

# TRADE SECRETS OF BESTSELLING AUTHORS

# THE AUTHORS

- BELLA ANDRE
- EMMA CHASE
- DEBRA ANASTASIA
- RUTH CARDELLO
- MELODY ANNE
- ALICE CLAYTON
- JENNA BENNETT
- KRESLEY COLE
- JENNIFER BERNARD
- ADRIENNE GIORDANO
- CATHERINE BYBEE
- LAUREN HAWKEYE
- TRACY BROGAN
- KRISTEN HIGGINS
- KATHLEEN BROOKS
- LAURA KAYE

# THE AUTHORS

- MIRA LYNN KELLY
- JESSICA LEMMON
- J KENNER
- JEN MCLAUGHLIN
- BETH KERRY
- RAINE MILLER
- BRENDA NOVAK
- KRISTEN HIGGINS
- MOLLY OKEEFE
- SYDNEY LANDON
- CHRISTINE LAUREN
- CARLY PHILLIPS
- KRISTEN PROBY
- TIFFANY REISZ
- RACHEL VAN DYKEN

# HONORABLE MENTIONS

- **BUILDING CHARACTERS**

If readers fall in love with your characters, they will follow them through an entire series. This includes sequels where readers want to gain a glimpse of their favorite characters.

# BUILDING CHARACTERS

- Characters are the vehicles that transport emotions - we feel what they feel. Characters should be relatable but interesting and fantasy fulfilling. Even with stand alone books, if readers know that you, as an author, are capable of giving them enthralling characters, they'll be eager to read any book you write next. –EMMA CHASE
- If readers identify with your characters, they are more likely to take a leap with you into other genres.

# HONORABLE MENTIONS

- **KEEPING READER EXPECTATIONS**
- Readers know what they want. If you listen to them, then they have respect for you, and they are more forgiving when you want to try a new adventure. Remember your fans. They can make or break your career. –Melody Anne
- Know your target audience

# KEEPING READER EXPECTATIONS

- Two questions to answer:
  - What is your goal?
  - Who are your readers that will likely buy your book?

# KEEPING READER EXPECTATIONS

- Know who you are and what you represent to your readers . Understand the responsibility that comes along with that. Opinions are often a luxury an author cannot afford to have when it comes to politics, world events, or the quality of another author's work. Changing the heat level of your writing can be done as long as readers expect the change. Ever thought you were getting chicken salad and bit into tuna fish? It's not a fun surprise, even if it would have otherwise been a taste you enjoy.

# HONORABLE MENTIONS

- **POSITIVITY**

- "Believe you are going to succeed. Which means having a positive attitude in the face of overwhelming odds which say you should and will fail." –BOB MAYER

# #7 - POWERFUL HOOKS

- Write with a hook in mind, some delicious encapsulated conflict or idea that makes the book impossible not to buy. A hook that helps marketing sell the book- helps sell lots of books.
- Make sure your hook is solid and real. No one likes to feel cheated if the hook doesn't pay off!

## #7 – POWERFUL HOOKS

- Make sure everything from the blurb, to the tagline, to the cover art, to the end of the excerpt packs as much hook as humanly possible! Readers have a lot of choices on where to spend their hard earned dollars these days. Help them by giving them something that will make them hit buy.

# #6 - EMOTION

- If you deliver an intensely emotional experience for your reader, they won't forget. Personally, the books I love the most pack a wallop—I laugh, I cry, I get angry, I sigh. And I don't forget that author. I'd rather read one highly emotional book a month than 10 books that just don't go deep enough. I spend more time trying to examine character emotion than any other aspect of my stories.— KRISTEN HIGGINS
- Infusing emotion helps create the experience for a reader – BRENDA NOVAK

# # 5 - PUBLICITY & MARKETING SMARTS

- I'd say that getting to the top and staying at the top require different strategies in this day and age. There are so many books, so many authors, that great publicity and marketing skills are a huge plus. To make your mark, you need a constant, consistent marketing effort. (Rachel van Dyken))

## #5 - PUBLICITY & MARKETING SMARTS

- **BOTTOM LINE?** No one will buy your book if they don't know about your book. Getting the word out there is important. When I switched genres to erotic romance, I shared 6 chapters of the book on my blog and Facebook. It got people excited and talking about the book before it was out. The book was my first NYT bestseller. Hopefully readers would have found it anyway, but that early buzz was especially helpful during release week. --J KENNER

# #5 - PUBLICITY & MARKETING SMARTS

- There are millions of books out there. Getting your books on readers' radar can be tricky. Word of mouth is amazingly powerful. On social media, don't focus on your books. Focus on yourself as an author. People are turned off if all they hear from you is ""buy my book.""
- Participate in conversations. Be a part of the community. Talk about books, music, movies, authors and characters you love. Readers & bloggers who have similar tastes or just like you as a twitter/FB friend will be interested in what you have to say and your work as well.
- Be unique. Don't be afraid to stand out. Videos, excerpts, eye catching graphics can go a long way. –EMMA CHASE

## #4 - SMART BUSINESS. THINK CAREER, NOT HOBBY.

- We have to do right by the story and characters first. Fame and fortune may follow, or may not. But having a career as a writer hinges on being able to continue to write, year after year, and to do that, the love of the writing itself has to be there. Love of being successful won't be enough to sustain a career, not in the long run. If a writer writes solely for the money, the readers can tell, and that's the beginning of the end.

## #4 - SMART BUSINESS. THINK CAREER, NOT HOBBY

- Trusting the right people, making decisions based on my own criteria not others. Making decisions based on information instead of emotion. Consistently handling myself as a professional. –MOLLY OKEEFE

## #4 - SMART BUSINESS. THINK CAREER, NOT HOBBY

- My entire goal when I started was to have 10 books on my backlist. I'm halfway into that goal with a minimum of 3 more coming in 2015. That goal, always pushing myself to evolve and grow, and think ahead, I think, is going to be what keeps me published. I've stuck to the adage "Writers write" so that's what I do. I write.

## #4 - SMART BUSINESS. THINK CAREER, NOT HOBBY.

- Most writers write every day. Or at least every weekday, or some set schedule. And since this is a job, I also make it a requirement that I spend some time each week doing non-writing related stuff, like promo and networking. I have to be careful to not mix that up with just chatting with writers on line. I have to do some focused chores, like getting a newsletter done. I'm constantly learning, evaluating and re-evaluating what works and what doesn't.—TRACY BROGAN

## #4 - SMART BUSINESS. THINK CAREER, NOT HOBBY.

- I see so many new authors putting out books and pricing them in a way that is the exact opposite of the statement above. When they stop treating their book as a popularity contest, and think of it as their living, they will do things differently. Making the top 100 on Amazon for a day or two with a 99 cent book, do not a writing career make.—RAINE MILLER

## #4 - SMART BUSINESS. THINK CAREER, NOT HOBBY

- I still don't have a business plan. My plan is to write as much as possible while I'm popular. I don't save things for a rainy day, book or idea-wise. I just try to seize the moment.—KRISTEN HIGGINS

## #3 - TAKING RISKS

- I think an author has to write what scares them. The more you dare yourself, the less likely it's the same song and dance the readers have encountered before. The hero in one of my novels is a homeless man, and it's by far my most successful one. –DEBRA ANASTASIA

## #3 - TAKING RISKS

- Taking risks are rewarded in publishing. Playing it safe rarely is. Write the book of your heart that you are passionate about. No one else will be passionate about your book unless you're passionate about it first.-- Tiffany Reisz

## #3 - TAKING RISKS

- You can take a risk with the content of your books (pushing the envelope, going edgier, etc.) or you can take a risk with your career
- Sometimes it's a good idea to move out of your comfort zone and take a risk. You might find a whole new spark of creativity, and you also might find success

## #3 - TAKING RISKS

- I took every risk I could think of. I entered contests, sent queries, showed my writing to whomever would look at it. Sometimes I got encouraging feedback. More often than not, I got harsh feedback. But every time I got a rejection letter, I sent out two more queries. Every time I DIDN'T final in a contest, I considered the judges critiques, made some adjustments to my story, and entered another contest.
- All the while trying to silence the little voice in my head that said, "This is never going to work. You're not a WRITER! I have a friend who said, "Self-delusion is so much more productive than self-doubt." If I had looked at the odds, I would have given up before I even started. But I dared to take a risk. It's the ONLY way to make it.—TRACY BROGAN

## #3 - TAKING RISKS

Write stories that excite you, even if they may not be popular, even if there's a chance people won't "get it". Like Marilyn Monroe said: ""It's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring."" –EMMA CHASE

## #2 - NETWORKING

- I remind every author I meet that it will take a reader 7 - 10 times to hear their name before they pick up their book. How many times did you hear their name...see their name... talk to them at a conference before you actually cracked the book? Networking starts from the moment you decide to be a writer. Because writing for yourself is kinda like daydreaming. It's nice and all, but if you do it too often people are gonna think you're crazy! Nuff said.—CATHERINE BYBEE

## #2 -NETWORKING

- Readers come first. Then fellow authors. Then people working in the publishing side of the industry. Connecting with fellow authors grows an author's reader base and keeps them up to date on industry changes. Connections with key people in the industry can increase the author's visibility and therefore gain the author a larger audience. But it all starts with the readers.—RUTH CARDELLO

## #2 - NETWORKING

- Bloggers are the new gatekeepers of romance. In order to be successful you need to not only network with the bloggers but also participate in blog tours, cover reveals, blitzes, etc. Networking with other authors is just as important. Where one of us succeeds we all succeed. It's about sharing, supporting, and encouraging one another. The business is big enough for everyone –RACHEL VAN DYKEN

# #2 - NETWORKING

## BOXED SETS

- These are a great indication of what good networking can do. Pooling talents of other authors and bundling stories is a brilliant marketing tactic.
- In some ways, making a bestseller list is more within reach than ever before. Join the right boxed set, price it low, market the heck out of it and you could be on a list. The potential is incredibly exciting and inspiring.—  
RACHEL VAN DYKEN

## #2 - NETWORKING

- Do other people favors, recommend them, shine a light on them and good things will come back to you. Nurture relationships and help others so when you do need to ask for something, people are ready to help you. Have conversations with the people you meet, don't just pitch your work. I've landed some big gigs through chats on Twitter that started out as just banter and evolved. Also-- we all want to "connect" with the big and powerful people. But don't forget everyone else! Publishing is a small world and this is a long game. You never know where people end up. So be nice to everyone you meet. See what you can do for others. Try to overcome your shyness and go out and connect with people. –MAYA RODALE

## #2 - NETWORKING

- Build relationships with the people you meet and maintain those relationships.
- Let people know you and they'll think to suggest you when opportunities arrive.

# #1 - WRITE THE NEXT BOOK!

- GREAT BOOKS SELL OTHER BOOKS!
- Being Prolific/Publishing Frequency - having multiple releases with short release times quickly keeps your name in front of readers, builds buzz, and trains readers to keep coming back for more from you

# #1 - WRITE THE NEXT BOOK

- A career as a writer begins and ends with a good book. Ideally a well-written book, but certainly a book that speaks to people. The story has to connect with the audience, or there's no career because there are no sales. So the book comes first. Making the book the best it can be.

# #1 - WRITE THE NEXT BOOK

- While networking and having publicity know-how and a business mind can be very helpful, and take an author's career further, the author has to be a writer first, so the business person has something to work with.

# #1 - WRITE THE NEXT BOOK

- Nothing sells you better than a good book...so you have to have more than one, unless you're Margaret Mitchell or Harper Lee. This is never more true than in the early days of your career, but it's still true 15 books in. Look at Robyn Carr and Nora; they're putting out 3-6 books a year, because no matter where you are, it's always about the next book. Maybe that's what makes you the truest sort of writer: the endless desire to tell a story. You can market and promote yourself to death...or you can balance an appropriate amount of marketing with writing the next book. I'd say 80% of your time should be spent writing.

# #1 -WRITE THE NEXT BOOK

- If I had five bucks for every time someone asked me why their one book wasn't selling... \*sigh\* You have to build your back list. In the end, its about supply and demand. Flood the market. Yes, you wrote one book and it was awesome, but once your readers finish that one book? They want more. **We live in a "I want it now" society.** With e-readers all it takes is the press of a little button and you have an entire book downloaded. The minute they finish they want more. Write your butt off, put in those 10,000 word days (edit and edit some more) write in your sleep and keep writing.

# #1 -WRITE THE NEXT BOOK

- If you get too caught up on promotion, networking, checking your sales numbers, worrying about what Author X is doing and how it's different from what you are doing, you aren't making product. **The MAIN thing an author has to do is make product=write.** Yes, networking, promo, etc. are important. But unless you have a consistent, dependently delivered product, there is not much to promote. Plus, writing is what helps you to deal with the highs and lows of this industry. It's what we do, primarily, and should be your main focus.

# JENNIFER'S SECRET

- My ALL time number **One** secret for being a bestselling author that's not on this list?
- **NEVER GIVE UP!!!!**

# NEVER GIVE UP!

- "How many books did you have published when you hit the NYT list for the first time?"
- This question was asked by the talented author Laura Kaye.

# NEVER GIVE UP!

- Here are some of the answers:
- Laura Kaye: 9
- Jennifer Armentrout: 11
- Megan Hart: 5
- Cora Carmack: 1
- Diane Alberts/Jen McLaughlin: 15, though her list hitter was the 1st under a new pen name
- Tessa Bailey: 5
- Karen Erickson/Monica Murphy: 49, though her list hitter was the 1st under a new pen name
- Katee Robert: 3
- Jennifer Probst: 5

# NEVER GIVE UP!

- Another question I never posed? How many rejections did authors deal with before they even got their first book published OR decided to self pub?
- Me?
- Too many to count.

# QUESTIONS/ANSWERS?

- ANYONE??
- BUELLER???