

Creating an Internet Identity - For Authors

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It is mere weeks before Christmas and the busiest season for anyone promoting their books. This is the time to schedule book signings at bookstores, readings at libraries and cafes, and it's also time to fork out some advertising dollars. Books don't sell themselves! Well, not unless you are Michael Crichton, Stephen King or J.K. Rowling. For the rest of us, we have to rely on smooth selling styles, setting up tables in our local bookstores, and finding unique and affordable ways to advertise our books. Affordable advertising can be difficult to come by for a self-published author. But there are ways around it. There is one thing you can do that will help to bring attention to you and your books. And that is to create an "internet identity".

Quick! Go to Google and conduct a vanity search. If you don't know what this means, it's simple. Type in your name. See how many direct hits to your site (or anything that pertains to you) come up. Three years ago I did this and was quite depressed to see that I was nowhere to be found. In the internet world, I simply did not exist. Since then, I have learned a few tricks of the trade, and I am now deeply entrenched in the top 30 pages (or more) in most search engines. What does this mean? It means that anyone, anywhere, can view information about my books and me. What this means to you is that if you are not at least 10 pages deep after a vanity search, you have a lot of work to do.

Here are a few ways an author can build up an internet presence or identity:

- The first and most important tool you will need is a web site. If you have a published novel, this is a MUST! Go to NameSecure.com and register a domain name. For authors, you should select your name or pen name. Choose .com's or .ca's only. Next, you need a host, a place to store your web site. You can purchase web-hosting packages from a variety of sources, or you can use free web spaces that may come with existing internet accounts. If you use a free space, then you will definitely need to buy a domain name. With NameSecure.com, you can then forward the domain name to the free web space. It keeps things looking professional.
- Once you have a web site, then comes the job of submitting it to search engines. There are a variety of tools and downloads that will assist you in submitting your site, or you can submit manually. I recommend that you submit once every three months, as most SE's may consider it spam if it is done too often. Look for "Add URL" or "Submit your site" on search engine home pages. Keep in mind that it can take months before your site shows up, and then most likely it will be many pages in. To increase ranking, make sure you swap links with other authors or add yours to sites that pertain to writing. Add a Resources page with links you've researched, links that other authors will find valuable. Get a Google AdSense

account and place their ads at the top of your web pages. Remember, content is key on any web site!

- One of the best ways to establish a web presence is by writing Press Releases. A press release is a news article or announcement, usually averaging 400 words, that should be sent out a month prior to any event as it takes time for the release to be picked up by other media sources. Press releases can be written by professional companies or by the writer themselves, and you can send them out weekly. They should be sent to all local media sources (fax them to TV, radio, newspapers and magazines), and to PR feeds online. I highly recommend 24-7PressRelease.com. This is the company I use almost exclusively. Their rates are affordable, they have a more personal approach and they are extremely generous in cases of emergency. 24-7PressRelease.com even sponsored a project I worked on, [Project Drumheller](http://ProjectDrumheller.com), and became our official media sponsor for the duration of the campaign. I have used this press release service over PRWeb's service, and will continue to do so. 24-7PressRelease.com is the crème de la crème of online PR services. There are also a number of free press release services that you can submit your news release to. Press-World.com, Free-Press-Release.com, TheOpenPress.com and more. Your releases will get picked up by hundreds of RSS feeds and distributed internationally.
- You will also want to find places you can advertise your books. I highly recommend that you apply for a membership at BookAdz.com. The rates are very affordable and you can promote your books through BookAdz without having to give up a percentage of sales. Sales can be directed to any outlet, your publisher or yourself. You have a choice between two packages, but with a GoldAdz membership you can advertise an unlimited amount of book titles. You can also advertise through NorthWestWriters.com, AuthorsDen.com and many more membership sites.

The fact is, the more your name is out there in cyberspace, the more people who read about your exciting action-packed thriller or suspenseful murder mystery, the more people who see your name pop up when they search for Canadian mystery authors, then the more potential customers you have. People buy more of what they know, what they frequently see. Your job as a published writer is to "get known".

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*Cheryl Kaye Tardif, a Canadian mystery author, has written three novels: **The River**, a terrifying, action-packed techno-thriller; **Divine Intervention**, a scorching psychic suspense, and **Whale Song**, an emotionally heart-wrenching mystery that will be released in 2007 by [Kunati Inc. Book Publishers](http://Kunati.Inc.BooksPublishers.com). For more information on Cheryl, visit <http://www.cherylktardif.com> or <http://www.kunati.com/meet-cheryl-kaye-tardif>.*