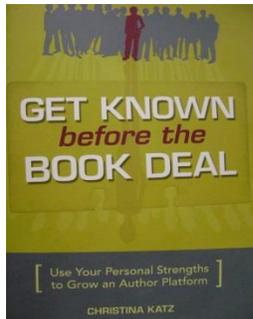


Get Known Before the Book Deal

By Christina Katz



Every writer needs a platform, and author Christina Katz has laid out a process for developing an effective one. Platform building should begin well before you have a book published, although most writers don't work on a platform until the publication date is at their doorstep.

Ms. Katz points out that agents and editors are looking for writers who have a following because there is already a target audience and people who care about what you say. That translates into book sales.

A great deal of the book is centered around finding your platform, even if you already think you know what it is. Her book focuses mostly on nonfiction platforms, which seems to be easier than fiction because nonfiction writers are communicating expertise on a specific topic.

However, fiction writers can become experts as well, so don't discount this book even if you feel it may not be talking directly to you. She suggests you think about what you already know, and what else you can learn. What narrow niche or specialty does your knowledge encompass? For example, if your novels take place in a specific location or culture, that place could be your specialty topic. It could also be a hobby or career that your main character has, or a specific era, a war, or American history. It might even be your knowledge about the writing process.

Also think about who is reading your books. Your audience can help you find your niche—what is your general genre, what are the sub-genres? What does your audience want to know more about? What do you have to offer to them about the topic?

Once you have identified your particular platform, it's time to market yourself. Ms. Katz reminds us that we need to be excited about the topic, be genuine, and be authoritative. Being too sales-focused, whiny, or rude isn't going to garner any points with your tailored audience.

Finding online groups that associate with your niche and those that are for writers is paramount. You'll find plenty of opportunities to help others and get more standing as an expert when you thoughtfully participate. She also suggests volunteering and teaching as other promotional opportunities, as well as publishing articles.

Her other suggestions: create a tagline that is a one-line punch that sums you up. Once you have your tagline, it should be everywhere—on your cards, website, blog, email. You should have a succinct bio that tells people who you are, and maybe even a mission statement that says what your intentions are with the niche. A professional photo is also key, as is a blog and possibly an e-newsletter.

The point is to know how to write well, have a platform, grow the platform, write your book, and promote. Ms. Katz does a great job of presenting ideas for having a successful following for years to come. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in platform building, but especially to those who are just getting started in the writing world.