

---

# The Kiss of Death



---

RWA® Chapter #144

March/April 2008

Volume 14 Issue 2

## What's Your PR Personality?

By Marcia James

What types of author promotion are a good fit for you? Obviously, the cost and time requirements of PR options are two important factors, as is your target audience. But also consider what will work best with your personality before developing your marketing plan.

Do you enjoy public speaking or would you rather write articles? Are you a computer whiz or is power schmoozing your specialty? Are you an extrovert who loves meeting readers in person or someone who prefers posting on reader email loops? There are PR choices for every talent and temperament.



### Reach your readers through the Internet

Available 24/7, the Internet offers a mind-boggling amount of PR possibilities. You can pick and choose those that suit your personality. For example, I love to guest-blog but wouldn't like the pressure of posting regularly on one of my own. I enjoy reader emails loops but had to cut back on my participation when my writing suffered. I've tried online chats and podcasting, written articles for e-zines and donated items for online contests. Each experience has helped me define my PR personality.

Online promotion figures prominently in Wild Rose Press author **Kim Watters'** marketing efforts. "I like the social aspects of the on-line loops because I'm basically a shy person. I feel more comfortable talking about my books in an e-mail format...than standing in front of a room of people. The challenging thing is remembering where and what you can post on certain days. Also, there are so many loops and lists...you have to pick and choose."

When it comes to PR, Sourcebooks author **Terry Spear** is adventurous despite describing herself as shy. She's joined MySpace and Facebook, written

articles, reviewed books, and given presentations to reach readers. "I love teaching classes. I enjoy writing motivational articles," she said. "I do the same with blogs. I've only done two chats and loved both, but I don't have time to do all of it." She hasn't been interviewed on radio or TV yet but states, "I'm going to gather up the courage and do it!"

### Drive-by signings beat giving directions to the bathroom

*I* ❤️ *Booksignings.* Why? I'm a people person and enjoy chatting up readers. I don't mind when customers confuse me with a bookstore employee. But even so, I prefer multi-author booksignings because of the camaraderie. Don't worry if booksignings aren't your cup of cappuccino. You're in good company.



"My least favorite book promo is booksignings," Kensington author **Dianne Castell** said. "That's too much like being a slab of meat in a display case. I like signing stock at bookstores. It's non-threatening, and you make connections with the booksellers, who are always great."

"I don't like doing single-author booksignings," Avon author **Jenna Petersen** said. "It's so much stress and so little pay-off. I do like doing group or conference signings, though. Much less pressure." Amber Quill author **Jane Toombs** agrees. "I won't do booksignings unless I'm not the only, lonely author."

Other writers look forward to in-store events. "At booksignings, if I can catch the eyes of passersby, I question, 'Do you like to read?' Most people stop," said Leisure author **Joyce Henderson**, who takes advantage of the reader "face-time" to increase her mailing list. "I have a guest book on the table and ask people to sign if they wish to be notified about my next release."

## “I’m ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille.”

You don’t have to yearn for the camera, like *Sunset Boulevard*’s Norma Desmond, to enjoy being “onstage”. And with the advent of Internet radio and podcasting, there are numerous media outlets for author interviews. This type of PR falls under the category of public speaking, however, which is a major phobia for many people.



Silhouette Intrigue/ Kensington mystery author **Rhonda Pollero** isn’t fazed by live interviews or public speaking. I am completely comfy in front of the camera and/or micro-phone.” She added, “I enjoy giving workshops and usually, if

people are motivated/ entertained/gained some crumb of knowledge from a workshop, they buy your book.”

Wings Press author **Becky Martinez** concurs. Her nonfiction books on character and plotting have led to teaching writers. “I do find that presenting workshops and online classes...helps sell my fiction books, too. I always get a bigger royalties check in the months after I teach classes.”

Kensington author **Susan Lyons** has to psych herself up to present workshops. “I’m an introvert, so I like the quiet, at-home stuff. It’s not that I don’t like people, but I find big groups draining. However, I think it’s good for me to push beyond my comfort level from time to time.”

Practice helped Harlequin Superromance author **Kay Stockham**. “The first time I spoke in front of a group, I literally shook so hard I couldn’t hold my papers still. Oh, what a nightmare! But I’ve gotten a little better since then.”

## Technophile or Technophobe?

It’s been said an author’s number one PR tool is her Web site, which is why my technophobe-self hired a Web designer. And I confess I don’t have a MySpace page. Luckily, some Ohio author friends have included me on their group MySpace site ([www.myspace.com/romanceauthors](http://www.myspace.com/romanceauthors)), which allows me to dip my technologically challenged toes in this social media site.

An impressive roster of authors, however, list working with their Web site as their favorite PR effort. **Petersen** said she likes updating hers monthly. “I also really like my MySpace, which I think has introduced me to a lot of new readers and is fun to maintain and change.”

Avon author **Caity London** is Webmistress for her own site and blog. “This includes all the graphics and gizmos,” she explained. “Recently, Avon has created ‘microsites’ which can mirror and promote our own Web sites. At my blog, I’ve listed all the software I use.” **London** also handles several promotional newsletters. “I run three of them now: a reader-base, a bookseller/ librarian, and a local/regional writers’ loop.”



Cerridwen author **Paige Cuccaro** also enjoys a technical challenge. “I like the graphic design part of doing a Web site. It’s the creative side of things that’s so addictive. Just like writing.” She’ll leave public speaking to other authors, though.

“It’s my least favorite. I tend not to be able to think or breathe properly when a bunch of people are staring at me.”

## Make your avocation and “day job” work for you

My inner shopaholic is thrilled to have a reason to buy contest prizes. I participate in promotional contests, as well as holding a monthly one on my Web site. I can combine my “retail therapy” with my PR efforts.

**London** shares my shopping satisfaction, stating, “I enjoy looking for bargains for my contests and tucking them into a bag.”

**Spear** has turned her talent at making award-winning bears into a promotional venue, customizing bears to an author’s brand or books. Thanks to previous experience delivering motivational speeches, **Henderson** doesn’t have a problem with stage fright. And **Martinez** taps her public relations background. “I’ve been able to send out my own press releases and come up with my own marketing plan.”

So, the next time you’re faced with the intimidating choices for author promotion, analyze which ones you’d enjoy the most and give yourself a break on those you avoid. Match your personality to your PR push.

*Marcia James’ debut comic romantic suspense, AT HER COMMAND, was released in trade paperback last year from Cerridwen Press. She has mined her experience in advertising and marketing to develop PR workshops. James offers her file of author promotion options to any RWAer who requests it. Just email her through the “Contact Me” page on her Web site: [www.MarciaJames.net](http://www.MarciaJames.net).*