

## Building an Effective Author Platform and Brand

By Jennifer Swanson

### The difference between Platform and Brand

- Platform = How you get the word out (i.e.. social media)
- Brand = What YOU are about

### When to create a Brand

- This is not easy. Don't rush to figure this out. You can begin thinking about it as your career progresses.
- Wait until you have several books before you can say who you are as an author
- You don't need to have this right away. Focus more on your platforms first

### Where to start with a Platform

- **Set Up a Website**
  - Figure out WHAT you want to get out of it – do you want school visits? To provide classroom activities? Do professional development for teachers? Teach and critique other authors?
  - Then set it up with the following minimum information— (add more as you expand your offerings)
    - i. Your bio
    - ii. Books page with synopsis and links to purchase
    - iii. Place to highlight awards/reviews
    - iv. School visit information/Speaking information
    - v. Your contact information
    - vi. Consider using pictures and/or video of you “in action”
  - Make sure your website reflects who YOU are
- **Social Media “guidelines”**
  - Pick which one you are most comfortable with and which one(s) you will use the most
  - For example, if you're not going to use Facebook, then don't create an author page. A social media account that is not up to date or not used, is not great.
  - When creating the name for your account, make it something that is easy to find if people are searching for you—if it's a catchy name, then you need to have that tied somehow to your website

- It's easy to get sucked into this. So, try to set up a time when you're on or schedule your posts in advance to save time
  - Be sure to interact with others. Don't just promote your own information all the time.
  - If you have a brand, like for example, science or history, then be sure to include posts about current events or cool science tips, etc. That way you are providing information as well as talking about your own stuff
- **Social Media places**
    - Twitter, Facebook author page, Instagram, Tik Tok
    - These all do different things and reach different audiences. Do some research of other authors to find out what they have done and take a look at their followers to get an idea of where to start
    - Pinterest is a great way to get the attention of teachers
    - Teachers Pay Teachers is also a platform you can possibly use to post your free author guides (assuming your publisher is okay with this).
  - **Book Promo groups/Writer Groups**
    - These are good to be in because it is a great way to expand your platform, i.e.. other people will be RT-ing your stuff and you will be doing the same to you.
    - Participate in Twitter chats if you can, these are great places to meet teachers, librarians, homeschool parents
    - Meeting other writers also helps you stay informed about our industry and helps you make connections with agents/editors/other writers

## **BRANDING**

**This is what YOU are about!**

- **How to create a brand**
  - Think about what you want to be known for --Is it an author of fiction middle grade or picture book (pick a genre)? A STEM teacher? A history specialist?
  - If you can, come up with a short "elevator pitch" to describe yourself. For example, mine is "Science Rocks!" and everything I do relates to science and science education
  - Don't know where to start, look at your favorite authors and see what type of brand they have and see where you might fit into your own place in the industry
  - Play with your brand. You may need to re-imagine yourself a few times. That's okay!
- **How to Establish your Brand**

- Start looking for ways to showcase your brand on your website. Include videos of you talking/performing/doing things that relate to your brand
  - Also submit to speak at events where you can show off your brand. If you write mysteries, see if you can speak at a mystery writer's event or perhaps a local event with a dinner mystery or something
  - Keeping in mind your brand, Offer to write a blog post for The Nerdy Book Club or other blogs with large followings
- **Expand your Brand**
    - Write articles about your brand topic for magazines or professional journals
    - Join organizations that are similar to your interests
    - Become a Star --Get on TV/Radio-- You MUST be able to tie your book into something currently in the news OR an event you are participating in
    - Speak Out! Look up teacher/librarian conferences in your state
    - Look for Podcasts that are related to your topic where you can be interviewed
  - **Move Beyond Books**
    - If it makes sense, consider starting other things to go along with your books
    - A new blog that focuses on what you do, i.e.. your topic, but brings in others to help
    - A promo organization that focuses on the types of books that you write
    - A podcast about your topic which involves other people
    - Expand into speaking at industry conferences that aren't writer conferences

### **A Few Final Reminders:**

You DON'T have to establish a brand. Being an author is totally fine.

Focus on one or two social media platforms and do them well

Be consistent in your message on social media and generous, i.e.. promote/engage with others

**Most of all: Be comfortable with what you're doing and THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!!!**

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