

THE POWER OF PROMOTIONAL GROUPS

EXCERPT

© by Karen S. Wiesner

ISBN: 1-933353-36-8 (electronic)

Published by Twilight Times Books <http://www.twilighttimesbooks.com>

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Disclaimer

Introduction: **The Promotional Landscape**

Who Should Promote

The Basics of Promotion

How Much to Spend on Promotion

Strategies to Promote Multiple Releases

Getting Our Message Across

Chapter One: ***Strength in Numbers: Types of Promotional Groups***

Co-op Promotional Groups

Group Overviews

From the Members: Advantages and Disadvantages

Membership Fee Promotional Groups

Group Overviews

From the Members: Advantages and Disadvantages

Small-clutch Promotional Groups

Group Overviews

From the Members: Advantages and Disadvantages

The Common Laments and Praises of a Promotional Group

Chapter Two: **Building Your Membership: Meeting Your Needs and Finding Like-Minded Authors**

What Do *You* Need?

Finding Members and Group Dynamics: Shared vision

Handshake Agreement Versus Contracts

Group Policies and Procedures Manual

Setting Up a Business List for the Group

Deciding on a Group Name

Defining Your Mission as a Group

Coming Up With a Tantalizing Lure

Dividing Up Group Tasks

What *All* Members Should Be Responsible For

Possible Group Tasks

Promotion Coordinator or Committee

General Secretary

New Member Mentor

Chapter Three: **Setting Up Camp: The Must-Haves**

The Website

- Do-It-Yourself Hosts

- Professional Web Designers

 - Website Maintenance and Updates Coordinator/Committee

- Domain Name

- Specific Pages to Include on Your Website

Submitting to Search Engines

Some Things to Optimize Your Website

- Guestbook and Automated Forms

- Tools: Author Trackers, Website Statistics, and Visitor Counters

Promoting the Group Website

- Linking to Your Site

- Inexpensive Banners and Other Types of Online Advertisements

- Submitting Your Url to Freebie Websites

- Website Awards

A Peek at the Websites of Promotional Groups

Author Spotlights

The Group Newsletter

- Newsletter Editor

- Fan Welcome Chair/Committee

- Newsletter Excerpts: Free Book Samples

- Promoting Individual Author Newsletters

A Peek at the Newsletters of Promotional Groups

Chapter Four: **Targeted, Inexpensive, Long-Term Promotion**

Web-Based Promotions

- Giveaways

 - Giveaways Coordinator

- Promotional Packages

- Online Interviews

- Live Chats

- Signature Line Promotion

- Promoting on Listservs, Forums and Bulletin Boards

- Webrings

- Online Press Releases

- Group Sampler Disks

- Amazon.com Opportunities

 - Marketplace

 - Advantage Program

 - Associates Program

Off-line Promotions

Chapter Five: **Affordable Paid Advertising**

Promoting Both the Individual Author and the Group

Co-op Advertisements
Ad Campaign Tips
 Paid Advertising Coordinator/Committee
 Treasurer

Chapter Six: **Group Anthologies and E-Serials**

Group Anthologies/Collections
 How Much Control Do You Want? Finding the Perfect Publisher (Or Publishing It Yourself!)
 Making It Work By Getting It In Writing
Group E-serials
Possible Anthology and E-Serial Tasks
 Coordinator
 Editing Committee (Quality Control)
 Anthology/E-serial Promotion Coordinator

Conclusion: ***Success in Numbers***

Appendix A: **Finding Group Members Through Writing Organizations**

List of 130 Writing Organizations

Appendix B: **Let Your Website Be Seen**

List of Almost 100 Search Engines

Appendix C: **Online Websites to Promote Your Group**

List of Almost 700 Websites

Appendix D: **Checklists**

Setting Up a Promotional Group Checklist
Group Website Checklist
Group Newsletter Checklist
Possible Group Tasks Checklist
Free Advertising Deadlines and Details Checklist
Paid Advertising Deadlines and Details Checklist
Anthology/E-Serial Checklist

My Thanks

About the Author

CHAPTER ONE

Strength in Numbers: Types of Promotional Groups

At the time I fully recognized my own dilemma as a prolific author who writes in many genres without the means to promote them all in the long-term, I started to notice an increase in the number of promotional groups cropping up on-line. The Brazen Hussies, Rising Stars of Romance, Divas of Romance (now disbanded)—these are groups of authors who have gathered for the specific purpose of promoting together. What a brilliant idea! These authors accomplish together what few can do alone: they can share the cost of long-term promotion and can hopefully market individually *and* as a group.

In my research over the past several years, I've discovered three main types of promotional groups:

CO-OP PROMOTIONAL GROUPS

Co-op promotional groups work around the concept of members paying for advertising cooperatively. The idea of coming together with the willingness of all members to contribute something isn't a new idea. When I first got published in 1998, I knew of a few groups of authors who had done this, either in an organized way or simply whoever could afford it or cared to organize something for a small group.

My introduction into this was a group called eauthorads (housed at Yahoogroups, at that time called Onelist). This list included a bunch of authors who had romance novels published electronically and wanted to advertise in *Affaire de Coeur* and *Romantic Times* magazines in a co-op setting. Both were more than willing to offer advertising to us. Usually these ads amounted to one black and white page or a two-page spread, with five to ten authors promoting a release in each. The cost was generally around a thousand dollars per ad. If you had ten authors pooling together on it, though, this became affordable for each author, especially considering that both magazines were willing to review the books featured in the ads. Coordination of these ads was done by various authors in the group, but eventually one author stepped up and did nearly all the work involved in scheduling and putting these ads together. When that author got tired of the work involved, another came forward to relieve her for a while. It went on like this for quite some time until we no longer had anyone willing to do the coordination.

Authors of mystery novels and science fiction and fantasy caught onto the brilliance of this co-op promotional method, and they also started coordinating ads for genre specific publications.

Unfortunately for authors, at this time, this structure of promotion seems to have fallen by the wayside. However, the *concept* of co-op promotional groups continues in evolved forms.

There's a growing trend for authors who write for a certain line or publisher to form a group for promotional purposes. How can you lose with this? A couple of authors can band together online and/or with a ring of websites connected together, all are featured on a group website, and these authors have others to sit with at book signings, host hospitality suites at conferences, and, of course, pitch in on paid advertising. Because most of these groups consist of mass market published authors, they're able to fund paid advertising without membership dues and they're in the public eye in a big way. Small press groups have also been able to make these works, though not on such a large scale.

One group of co-op authors is Rising Stars of Romance <http://risingstars.novelaauthors.com/> (also called ToBeez, meaning "sold and TO BE published"). Co-founded in February 1998 by Terri Brisbin and Tina St. John, Rising Stars is a group of romance authors who have just made their first sales and are looking for information and support from others going through the same process. Although the premise of the group is to help newly published authors, members can remain in the group no matter how many books they've had published. However, only newly contracted authors are eligible to join. The group started very informally, with 14 authors all asking "What next?" after accepting their first contracts. Promoting together then and now grew and continues to grow naturally out of this mission. Currently with over 200 members, the group doesn't require membership dues. Instead, members pay her share toward the cost for any projects they choose to participate in. When group ads are placed in a romance-industry magazine, each participating author pays a share. Occasionally the group has produced brochures or cookbooks, and the cost is split between those involved.

Avon Authors <http://www.avonauthors.com/> was formed in March 1997 and is a group of romance authors who write for Avon Books and HarperCollins Publishing. The group has approximately 65 members. Instead of membership dues, members pay her share toward the cost of any promotional avenues or projects they choose to participate in.

Many small press and electronic published authors have also banded together under the umbrella of a certain publisher to promote their releases. Authors published with Amber Quill Press, LLC have flocked together at <http://www.adventuresofamberquill.com/> to advertise together as well as put co-op ads in industry trade magazines.

Whiskey Creek Press authors advertise together in *Romantic Times* with a business listserv at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AuthorCo-opAds>.

Basically, groups like this are made up of any and all authors of that publisher interested in joining. Membership fees are rare, as all authors share the common purpose of putting as many co-op ads in trade magazines as they afford.

Other Co-op Promotional Groups:

Harlequin Historical Authors <http://home.att.net/%7Ehistoricalauthors/authors.htm>

Intrigue Authors <http://www.intrigueauthors.com/>

KimsCrew <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kimsCrew/>

Super (Harlequin Superromance) Authors <http://www.superauthors.com/>

Warner Women <http://www.warnerwomen.blogspot.com/>

From the Members: Advantages and Disadvantages

Group members of ToBeez cited how well the group exposes its members, especially at conferences around the United States, and ToBeez has coordinated some co-op ads. According to members, these tend to be sporadic. The group participates in five or less ads per year in *Romantic Times*, approximately ten authors per ad, with over 200 members competing for space. Getting into an ad at a time when you have a book available can be a bit difficult. Some group members also mentioned feeling promotion is slanted toward traditionally published authors rather than small press and e-published.

Avon Authors' strategy is a bit different. The group employs the use of a communal website and message boards. New authors to the group are especially appreciative because hard-core fans have a tendency to visit the group's message board on a daily basis. New authors are known right away and fans become eager to purchase the upcoming book after having conversed with the author. One member of Avon Authors, in particular, hit the Waldenbooks Mass Market List and BookScan within the first week her debut novel was released. This author's personal website was also visited continuously because of her presence in the promotional group. Her fan base grows by leaps and bounds, and, in this way, she builds relationships with her readers. Because of her place in the group, she's getting the same level of exposure as some of the top authors with her publisher. Authors in the group are encouraged to advertise their contests and spotlight their books in the newsletter with previous releases being listed on the website. A surge in hits and guestbook entries comes whenever the newsletter goes out.

Avon Authors and groups like it also put co-op advertisements in major trade magazines when they're able. While coordination of these might not be as frequent as some would like, the members saw no disadvantages at all to belonging to this type of promotional group.

MEMBERSHIP FEE PROMOTIONAL GROUPS

There is great wisdom in using the internet as the place to gain the interest of readers. Websites devoted to romance lovers, mystery readers, you name it, are cropping up left and right. The smart author will make sure she's on every single genre-specific website she can get a place on. Most of these websites are *fan-run*. In other words, a fan of the genre set it up and maintains it for love, and, occasionally, from the profit of authors advertising on it.

Another breed of websites have also gone up that are *author-run*. The purpose is to get together a group of like-minded and usually like-*genred* authors who want to cater to their fans. Membership fees go from obscene to affordable.

The Romance Club <http://www.theromanceclub.com/> is a group structured in almost exactly the way Divas and All Star Scribes are. For those who write in other genres outside romance, the owner of this site has set up alternate genre website for authors to pay for promotion. The cost, unless you have a fat advertising budget, is fairly steep.

Flowers and Hearts <http://www.flowersandhearts.com/> formed in April 2005 and includes 50 multi-genre authors who have sold over 600 books combined. Their main promotion is via their website and newsletter. Current annual dues are \$5 plus one of hour work a month on group promotion and business. As a co-operative group of authors, everyone works together toward a mutual benefit.

BooksWeLove.net <http://www.BooksWeLove.net> launched in January 2002. Owners and authors Jude Pittman and Maureen McMahon had the idea to start a group where they could promote their own books and the books of other authors, and this evolved into the mission of commitment to long-term marketing and building a readership (not simply *authors* promoting to other *authors*) base. Despite the owners' intention to keep the group small, they currently have over 120 members. Although BooksWeLove.net is no longer accepting new members, current members pay a very affordable \$25 a year and are required to sign on for three years at a time. BooksWeLove.net's database of readers is nearing 1000. Major promotions entail advertising as a feature site on top search engine websites and frequent contest giveaways. Each member gets a page on the website with releases listed, and new member releases are included on the main page and in the newsletter. All the genres members write in are promoted on the website.

Other Membership-Fee Promotional Groups:

Aussie Authors <http://www.aussieauthors.com>
Christian Authors Network <http://www.christianauthorsnetwork.com/>
Erotica Romance <http://www.eroticaromance.com/>
The Mystery Club <http://www.fictionweb.com/>
Poets' and Writers' League of Greater Cleveland <http://www.pwlgc.com>
The Romance Club <http://www.theromanceclub.com>
Small Publishers', Artists and Writers' Network (SPAWN) <http://www.spawn.org>
Wisconsin Fellowship of Christian Authors <http://www.wisconsinchristianauthors.com>

From the Members: Advantages and Disadvantages

BooksWeLove.net has a group structure focused almost entirely on the giveaways (again, many set up like scavenger hunts) they host throughout the year. Many members praised the group for taking over what they hated to do themselves, since the promotional events offered allow members to participate without taking up their own time. The contest giveaways (donated by participating members) bring readers to the individual author pages on the group's website. Each member has a separate sign-in guestbook. Contestants are asked to visit the author's pages, looking for contest clues (which, of course, exposes the author to a potential buyer), then to sign the author's guestbook. Members get notices in their Inbox whenever their guestbook is signed. This allows authors to have personal contact with readers. Also, if a reader likes an author's books or has won one, she'll frequently sign that information in the guestbook, saying she plans to buy others from that author. Reason also dictates that if the reader enjoyed the book she won, chances are she'll purchase another from the same author. While this isn't a guaranteed sale, it is helpful in gauging the effectiveness of promoting with BooksWeLove.net.

Other members praised BooksWeLove.net for offering individual author pages (which many members use as their "main" website) that are attractive, easy to navigate, and, perhaps

most important, kept up-to-date. BooksWeLove.net also enjoys a strong position with all the major search engines, which is no small amount of work. See Chapter Three for the importance and strategies for submitting to search engines.

In an effort to track the effectiveness of promotion, one of the owners of BooksWeLove.net sends out monthly summaries of website statistics (more in Chapter Three on how and where to get these), which include where traffic is heaviest on specific pages of the group website, where readers are coming from, and the number of visitors per day and month. While BooksWeLove.net doesn't coordinate group co-op ads in trade magazines, for the cost of membership, members are getting good exposure and the solid chance of increased sales.

It stands to reason that if a promotional group caps its membership, the authors can enjoy group and individual promotion at a very small cost per year. Everyone's efforts in the group bring awareness to the public. However, it is also true that it's usually just a handful of members who do most of the work. Gauging whether group promotion has increased individual sales is always one of the major disadvantages.

SMALL-CLUTCH PROMOTIONAL GROUPS

Some of the most effective promotional groups I've observed are the small clutches of authors getting together to promote as a group. While co-op and membership fee-based groups can concentrate on only a few members or even on a huge number, in general small clutch groups have only a few members—anywhere from three to 15. This focus wonderfully allows all authors to get individual promotion while they promote as a group. Janet Lane Walters eloquently spoke of how important the size of a group is in determining effectiveness of promotion: “When a whole group is promoted, there is generally a positive overflow onto the individual author—unless the group is too large. Then the individual author gets buried in bodies.”

The small clutch group concept can work effectively for an author in any medium and the structure of the group can be tailored specifically to the needs of the authors who band together. After having been a member of all three types of promotional groups, I think what truly makes small-clutch groups so effective is that they can have all the benefits of a co-op group with none of the common downsides of the membership-fee types.

The Wyrd Sisters (<http://www.ireadthewyrdstuff.com/>) started out with four members in 1992, as sort of a critique group formed from members of the Pike's Peak Romance Writers (RWA). Four more authors were later added. The group doesn't require membership fees. The multi-genre authors promote their works collectively via Web links to their personal pages, NovelTalk chats, and in-person appearances. Members have participated in two group series': the Hope Chest Series (with five stories from five authors in the group) and the Three Graces Series (three authors). More about that in Chapter Five.

The Brazen Hussies <http://www.brazenhussies.net>, formed in 1999, include three award-winning fantasy and science fiction authors banded together to promote their books and educate readers about the genre. Together, they do group book signings and appearances, online chats and radio interviews. The reason they formed was because they noticed that publishers weren't doing much, if any, publicity for the books published. Together, they decided they could promote...well, like brazen hussies. The group doesn't employ membership fees. Promotion is mainly in their appearances, newsletter, and website, as well some promotional items like

bookmarks, pencils, and shelf-talkers for bookstores (paid for cooperatively as opportunities come up).

The Little Blog of Murder: Confessions of Five Ohio Mystery Authors <http://www.thelittleblogofmurder.com> is a group of five mystery authors from Ohio promoting together in the form of a blog launched on February 2006. This is a very popular trend for authors who want to keep in daily contact with their readers these days. The five authors proposed to not only promote their releases together, but also to interact with their fans and other authors. They also do this off-line at conferences and book signings. They have no membership fees, but they do pool together to pay for their website, as well as donations to charity auctions or other giveaways.

One of the first mystery author groups to form, in 1995, was Femmes Fatales <http://www.femmesfatalesauthors.com>, currently with nine members, three of whom are original members. The group promotes mainly through mini-tours, panels, their websites, a newsletter and, most recently, a blog and a trivia contest. Though the group has no membership fees, they do share the cost of any advertising equally. Proof to their visibility as a successful promotional group, they were featured in a sidebar article in *Publisher's Weekly*.

Another mystery group is Minnesota Crime Wave <http://www.minnesotacrimewave.org/>, which includes three award-winning members who do many in-person promotions together, along with promoting via their group website and newsletter. Interestingly, the authors in the group came up with the idea to showcase Minnesota authors by putting together a short story anthology. A second is scheduled for 2007 release.

Jewels of the Quill <http://www.JewelsoftheQuill.com> was formed and launched by Karen Wiesner (yours truly) in July 2003. The group was featured in the September 2003 issue of *Romantic Times BOOKreviews*. My idea was to form a small group of authors who had many releases to promote as well as who wrote in many different genres, as I did myself on both counts. Commonly, all members would write romances so our affordable paid promotion could be focused in traditional trade publications, such as *Romantic Times* (what we collectively saw as the most popular magazine in the romance genre). My purpose was to promote as a group in long-term, focused ways that none of us could do alone and in such a way that membership fees wouldn't be required. It made sense to me that, since there are twelve months in a year, the number of members should always be capped at twelve, allowing each author a month in the spotlight per year (and allowing us to have monthly giveaways for our visitors from the spotlight author). The main means of promotion are the group's website, our monthly newsletter Fans of Jewels of the Quill, and excerpts, along with monthly and special giveaways.

As for advertising, I knew on my own I could barely afford a single ad per year in *Romantic Times* (at a cost of \$500 for a single, 1/3rd page black and white advertisement). Within a group setting, I figured that we could purchase *six* ads per year. (See Chapter Four for more details on affordable paid advertising.) The way this has worked out is that the ads we put in *Romantic Times* every other month promote the releases of two members of the group *and* promote the group. These ads are paid for cooperatively by all twelve members. What makes this promotion so affordable is that each member's payment for her portion of the ad she's spotlighted in is spread out over the course of a full year. So, with two authors per ad, the cost of each author's portion is \$250 per year, or roughly \$21 each a month annually. In this way, it's as if everyone in the group is getting an ad every other month—which keeps us all firmly fixed in reader's memories.

In 2005, Jewels of the Quill began doing group anthologies together, including one “regular” volume in our Tales from the Treasure Trove collections, in which all stories focus on the chosen gems of our members, and one holiday (Christmas, Valentine’s Day and Halloween) volume per year. Members contribute stories as they’re able. Each anthology is accompanied by an ad or a publisher advertorial (much cheaper!) in *Romantic Times*, which the participating members pool together to pay for.

Other Small-clutch Promotional Groups:

Amorous Authors Newsletter <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AmorousAuthorsNewsletter/>
Behind the Muses <http://www.behindthemuses.com/>
The Carolina Conspiracy <http://www.carolinaconspiracy.com/>
Coffeeshop Writers <http://www.coffeeshopwriters.com>
The Cozy Chicks <http://cozychicks.blogspot.com/> (blog)
Faithchick.com <http://www.faithchick.com/> (blog)
First Offenders <http://firstoffenders.typepad.com/> (blog)
The Fractured Publisher <http://www.fracturedpublisher.com>
Good Girls Kill For Money Club <http://www.good-girls-kill.com> (blog)
KillerYear <http://www.killeryear.com> (blog)
The Lady Killers <http://www.theladykillers.typepad.com/> (blog)
Lethal Ladies <http://www.lethalladies.us/>
The Lipstick Chronicles <http://thelipstickchronicles.typepad.com/> (blog)
Magic Mavens <http://magicmavens.blogspot.com/> (blog)
Murderati <http://www.murderati.typepad.com/> (blog)
Mystery Turtles <http://mysteryturtles.blogspot.com/> (blog)
The Naked Authors <http://www.nakedauthors.com/> (blog)
Night Whispers <http://www.nightwhispersauthors.com/>
The Outfit: A Collective of Chicago Crime Writers <http://www.TheOutfitCollective.com> (blog)
PASTimes <http://favoritepastimes.blogspot.com/> (blog)
Phaeton Regency Authors
<http://www.awe-struck.net/PHAETON/PhaetonRegencyAuthors.html>
Sirens (SRNs) <http://www.sensualromances.com/>
Wet Noodle Posse <http://www.wetnoodleposse.com/> (ezine)
Women’s Fiction Mainstream <http://www.mainstreamfiction.com/>
Word Wenches <http://www.wordwenches.com>
Writeminded Blog <http://www.writemindedblog.com>
2004 Golden Heart (RWA) Finalists <http://www.ghophers.com/>

From the Members: Advantages and Disadvantages

One member of The Brazen Hussies spoke about how hard it was to promote her books on her own. “I’m a fairly shy person,” Lisa Goldstein shared, “and I liked the idea of writing in part because (I thought) I wouldn’t have to interact with too many people.” Lisa found that she was able to overcome her modesty enough to promote herself within the group structure. She spoke of ill-attended book signings becoming a place for the participating authors to talk to each other. While doing a Q&A session together at a conference, someone else can take up the slack during a lull.

However, finding a group that gels together is nothing short of a miracle. The Brazen Hussies found that harmony in author-friends they’d known for 20 years and, at one time, all lived in the same geographical area. Lisa cites some pluses of promoting in a group: playing off each other, pooling ideas, getting more gigs together than separately, and coming up with more unique promotional ventures together. When one member becomes tired of promotion, another member tends to get the rest enthusiastic again. And who doesn’t love the fact that the group can share the cost of mailings and purchasing bulk bookmarks?

The Little Blog of Murder: Confessions of Five Ohio Mystery Authors were excited about finding other authors who have the commonalities of writing mysteries and living in Ohio. The group’s main promotion is their blog, which they’re all consistent with keeping up entries for, and they’re also able to attend book signings together. Having a supportive band of authors is something that can turn on the enthusiasm for nearly anyone.

Members of the Wyrld Sisters cite working together as a group—to enable them to do more with less money per person—is a huge advantage. Also, it opens up the creative pool from which to gather promotional ideas. The disadvantage is that they’ve grown so close over the years that they tend to treat each other like actual sisters, with all the ups and downs that go with that relationship. Fortunately, their respect and affection for each other keeps them going. At the current time, the Wyrld Sisters has six local members and two out of town—that’s about their limit for locals since they are, first and foremost, a critique group. Since they try to meet every once in a while for a retreat to brainstorm story ideas, having too many people would be counterproductive.

Femmes Fatales authors see advantages in more visibility together, having a built-in network for hearing industry and market news, and a chance to dish. While it’s always hard to quantify sales increases, each author works as a team to promote the others along with themselves. The group’s mini tours make better copy for local copy. Booksellers tend to be very supportive of the group during joint book signings. Knowing each other so well also helps them when planning panels together at genre-specific conferences.

The majority of the authors in the Jewels of the Quill were small press published and/or electronically published, and finding ways to promote effectively was a lonely struggle. One member who’s been with the group from the start said, “What I wanted was more career development, recognition, excuses to write. That was the Jewels.” Now these members enjoy group and individual promotion. Members pool together to pay for their domain name and other majority-agreed-upon promotion, and the website is updated weekly, sometimes daily, and has gotten many compliments for its attractiveness, ease of navigation, and comprehensive information about group members.

Fans love the monthly giveaways and the special, three-times-a-year book lovers’ galore giveaways donated by generous members. The monthly newsletter is well-read by subscribers who flock to the website when a new spotlight is up, and one of the most successful promotions are the excerpts of group anthologies and individual releases that are sent via the newsletter

every Friday—this especially has gotten a lot of feedback with the implication of a purchase being considered or imminent.

Another benefit the members enjoy are the bi-monthly ads in *Romantic Times*, which garner exposure for the group and spotlight members, as well as getting reviews for the books in the ads. The group anthologies, too, have been hugely successful in terms of reviews, awards and reader enthusiasm. In the future, sales of the anthologies will hopefully help pay for a large part of the advertising the group does.

Many of the members have seen an increase in exposure and sales since becoming a part of the group. Also, since many of the members are geographically close, we've had the pleasure of doing group book signings and appearances together at conferences and bookstores.

Even without membership dues, the ads the group puts in *Romantic Times* are costly, despite how the cost is spread out over the course of a year. Without all members paying 1/12th of each one, this kind of promotion wouldn't be possible and it is therefore a requirement for all members to agree annually to the ad campaign (decided by unanimous vote of all members who intend to remain in the group for the whole of the "ad campaign year"). This has resulted in a couple of the members being unable to continue for longer than a year or two. There's also the frequent request of other authors to join the group, but, with only twelve members allowed at a time, membership is by invitation only. Having a few new members in the group every couple years has proved a benefit for fans though.

The members are very vocal about the benefits of the group, stating that the group provides "terrific bang for the buck promotion-wise" and that "There's nothing around like Jewels of the Quill—it's way beyond anything offered in other groups I've heard about."

For a list of writing organizations for finding group members, see Appendix A.

THE COMMON LAMENTS AND PRAISES OF PROMOTIONAL GROUPS

Each of these promotional groups has drawbacks and advantages. A small press published author has neither the financial ability nor the "spotlight" that mass market published authors have, it seems from this side of the fence, by default. Promotional dollars become that much more valuable for that reason. Authors must use them wisely in order to gain the most exposure and potential sales for their body of work. Within a promotional group, immense benefits can be seen...along with a few shortcomings.

The biggest lament, cited from members of these three types of promotional groups, seems to be that it's very difficult to track how effective promotional efforts are in garnering exposure for the group and individual authors, and, subsequently, even harder to track whether that promotion is selling many, or even *any*, books. We will talk a little bit about optimizing your website's performance in Chapter Three, but even with all the traffic tracking software in the world, an author really never knows how effective her promotion is unless, upon joining a group, her sales zoom from two figures to four with her next royalty check. Needless to say, that doesn't happen very often.

One thing most of the members of any promotion group look for is co-op advertising in genre-specific publications that they couldn't otherwise afford. Some of the various groups offered this, but the majority had nothing set up for coordinating this kind of co-op promotion. Members did feel this was a missed opportunity. They also talked about the hardships of making sure all the promotional groups they belong to have their latest information, and, sometimes, of

not getting the promotion they're owed because the website is stagnant and those in charge don't have the time or the inclination to keep it updated as often as they should.

In most of these groups, one or two members are shouldering nearly all the work—work they're not being paid for. Let's face it, this probably works well for the rest of the group, but can result in burn-out for the one or two workers and neglect—God forbid!—of the website (which is usually the major promotion for the group).

In some cases, the authors who do the lion's share of the work begin foregoing their own writing careers in favor of the promotional group's members. Take Jude Pittman and Maureen McMahan, co-founders and owners of BooksWeLove.net. Jude confided a lesson for all who endeavor in this sort of group promotion to heed:

“What we do, more than anything, is commit a huge amount of time and personal resources to the management of the group's promotional website. It's kind of like a family—where you don't do it for monetary rewards but more because they're part of you. Originally, our idea was to start a group that would share promotion with us so that we'd have a lot of promotion for our *own* books. But, as time went on, both Maureen and I went in other directions personally and those directions took us further away from personal writing and more into various types of promotions and other career choices. As a result, BooksWeLove.net became for both of us more of a hobby and less of a personal promotion vehicle. We do each have books out there, but we haven't done anything new in several years, and, although we put our books up and each have personal pages on the group website, I have to confess that neither of us spends much time marketing our own books.”

It's sad that anything can take us away from our love of writing, but it can happen if group promotion becomes so time-consuming there's nothing left to give to our writing. However, in the ideal and if done correctly and wisely, a group put together for the purpose of promotion can enhance and grow a fan base like nothing else. It can allow the author to do what she does best—write non-stop and promote those gems with less effort.

The biggest advantage of promotional groups, based on member feedback, is quite obviously that it's another location online that showcases the author's work, and another place for search engines to find the author's name and book titles. The more frequently a reader is “intrigued” by an author's name and/or title, the more likely it becomes that she'll make a purchase. Remember our stats about a reader needing to see something ten times before she's willing to pry open the old pocketbook? This is one way to do it and a very effective way it at that.

Authors love the support of those who write in the same genre, or simply knowing those who have the same goals as they do, and working together toward fulfilling them. You can find that in any type of promotional group.

Authors love sharing the cost of promotion, sometimes in small increments instead of lump sums, and thereby taking advantage of increased advertising in a much more affordable way than they can get on their own. Authors like knowing that they can promote more than one of their releases and do it over a long period of time in a way that isn't going to exhaust them. In some instances, authors in promotional groups share the work of promotion as well as the benefits.

When it comes to giveaways, authors (especially those who don't get free copies from their publisher) in a group aren't shelling out constantly for little return—the group can offer giveaways that bring the readers in, but each author isn't necessarily on the hook for donations all the time. And, if you're in a group with a particularly catchy lure, any promotion garnered becomes personal for the individual authors in that group. If members are geographically close,

you always have someone to sit with at book signings or conferences. And who better to share good news with than with your promotional group, which will give you a promotional pat on the back on the group website or blog?

Another great thing about being a part of a group is that it may evolve beautifully over time and become a staple for fans who make lists of books to buy. The more exposure these fans have to individual members' writing (or even to group anthologies!), the better the chance for sales.

Promotional groups offer all of this and more. If you play your cards right, there's no way to lose!

So how do you set up a group that meets your individual promotional needs? In Chapter Two, we'll talk about figuring out what you need in a promotional group and how to put together a group of authors who share your needs.

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