

How to promote your own self published book

An interview with Tim Quirey, author of ‘Cre@te’

One of our customers, Tim Quirey, has done an exceptional job promoting a book he published and which we printed last year. We spoke to Tim and asked him to distil his experiences for the benefit of others who have published their own books, or who are considering doing so. Here’s the interview.

KainosPrint: Tim, I have been tremendously impressed with the way you have promoted your very unusual recent book. I’ve been involved with self publishing either as a book-seller selling self-published books, or commissioning them and more recently printing them, and I don’t think I have ever come across anyone who has done as thorough a job as you in promoting a self-published book. Could you please tell us first a bit about the yourself.

Tim Quirey: I am a business analyst and like to spend my spare time embarking on more creative pursuits. Even though I have no experience in writing/drawing books, I enjoy learning new skills and satisfying life long goals. Self publishing my own book was just one of these. More recent projects include drawing and writing a children’s picture book, painting a traffic signal box, building a website, holding a photo exhibition, t-shirt design, and developing and delivering a children’s drawing seminar/session in Fiji entitled ‘Draw your Dreams’.

KP: And tell us about the book you have self-published.

TQ: The book is called Create. It is coffee table style book that explores the lives milk crates live. The book comprises 74 photos, each accompanied by a one page short story providing insight into the trials, tribulations and many varied lifestyles crates lead throughout the world. I have included photos taken in Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Morocco, France, and United Kingdom

KP: And what advice do you have to help self publishers promote their work?

TQ: The most basic requirement is to have a strong desire to promote your book and the willingness to dedicate a lot of time to the task. It might sound obvious but it is crucial that you make people aware you exist and so does your book. If people don’t know about you then it makes it hard for them to help you.

I found having a good media release and a one page biography of my book and myself were valuable when making an initial point of contact. When making this initial contact it is good to know peoples’ names rather than sending to generic mail or email addresses.

I found it helpful to identify a unique quality about my book that would help raise interest and then focus on that aspect. Thankfully there are not too many books about milk crates around.

Approaching people directly is also much more beneficial than sending a letter or email or phoning but it is not always practical especially if people live in different states or countries.

KP: What specific things did you do to promote 'Create'?

TQ: I organized a book launch. I found a restaurant in the city which regularly displays art and I arranged to show pictures from my book in an exhibition. I approached the owner of the restaurant directly and pitched the idea to him. I learnt that you need to ensure you have planned everything before approaching and provide a convincing argument or case as to why you should be holding an exhibition or having a display. Some places are being approached all the time by people like myself, so you need to try and convince people that your idea is better. Having this venue and exhibition helped promote my book extensively.

I contacted a number of newspapers and magazines. For these I found a contact person and emailed a media release in outlining the launch of my book which was being staged at a city restaurant. Once the initial contact was made further conversations were made via phone.

I made good use of the internet. I used local city 'What's On' websites to help advertise the launch of my book and exhibition. Some sites you directly place the ad yourself for free. In other instances I contacted people via email requesting an entry be made. I provided all requested relevant information and pictures for placement on their website. I also built my own website (www.milkcratebook.com) which was a good point of reference.

KP: Can anyone reading this interested in obtaining a copy of your book contact you through www.milkcratebook.com

TQ: Yes, there is a contact link there or people are most welcome to contact me directly at milkcratebook@hotmail.com.

KP: What other avenues apart from press did you use to publicise your book?

TQ: I was able to promote the book on local radio stations. I made contact after identifying radio shows and radio announcers that might be interested in my book. In some instances I sent copies of the book with my media release and biography. In other instances, I sent emails to radio stations informing them of my book and its launch. Some radio station websites call for ideas to be submitted for segments so this was also useful. I found it is important to ensure you email a person directly where possible. It is important that you do research and know about the shows and an audience that your story appeals to. In

some instances radio presenters were able to direct me to other programs which were bale to help. For example a lady at JJJ put me onto a local independent Brisbane radio station which then proceeded to interview me.

KP: With success in Press and Radio did you try to promote your book through Television.

TQ: I did manage to get one segment to help publicise the book on TV. I made contact through the TV station's website to the relevant program and TV personality. Again it is important that you speak to a show or person that fits your book. Here the TV show I identified was requesting ideas for segments. You have to pitch your idea concisely and make it appealing and interesting to a wider audience.

KP: I spent nearly 20 years as a bookseller. Did you contact bookstores directly?

TQ: Yes. I approached in person and had a copy of the book to show as an example in hope the shop would take some on consignment. I had to be ready to answer questions on pricing, and also some bookstores will require a statement of supplier which can be downloaded from the tax office website. This is required if you are a hobby author and don't have an ABN. I tried to target bookstores which carried books like mine and also bookstores located in areas that fitted the book. I found local independent bookstores easy to approach and generally helpful and friendly. I also emailed bookstores interstate and within Queensland but approaching bookstores in person was much more successful than emailing information.

I also explored the possibility of libraries stocking the book and I wrote to libraries making them aware of the book. I made initial contact via email with information on my book and myself.

I would also suggest making contact with organisers of writing events or competitions to further promote your book. Look to get involved where you can. There are some good resources out there that outline all the events and key dates for competitions.

KP Any other general thoughts?

TQ: Don't discount the value in exploring different avenues. For me I spoke to galleries and artists and photo clubs. Some people are very helpful and willingly offer ideas and help you may have previously not thought about. I made some good contacts and it is good to share ideas and get advice from people across a broad spectrum.

Don't be to worried about knock backs or non responses. Keep trying and keep putting it out there. Keep making people aware of your presence.

Make sure you keep things simple and concise and make sure you provide people with all the necessary information. Don't make things hard for them. Provide potential buyers with multiple means of contacting you back.

KP: We came across a customer a couple of weeks ago who had posted a video promoting their book on YouTube. Maybe that's an idea for your next book. Tell us a bit about your new book.

TQ: My new book which I hope to finish by the end of September is a children's picture book that is about a bear who wishes upon a star. The star turns out to be a shooting star and as it races across the sky the bear fears his wish will be lost. The story then follows the bear as he chases it across the countryside in an attempt to save his wish.