

Love is an exploding cigar

Welcome Guest Blogger Marcia James!

Submitted by Marcia James on Fri, 2007-04-06 12:45.

Author Branding: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Author branding has nothing to do with hog-tying, hot irons or permanent scars, but the process can still be painful. How does an author develop a personal brand that lets readers know what to expect from her books? I faced this challenge last summer when I sold a comic romantic suspense to Cerridwen Press and crossed the threshold from aspiring to published author. First I chose the logo part of my brand – a Chinese Crested hairless dog, perhaps best known as the perennial winner of the Ugliest Dog contest.



Why this logo? My book, *At Her Command*, features a Chinese Crested as a DEA drug-sniffing dog, and the tiny breed works great for comic relief. The dog, in all of its lovable goofiness, fit my humorous author voice. And my logo, a caricature of a Chinese Crested, has been incredibly popular. But is it memorable?

The best author branding is something readers recognize, like McDonald's golden arches. Web site design can reinforce the brand, and I created **a website** that's a reflection of my sense of humor – from the playful fonts to the revolving visuals of a couple falling into, then out of, bed. My slogan: Hot, Humorous Romances, continues the theme. And my PR giveaways – thumbcuff keychains – hint at both the suspense and the kinky-sex sides of my romances. Unfortunately, my first shipment of thumbcuffs had keys that couldn't unlock the cuffs, so they also set me up for potential lawsuits!

In my "day job," I'm a PR/marketing writer, so I'm very curious about reader reactions to author branding. Is there an author whose Web site, book trailer, slogan, etc has stuck in your mind? If so, what did you like about it? Authors have very little control over book covers, but we try to reach readers with our branded promotions. What author ads, banners, newsletters, etc have you seen that persuaded you to pick up the author's book and why? If you could receive a promotional giveaway from an author, would you prefer a bookmark, an excerpt booklet, a logoed item like a pen or something else entirely?



I'd love to read your comments! I'll be visiting family for Easter, but I look forward to your feedback on effective author branding!



To make this blog a little more memorable, you could win my guest blogger prize package: a sterling silver dog charm, a thumbcuff keychain and a stuffed dog! To thank you for your feedback, I'll choose a winner from the comments left between now and 9 a.m. EST on Monday, April 9th. (You must be a registered user here at Cigars!)

I also have a monthly contest on my Web site, as well as a humorous Sex Advice column "written" by the sex therapist heroine of my work-in-progress. So I hope you'll visit my Web site!

Thanks!

-- Marcia ;-)