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No More Autograph Parties

by Dan Poynter

One of the joys of being a published author is being appreciated for your Work. Getting a favorable response to your book from a crowd of people is an event most authors look forward to. But many authors and author-publishers misunderstand the purpose of a book signing and they attend unprepared.

Book signings are a form of product promotion not available to producers of other goods or services. But autographings are not a party in your honor—you and your book are not even known yet. Bookstores, both chain and independent, stage events to attract potential customers into their stores. The stores supply the venue; the author supplies the audience.

Never do an autographing; always offer a mini seminar. Attract buyers to your autograph parties.

—Terri Lonier, author, *Working Solo*.

An "autograph party" says, "Come and appreciate me (and buy a book)"; a "seminar" says, "Come on down and I will give you something free (information) that will improve your life." Always think of the *benefit* to the potential customer. How can you lure them out of the house and down to the store? Your appearance is a promotional opportunity for you and it will require hard work.

Patricia Bragg (Health-Science) publishes health and fitness books. To promote her mini seminar at a local bookshop in Santa Barbara, she posted handbills in all the local health food stores. Then she made a postcard mailing to her customer list within a 50-mile (driving) radius. The store was packed and she was on for over four hours—until closing time. The store sold out on many of her titles and gave out rain checks.
<http://www.bragg.com>

Authors are celebrities; they are the draw. People think if you wrote a book, you know something. And, you probably do. Nonfiction books are written from the best research you can do, you direct your material toward a certain type of reader and you further explain your advice with your own experiences. Book writing is a journey. Often we do not know where the process will take us. We learn everything there is to know about our subject and, in effect, we are gaining an advanced degree in our area of interest: we do the research and then we do the paper. So, authors are pretty special, often interesting and do know quite a bit about their subject area.

When my parents taught me not to write in books, they did not know they were raising an author who would autograph them. They turned my last book tour into a guilt trip.

The store might publicize your appearance with a sign in the window for a few days and may place a notice in their event schedule. Attracting the rest of the crowd is up to you.

These mini seminars may lead to longer ones for other groups at other locations—for money. Go for the exposure and go prepared. Your book deserves it.

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Dan Poynter does not want you to die with a book still inside you. You have the ingredients and he has your recipe. Dan has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. For more help on book writing, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

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-30-