

Promoting on Reader Loops

By Carol Ann Erhardt

When I first began participating in author days on reader loops, I thought it was the greatest thing this side of a huge box of Godiva chocolates. I mean, I could sit in my comfy chair wearing pink bunny slippers, a pair of jeans, and a favorite washed out T-shirt. Being a shy person who is uncomfortable in a roomful of strangers, I could party with the best of them on-line. One of the first things most authors will tell you is that “word of mouth” and name recognition are your best promo tools. A good method of generating that information is to participate in reader loops. Of importance is: During the hours of promo, many of the readers will “lurk.” Some won’t read the numerous, and I mean numerous, posts until a day or two later. Many will skim the “subjects” of the emails, and open only those that appeal to them—blurbs, clever subject lines, contests, giveaways. So, even though you aren’t getting the interaction you might want, the people who will make the decision to purchase your book are still out there. They join reader loops because they want to learn about... books!

So, how do you promote your book and your name on these loops?

Here are a few tips I’ve used which work well to draw traffic to my website.

Promote one book only. Seeing the name of this single book several times will brand that title in the reader’s mind. It’s like those jingles in television commercials. They’re catching!

Use creativity when posting an excerpt. For instance, for my book *Hit and Run* I’ve used the following subject line. *Do You Believe in Psychic Links?* Much better than the bland “Excerpt 1 – *Hit and Run.*” Which would you be most likely to read?

Bring your characters to the party. I’ve had a lot of fun with bringing my hero and heroine to the party. They tell about their goals, their attraction, and their conflict. My hero flirts with the women on the loop and they love it!

Offer a free read. I periodically write short stories for my newsletter. Readers love to get something for free. This is a great way to add to your mailing list. Entice them with the free read in exchange for signing up for your newsletter.

Keep your excerpts short. The quickest way to lose a reader is to post a long excerpt. With a ton of emails to wade through, chances are they won’t read the entire post—which leads to them skipping your other excerpts.

Keep them hooked. Just like a hook line at the beginning or end of a chapter creates a page turner, leaving the reader wanting to know more at the end of your excerpt will create the desire for them to read the book. The feedback I receive on these “hook” endings is great. And...it lets

me know that they are reading my excerpts. First thing is to use that hook in the subject line, and then leave them wanting more at the end of your short excerpt.

Use your tag line and website/blog url. If you track your visitor counts like I do, you'll see a spike after participating in a reader loop promotion. I post the first chapter of my book on my website and in my final post of the day, I direct the readers to my website, and provide the novel's purchase link and publisher.

Be personable. Interact with others on the loop, whether it be readers or other authors. My first post of the day is always Who Am I? This contains a list of personal things about me. Readers like to learn about what makes an author tick. Avoid including too much information, or too personal of information. Here's what I post.

*I am a wife to my soulmate, after surviving an abusive marriage.

*I am a mother to my four children, and four stepchildren.

*I am a proud grandma.

*I am a full time Executive Assistant.

*I am a caregiver to fourteen feral cats.

*I am owned by three cats named Charlotte, Wilbur, and Templeton.

*I am a woman who loves ice cream, chocolate, people, animals, sunshine, snow, and good books.

*I am a woman who is afraid of heights, spiders (eek!) and the dark.

*I am a woman who dislikes mean-spirited people, death, and destruction.

*I am a child who worries about her elderly mother, and misses her deceased father.

*I am Carol Ann Erhardt, a romance novelist.

I polled several of my fellow authors to find out if they had any promotional tips to share, and this is what they had to say.

Terry Spear, www.terrypear.com, Paranormal author, Sourcebooks.

One thing is to help others on the loops. When they're looking for help for something, offer it. Your sig line will be at the bottom of your post and if readers are interested, they'll check out your books. I just offered a week of free online classes to 2000 writers who are also readers and had a lot of hits on my website because of it and some are now taking my online classes that I wouldn't have reached before. ...giving to readers helps promote Goodwill.

Amber Polo, www.amberpolo.com, Paranormal author, The Wild Rose Press.

I set up a list of loops and a list of excerpts on a grid. This allows me to know which excerpts I use on each particular readers loop. It avoids the same excerpt showing up over and over on the same loop.

Patti Schenberger, www.pattischenberger.com, Paranormal and contemporary author, The Wild Rose Press.

What I do on loops is always offer a free download of my book, or print copy using one of two ways. If they sign my guestbook on my website or I ask that they send me an email with the word Contest in the Subject line and I draw after the event is over. This is a twofold win. I get more names for my newsletter and I encourage readers to try my books for free.

I have also been known to let the loop readers know that every one of my books contains a dog. Every book in my paranormals has a canine companion to the heroine. It just sort of evolved that way. My daughter works at a local doggy day care and when I do signings, I always give a portion of my sales to the local animal rescues.

Deb Tompkins, www.debhorsedesigns.com, Contemporary Author, The Wild Rose Press.

Nothing stirs interest like something for free. Pick an inexpensive item out of your story or related to your story as a contest prize. For example the story I have in works now has two cats. So the contest question could be “what are the cats’ names?” and the winner would get a handmade catnip mouse for their cat. Be sure to post the answer in one of the excerpts.

In summary, reader loops are inexpensive promotional tools. There are many groups. Search through Yahoo Groups for Reader loops. Visit them and you’ll be able to see how many members belong. The larger the number the better the opportunity. And, be sure to check which days are open to promo. Many allow one promo per week on a specific day. This would be where you post a blurb, a short excerpt, and the purchase links. But the most effective way to promo is to ask for an author promo day for yourself or to band with a group of other authors and promote together. I belong to several author groups and we go together on a specific day. Each has a specific block of time to use for their promotion. No matter what, please don’t get discouraged if you don’t see immediate interaction on reader loops in response to your posts. And be sure to track your website and blog traffic. Seeing the numbers spike is positive reinforcement that you are reaching readers who are interested in your books. Reader loops are wonderful promotion opportunities.

~Carol Ann Erhardt is an inspirational romantic suspense author. Learn more by visiting her website at www.CarolAnnErhardt.com