The Quick Start Guide to Building Your Writer Platform

Written and published by Kimberley Grabas

YourWriterPlatform.com

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Your Writer Platform: Getting Started

What is a writer platform?

"Platform" is used to describe the variety of ways that you use to connect to—and engage with—the ideal readership that is most receptive to your work. It’s also the amount of influence you wield, the level of visibility and authority you have gained, and the deepness of your connection with your readers.

When should I start building my platform?

Ideally, you should start building your platform as soon as you’ve determined you want a career as a writer, while you’re still writing your first book. But, for many writers, that ship has long since sailed. So, the second best time to start is right now.

What are the steps I need to take?

One of the most common and frequently asked questions from writers that I receive regarding their platform is, “Where do I start?” So I have created this short guide to walk you through five key steps to help you lay the proper foundation for a solid and successful writer platform.

As you work through the steps, keep in mind that it’s action—not just information—that will produce results. Go deep! Don’t view the effort you expend here as wasted, or just one more thing keeping you from your writing. Your writer platform is the bridge between the work you create and the people who are meant to experience it. Take the time to craft a strong one.
“Branding requires effort and attention, especially if it’s authentic.”
Simply put, your brand is your promise to your audience. 

Your brand stems from who you are, how you want to be known and who people perceive you to be.

Branding is how we market ourselves to others, and the best way to do so is by discovering and revealing who we are on the inside.

Many writers skip this step, but it is arguably one of the most important tasks to complete before moving forward in your book marketing and platform building efforts.

If you can’t articulate clearly what you have to offer—what makes your work and your writing unique—you will not be able to translate your value to an audience.

For a thorough discussion on discovering your brand personality, as well as marketing, launching and managing your author brand long-term, check out the following article:

Discover & Build Your Author Brand

YourWriterPlatform.com
“Select carefully. The target market you choose will help dictate your marketing strategy.”
Identify Your Target Audience

Become obsessed with your readers.

Who is your ideal reader? **What are their wants, desires, values and interests?** Who are their influencers, and where do they spend their time online and off?

Understanding what your readers are drawn to, how they communicate their needs, and where they go to discover solutions to their problems is an exceptionally important—but often overlooked—step in both the writing AND the marketing process.

Taking the time to intimately know your reader, and narrowing your focus to include only those select few who will truly appreciate your work is challenging, but well worth the effort.

Recognizing that your book is not a ‘must read’ for every literate person on earth, necessarily means you need a way to **narrow your focus.** The goal is to segment a broad market into smaller, distinct groups of individuals who are like-minded or share specific characteristics, behaviours and needs.

Learn how to clearly identify your target audience and develop a reader profile, here:

**How To Target an Audience (And Avoid Book Launch Flop)**
Before we move onto step 3, it’s important to take the time to tie steps 1 and 2 together.

Defining your **author brand** requires a great deal of introspection. Why do I write what I write? What message am I trying to share? How do I want to be perceived, and why is that important to me?

Identifying your **target audience** requires an understanding of the shared characteristics of a particular group and the relevance those traits, ideologies and interests have to your work.

Before you do anything to promote yourself or your work, you MUST be able to articulate plainly, succinctly, and without hesitation: *why you write what you write, and who cares that you write it.*

The key, therefore, is to identify and research what your true target audience craves, recognize the unique and meaningful aspects of what you have to offer, and align the two to benefit your ideal reader in an exceptional way.

Check out this post to understand how nailing these two things down can make your job as a writer—and a marketer—much easier:

2 Must-Dos to Make Your Book Marketing Infinitely Easier
“Nothing screams lack of investment like having a .blogspot, .typepad or .wordpress. in your domain name.”
Set Up Your Author Website/Blog

Your website is the capital from which you rule your author empire.

There are many, many options available to authors for creating a website or blog that will act as “home base” for their platform.

My recommendation is to set up a self-hosted WordPress site, using BlueHost as your hosting provider. For the reasons behind this recommendation, as well as a tutorial on how to quickly set up your WordPress site, check out this post:

Set Up Your WordPress Blog in Under 15 Minutes

For those of you who would prefer to pay a little extra monthly for the convenience of having an expert build your site and do all the heavy lifting when it comes to the tech side (all you have to do is create content) I recommend OutstandingSetup.

For tips on author website “must-haves”, go here:
“The money is in the list.”
Don’t wait for perfect. It’s tempting to put off list building until your site is tweaked to perfection, you have a killer free opt-in, or you finally have a book to market.

But, one of the biggest assets you can create in your business (aside from your writing, of course) is a dedicated line of communication to your fans. A way of connecting with your “people” that you own (not that you borrow or rent, like on social media).

I use Aweber for my mailing list at Your Writer Platform, and I love it! I find it the simplest email subscription software to use, with the most useful options.

For more reasons on why it’s über important to start building (and maintaining) an email list, as well as how to get started on yours, have a read through the following post:

The Writer’s Guide to Building an Email List
"Twitter is not a technology. It's a conversation. And it's happening with or without you."

~ Charlene Li
Establish a Presence on Social Media

Determine where your readers hang out online, and be there.

Some writers take to social media like a fish to water. For the rest of us, the learning curve is inexplicably steep.

The important thing to remember, is that social media is intended to be, well, social. Not promotional. Focus on the needs and interests of your target audience, and give them what they want.

The more useful, intriguing, inspiring, funny or thoughtful your updates, the more people will be compelled to follow—especially if what you share resonates with them.

The following articles will help you get a foothold on some popular social media platforms:

- Twitter Marketing 101: For Writers
- 34 Strategic Ways You Can Use Pinterest to Market Your Book and Your Author Brand
- Authors + Content + Readers = Wattpad
- How to Market a Book and Strengthen Your Author Platform with Goodreads
Next Steps

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

Remember that building your platform will take time (think marathon, not sprint!). Take things one step at a time, one “bite” at a time, and incorporate something new only after you’ve mastered the task that came before.

There is much more work to do when you’re first starting out, but you’ll soon see that eventually a tipping point is reached, where the cumulative effect of your early efforts creates momentum that requires less work for greater results.

Embrace the lesson behind the above saying as you tackle what lies ahead. Looking at the sweeping goal of building a platform, getting noticed and selling more books can be completely overwhelming.

But by breaking up your tasks, and taking things bit by bit, it is more than manageable.

It doesn’t end here.

Head on over to YourWriterPlatform.com for more posts, tips, and inspiration, and check out the platform building resources on the following pages.

If you have any questions about the content of this guide, or would just like a bit more guidance, shoot me an email at Kim@YourWriterPlatform.com
Resource List

Platform Building Essentials: Website & Hosting

**Bluehost:** One of the 20 largest web hosting companies, Bluehost is a reliable choice and makes getting set up with WordPress super easy. Customer support is excellent, and you can be up and running in minutes! I highly recommend using Bluehost to satisfy your author website web hosting needs.

**Outstanding Setup:** Want a gorgeous, customized website, with all the technical tidbits taken care of (including initial set up, theme, domain, WordPress install, backup and security), and all you have to do is blissfully create content? Dream come true, right? The people at Outstanding Setup are helpful AND patient, and will do all the heavy lifting when it comes to the set up and maintenance of your WordPress site - but you remain in control. An excellent alternative if you prefer someone else to handle the technical side while you concentrate on building your writing business.

**WordPress:** The #1 Blog Publishing Platform. WordPress has the greatest variety of themes, plugins and services of any blogging platform. It’s free and easily customizable with wonderful support. This is the self-hosted version of WordPress, not the hosted wordpress.com version. You are in complete control over how you use it, and what to install. Most importantly, you’re in control of your data instead of some other bigger entity who can change the rules at any time.
Aweber: You can never start building your email list too early. There are several good options available for writers, but the stand out email opt-in service and email marketing/broadcasting tool is Aweber. You can send out broadcast emails to your subscribers as well as automatic follow-up emails set at varying intervals (super usefull!). Send automatic blog updates, test emails before you send them, choose from loads of well designed email opt-in forms, monitor who signs up - and you can try it all out for only $1!

Mailchimp: Another option that is easy to use and free for your first 2000 subscribers. Just be careful to check their terms of service to be sure you understand any limitations that are placed on email marketing. A good choice for writers and artists who just want to share their art.

Optin Skin: Optin Skin is a helpful tool for creating custom email opt-in forms that you can embed within, or at the bottom, of your pages and posts - or pretty much anywhere you want to capture emails. There are several base templates to choose from that you can quickly and easily alter and tweak to match the look of your site (no coding required!).
**Resource List**

**Platform Building Essentials: Social Media Tools**

**TweetDeck** - When you have multiple Twitter accounts and want to keep track of everything in one place, TweetDeck is a great option.

**Hootsuite** - This is another option for managing multiple accounts with both a free and pro version. This is the third party app I use to track mentions and schedule tweets.

**Buffer** - One of the best ways to grow a Twitter following is to tweet often. The problem is you either have to be on Twitter all day, or your tweets all go out in clusters when you’re there. Buffer solves this problem by helping you schedule tweets throughout the day.

**Google Alerts** - Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your queries. You can monitor a developing story, keep current on industry news, or even check your name/site for results on what people are saying about you.
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Platform Building Essentials: Guides & Training

**Kickstart Your Blog** - A course designed by A-list blogger, Mary Jaksch of Write to Done, Kickstart Your Blog is a program that will take you by the hand and guide you through a proven step-by-step system to craft a blog that will help you stand out from the crowd. The program is designed to be super-easy for new bloggers to follow - and yet it delivers all the important skills, tips, and tricks that you'll need to know to ensure your blog is a success.

**31 Days to Building a Better Blog** - This month long workbook by Problogger's Darren Rowse has helped thousands of people get better at blogging, learn how to reach an audience, and even start making a profit with their blogs. Whether you're just starting out or ready to take your blog to the next level, this book is worth a read.

**Blog Post Promotion: The Ultimate Course** - In order to be successful as a blogger, guest blogger, and freelance writer, you must be able to not only write awesome content, but also be able to promote it successfully! This course, created by freelance writer and popular blogger, Kristi Hines, will help you get the traffic that you want - and deserve - for your great content.
Questions, comments, or compliments?

Still have some questions about building your platform? Struggling with something or just want to share some feedback?

Here’s how we can stay in touch:

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Subscribe to Your Writer Platform on YouTube

Or, you can even try good old fashioned email: Kim@YourWriterPlatform.com