other materials, and where the staff's break room is (for their snacks).

If it's not already set up for you, you'll want to spend some time arranging your table and materials. Try to set up near the front door if at all possible. If you're stuck in the back of the

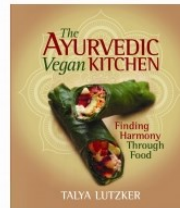


The Ayurvedic Vegan Kitchen

Finding Harmony Through Food
with Talya Lutzker

Cooking Demo & Book Signing

Tues, December 4th between 6 – 7PM



Join Staff of Life as we celebrate an exciting, local, Santa Cruz author, chef, and nutritionist with her newest book release with a cooking demonstration and book signing!

Purchase your copy of The Ayurvedic Vegan Kitchen today and have it signed by the author, Talya Lutzker.

The Ayurvedic Vegan Kitchen is available for purchase for \$20.95

Talya Lutzker is a Certified Ayurvedic Practitioner, Yoga Teacher, Massage Practitioner, Professional Chef, two-time cookbook author and the founder of Talya's Kitchen, an organic, nourishment-focused catering company where "good food is medicine". Her newest book, "The Ayurvedic Vegan Kitchen" is available at Staff of Life.

Talya offers Ayurvedic Pulse Readings and Nutritional Consultations, Food-Based Cleansing Programs, Traditional Ayurvedic Bodywork Treatments, Yoga, Personal Chef Services, Catering Services and Cooking Classes.



For more information contact: Kathleen Williford, Event Coordinator 831-423-8632 x 107
Follow Staff of Life on FACEBOOK or visit www.staffoflifemarket.com
for all Staff of Life Events & Promotions.

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store you'll have a lot less traffic. Post your "Author Appearance Today" signage, arrange a stack of books on the table, and get ready to greet your public.

In addition, take a few minutes to meet and chat with each and every member of the staff. They are in a position to help you sell more books, so going out of your way to be kind to them is critical to your success. Bring them coffee and donuts or pizza and soda for a little added love.

It's Not Really Just a Book-Signing Event

The truth is, it's much more than that. At least it should be if you want your event to be successful.

A great author event offers several components to ensure it appeals to the widest audience. Some people just want to meet a real writer. Some want to learn more about the book. Some want to mingle with other fans. Some want to learn more about the subject. A well-planned book signing can accomplish all of that and more.

Start With a Reading

Depending on your subject matter, a short reading is often expected at a book signing. Of course, this is where most authors freeze up in fear, and begin to make excuses about why they don't speak in public.

Here's the truth though: no one is better suited to read your book to an audience than you are. After all, only you know the precise inflections you intended when you wrote each sentence. So now is not the time to be shy. Step up to the podium with confidence and give your fans what they came for.

Some tips to help you get through your first—or fiftieth—live reading:

- Keep it short. Aim for no more than 10 minutes. Shorter is better.
- Make eye contact with audience members.
- Practice ahead of time and record yourself if possible, so you can spot problems ahead of time.
- Smile. Greet the audience with genuine warmth.
- Relax. It's just a reading, not the State Of The Union address.

Have A Sign-Up List

Be prepared with a clipboard where people can write down their email addresses in order to get the opt-in gifts you provide to people who join your list. Have a cover sheet that explains what that benefit might be so you don't have to explain it every time someone asks. This may be something an assistant encourages people to do. Don't forget the extra pens (they tend to walk away) or have a pen attached to the clipboard.

What Else Can You Add?

People love to be entertained. If your book is, say, a historical romance, you might consider dressing in clothing from the time period you're writing about. Maybe you've written a book about the paranormal: dress up as a ghost. You get the idea.

If you're writing nonfiction, maybe your subject matter is something that is demonstrable, such as making smoothie samples for a cookbook on "10-day Smoothie Cleanse" or makeovers for a book on looking your best.

Whatever your subject matter, think about what you can do to make people enjoy your presentation more. People want to be entertained and the more comfortable you are in doing so, the longer they will hang around. If you're not comfortable with what you're doing, believe me, people will know. Iron out the kinks ahead of time and be at ease with your presentation and in your presence.

Follow-up With a Q & A

One thing people love about book signings is the opportunity to ask questions of the author. They'll want to know how you got started in your field, how you did your research, what this or that celebrity is really like, how they can become a writer, and a host of other things about you, your book, and your career.

Again, relax, be yourself, smile a lot, and be sure to thank everyone for his or her participation and for taking the time to come out.

Naturally, at some locations you won't see everyone in a huge group. Be prepared to answer the same questions over and over . . . with a delightful smile.

You'll Sign Some Books, Too

Finally, it's time to get out your favorite pen and sign some books!

Be sure to smile a lot, greet everyone personally, and do more than just sign your name. It's good practice to write a little something inside each book. You don't have to stress over a personal message, though. Instead, come up with one or two lines ahead of time that match your book and your personality, and sign each one the same.

For example, if you've written a self-help book, you might sign each book:

"To NAME —Never stop striving for the best! YOUR NAME"

Even though you're signing each book the same, to your guests it will feel personal. Just remember to always include the person's name.

Here's another tip: have a notepad beside you where you write the name down first, asking for the spelling. Even common names may be spelled in a unique way. This way you won't make a mistake and ruin a book, plus it will be easy to remember when you're multi-tasking and quickly forget the name you've just been given. If you have an assistant, this can be his or her job. Just make sure their printing is legible!

At the end of your event, if there are books left, you might offer to sign and leave them. Be sure to add a sticker that says "signed by the author" to the cover, so readers will know.

After the Event

Now that your big day is done, it's time for a huge sigh of relief—not to mention a few pats on the back for a job well done. But don't rest too long, because there is still a bit of work to be done to ensure you have the best possible results from your event.

First, be sure to reach out to your hosts with a well-deserved and sincere “thank you!” Chances are these folks worked nearly as hard as you to make the event run smoothly, so they certainly earned your gratitude.

Consider sending a hand-written thank you card (remember those?), some flowers, or even an edible bouquet or gift basket. Be sure to mention by name everyone on the staff who went above and beyond to make your event shine. Your personal thanks will help ensure that next time you have an event, they'll be more than happy to play host.

Follow-up with guests who signed in as well, but only if they've agreed to be added to your mailing list. A friendly email thanking them for attending and offering a free gift (perhaps the first chapter of your next book) is a great way to make a good impression and encourage them to chat up your book to others who might be interested.

Finally, be sure to publicly thank everyone who helped along the way. Posting your heartfelt thanks on social media for all to see lets the world know you're not some unapproachable author, but a real person. Not only that, but it might well encourage others to host you for upcoming events, when they see how much you appreciate the time and effort that goes into a book signing.

Book Signing Benefits for Every Author—Even Newbies

You don't have to be Stephen King to reap the rewards of a well-planned and well-executed book-signing event. In fact, it could be argued that for brand new authors, a book signing is one of the best ways to get in front of your public. The personal interaction and meet-and-greet style of a book signing gives potential fans an opportunity to get to know you in a way that just can't happen in a blog or even on social media. A great book-signing event gives you:

- Good press opportunities
- More sales
- Better audience reach
- Raving fans

Here's the key takeaway though, if you want to reap those rewards: Careful planning. Put thought into your audience, the appropriate venues, the format of your event, and what you want to accomplish with it, and you will see more success than you can imagine.

Most important of all, is to be friendly and approachable. Don't hide behind a big table. It's far better to have a small table, merely large enough to sign books upon and then stand closer to your audience. If you have other materials, consider using an additional small table for this. (TV trays work just fine when draped with a nice cloth.) Your assistant can stand beside you when



you finish speaking in order to write down names for signing and to get people to sign up for your opt-in goodie.

The setup in the picture on the left isn't ideal. It sets the author apart from his buyers and has a "distancing" feeling. With a table like the one on the right, the author can speak, then sit to sign books afterwards. You want to always make it a priority to create an atmosphere of being approachable and friendly. That's the best way to create lifetime fans. After all, you want your first book signing to be just the start of a lifetime of signing books for a fan base that follows you and buys every book you write.