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An Essential Guide

From Literature Wales

**Developing Your Author Brand**

**What is an author brand?**

‘Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.’ Oscar Wilde may not have been talking about author branding when he wrote this - but he could have been.

An author brand is how you describe yourself and your work; it’s the foundation for book marketing which finds readers with a genuine reason to be interested in your writing. More than anything, it is [**how you make people feel**](https://corp.smartbrief.com/original/2021/06/maya-angelou-right-branding-how-people-feel-about-you) - the impression you give of the world they’ll step into if they open the pages of your book.

It’s also important to consider what you don’t want to include in the public-facing version of yourself. Many of us draw on difficult or private experiences in our writing - but you’re under no obligation to explicitly share these. Defining your author brand can be a useful way of protecting yourself.

Many writers, initially at least, don’t like to think of themselves as a brand. But the truth is, when you go through the process of developing an authentic one, the cringe factor is reduced because you’re able to be yourself in your marketing.

**How to develop your author brand**

The key to a successful author brand is embracing your individuality - the unique set of motivations, inspirations and passions that inform your work, what George Saunders calls a writer’s [**‘iconic space’**](https://lithub.com/george-saunders-wants-you-to-accept-your-flaws-writing-and-otherwise/)**.**

Ask yourself the following questions, and note down any words or phrases in your answers that feel significant. It can be helpful to speak out loud. Notice your tone of voice as much as the content of what you say.

* What themes do you find yourself returning to again and again in your writing?
* What impact would you like your books to have?
* What part of the creative process do you enjoy the most?
* What aspects of your work do you find yourself thinking about during your downtime?
* What did you love to read when you were a child [less specific books, more themes and concepts you enjoyed]?
* What inspires you?
* Do you ever feel you’re ‘weird’? In what ways, when and why?
* What makes you different from other authors?
* Why should people care about your work?
* What are your values as a creative person?
* Why do you write?

**Your author brand story**

A great first step in articulating your brand is to write a brand story. This is a creatively written author bio which acts as an engaging invitation into your writing.

Look at the notes you made in the interview exercise and select the details you’d like to include. Consider how you’d introduce yourself if you were a character in one of your books - you wouldn’t talk about where this person was born or went to school, you’d use an image or anecdote to make them vivid in the mind of the reader. Your storytelling skills are your secret weapon - use them wisely.

Aim for two to three paragraphs in either the first or third person - you’ll edit this and use different versions in different settings: copy for your website homepage, social media bios, *anywhere* you have limited space to convey who you are to potential readers.

**Content themes**

When it comes to content, we know the ‘Here’s my book, buy my book’ approach won’t cut it over the long term.

Content themes are the topics you’ll talk about in your ongoing book marketing, from emails to your mailing list to social media posts. This is the way you cultivate and maintain relationships with readers. Themes can be anything from a photo on your daily dog walk, nuggets from your research, tips on writing when facing a particular challenge, musings on the nature of time or happiness.

Look again at your notes again and consider:

* What themes emerge?
* What topics are you interested in?
* What insight and expertise do you have?
* What can you share which has value? (Entertainment, information, moments of reflection - these are all valuable.)
* What are you passionate about?
* Do these relate to the world of your writing? (Tangentially is fine.)

Aim to come up with three to five content themes. A good test is to list five to ten pieces of content – e.g., short Instagram or Facebook posts - on each theme. If this is relatively easy, these are likely to be good topics for you.

**Finding readers on social media**

Social media offer exciting opportunities for writers to connect directly with readers in ways that were never possible before, but the options can feel overwhelming.

Always keep in mind what you’re trying to achieve. Social media should form part of your overall marketing strategy, for example to drive book sales or mailing list sign-ups. If you have limited time, it’s more effective to concentrate your efforts on one or two platforms and build relationships, than to join every platform and spread yourself too thinly.

Choose your social media platforms based on:

* Where your target audiences congregate
* Where you enjoy spending time.

And remember every social media platform is a collection of communities. Focus on the specific groups who have a real reason to be interested in your book, based on its setting, for example #loveshetland, or its content, for example #gardensofinstagram.

[**Use your content themes consistently**](https://thesocialgame.co.uk/blogs/news/why-is-consistency-important-when-it-comes-to-social-media) to engage with these communities, ask questions and start conversations - spend at least as much time liking, sharing and commenting on other people’s content as you do sharing your own.

Crucially, give yourself time to explore and be social, especially when getting started on a new channel. Have fun - the right content themes will mean your passion shines through.

**Resources**

**Links and inspiration - who’s doing this well?**

These are author websites where you’ll find links to social media - take a look around!

* Clare Mackintosh <https://uk.claremackintosh.com/>
* Nadine Matheson <https://www.nadinematheson.com/>
* Samantha Clark <https://www.samanthaclark.net/>

Further reading/ watching

* [**Author branding**](https://www.laterpress.com/blog/author-branding)
* [**Taking the cringe out of author branding - The Society of Authors**](https://vimeo.com/646484272)
* [**Social media for writers**](https://kindlepreneur.com/social-media-for-writers/)
* [**How to create a marketing strategy for online book promotion**](https://vimeo.com/488657506)

Hyperlinks in full:

1. More than anything, it’s about how you make people feel  
   <https://corp.smartbrief.com/original/2021/06/maya-angelou-right-branding-how-people-feel-about-you>
2. What George Saunders calls a writer’s iconic space

<https://lithub.com/george-saunders-wants-you-to-accept-your-flaws-writing-and-otherwise/>

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1. Author branding

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