

Promo 205
Insider's Guide
to
Virtual Blog Tours
by Nikki Leigh

(Author of the Promo 101 Series)

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A Note From The Author

Every time I pick up a promotional book, the first question I ask myself is, “Is the author qualified to write about this topic?” I’m not like that about fiction, but with non fiction and how to books, I want to know the person has a clue what they are talking about. That’s why I thought it would be good to give you some background about myself and why I’m qualified to write this e-booklet.

I started doing promotional work over fifteen years ago and once my employers and clients learned that I knew how to promote, that was worked into my job descriptions. That background has been very helpful since my first book was released in early 2006. There are some differences I learned, in each item or service you promote, but there are similarities.

One of the greatest promotional avenues for authors is the internet. It gives us free or low cost ways to get your message in front of millions of people. Other promotional options would be prohibitively expensive to get that kind of exposure. So, I was on a mission to learn how to promote my books online.

For anyone that is reading this e-booklet, virtual tours can be used to promote just about anything and I would love to talk to you about how this can work. Many of the tips and suggestions in this e-booklet can be used to promote other items or services, but I’ll focus on book promotion here.

In March 2008, the first book in my Book Promo 101 series was released in print. It is titled Book Promo 101 – Learn the Basics of Book Promotion. There are many easy and free promotional options in the book and there are other promotional avenues for the authors who have experience promoting their books. I’m working on Book Promo 201. It deals exclusively with online book promotion. There is in depth information about social networking, social bookmarking, utilizing online author sites, message boards, newsletters, chats, blogs, virtual book tours and much, much more.

Just a couple of quick notes about my books, I’m an award winning fiction and non-fiction author. I have four business books on the market under the name Shri Henkel. I also have one mystery, two historic suspense, one anthology and one author promotion book. We’ll see what the future brings. At this point, I have a number of books planned and several short stories. There are some ideas brewing for projects once those books are finished. It looks like I have a lot to promote.

Nikki Leigh

Touring Author Instructions

This e-booklet began as a promotional tool for authors who tour with me on the virtual book tour site (<http://www.bookpromotionservices.com>). Some authors hire me to coordinate the complete project and others choose to coordinate their own tours with my assistance. That is a great way to learn a lot about book tours and online promotion in general.

This e-booklet contains detailed suggestions about the sort of things to post during your tour. It also contains tips to make the tour more successful. As always, let me know if you have questions. (nikki@nikkileigh.com)

Use a Blog Tour to Promote Other Products and Services

Blog tours can be used to promote any products – not just books. To promote other items, you simply need to attract your target audience – the same way we do for a book tour. When you promote other items, you can post articles about your product, information on how to use a product, the benefits of a service, and any other information that helps potential clients or customers understand more about your product or service and how it can benefit them. One of my favorite things about promotion is that it’s an awesome chance to stretch your creativity and that is certainly true with blog tours. Blogs, website, newsletter, forums, internet radio shows and discussion boards are some of the promotional avenues that are available to anyone who wants to use a blog tour to promote their business. Feel free to contact me with information about what sort of product or service you want to promote. I’d be happy to discuss the possibilities with you. I can be reached at nikki@nikkileigh.com.

Face to Face Book Signings and Book Tours – Is There Another Way ?

Are you looking for a reasonably cost and eco-friendly way to promote your books, or other products and services? What is an author to do if they want to promote their book to a large audience, but they are on a fixed income or limited budget? Even if we have more money – I learned long ago that the less money I spend to promote, the more money I make. So, I’m always on the lookout for economical ways to operate all facets of my business. The cost effective and environmentally conscious answer is - a virtual blog tour. There are many benefits to a virtual tour over a brick and mortar store tour. We’ll discuss other benefits soon, but these are some of the eco friendly benefits:

- Conserve gas

- Limit travel time and expense
- Save money
- Stay home with family
- No need to leave your day job to tour

We’ve all seen authors seated behind a table and there may or may not be a line of people waiting to buy a book and to have the author sign it for them. But, those tours are time consuming, expensive and need to generate a lot of book sales to even break even. Once the book signing is over – your visibility is basically over.

Do you want the exposure and sales that a tour would generate, but you can’t afford the time or expense of a tour? You’re in good company. Many authors and publishers would love the exposure and buzz a tour can generate, but simply cannot afford the expenses. That’s one of the reasons blog tours are gaining popularity. They can be inexpensive, some authors decide to coordinate their own tours and you can easily work the tour into your daily schedule. In fact, you can tour the cyber world in your pajamas, from your home.

Definition of a Virtual Blog Tour

1. Simply, a virtual blog tour is a cyber “tour” which includes various blogs, websites, radio shows, newsletters etc. These sites usually have themes that are included in the book and are promoted on the tour. This “tour” gives authors the chance to reach many people as they travel the blogosphere.
2. A tour contains a set of blog, website interviews, reviews or guest posts etc that are posted on a series of sites during a set amount of time. Various blog owners host you and many ask you interview questions about your book or they may request that you write a piece about a specific part or topic of your book.
3. Virtual blog tours are a wonderful alternative to a “live” bookstore tour. A bookstore tour can be very expensive, consume a lot of your time, take you away from your family and job and there is no guarantee that it will be successful. A blog tour can be done from home and in your fuzzy slippers if that’s what you prefer.

Is a Blog Tour Right For You?

Are you:

- An author
- A business person with a product or service to promote

- Offering a class, teleseminar, etc that you want to promote

If you want to:

- Increase your credibility
- Increase your visibility
- Increase your revenues

What kind of books can you promote in a book tour?

1. e-books
2. trade paperbacks
3. hard cover
4. print on demand
5. audio books
6. any other format you want
7. You can promote any other product or service through a blog tour

What are some personal concerns?

- Time
- Price
- Are you familiar with online promotion – this can be a great way to learn more
- Do you know how to use a blog – this is a great way to learn more

How long is a tour?

1. They are usually from 1 day to 1 or 2 months
2. I offer 2 week, 4 week, 2 month or six month touring options

Benefits of Doing a Blog Tour

1. One of the key things people want to do with a blog tour is to generate sales
2. Generate a buzz about your book
3. Reach your target audience
4. Get information about you and your books to many people in a short period of time
5. Create additional links to your site
6. Let readers and potential readers to learn more about you and your books
7. Help blog readers get to know the person behind the book or other product
8. Search engines love blogs and your information gets to search engines immediately

9. Give people the opportunity to communicate with you
10. Comments can give you the chance to see what your blog readers are thinking
11. Build credibility and increase visibility

It is important for authors to “get their name out there”. All the big name authors are well known and they have name recognition working in their favor. New authors do not have that luxury. I know plenty of multi published authors who have 5-10 or more books in print and they still have limited name recognition. A book tour can be a great way to get your name and the name of your book “out there”.

You will also have many more search engine results for you, your book, your website and your blog. This is important and beneficial. Another important step is to use “keywords” or “tags”. These are words that people would use to search for your books. For example, each time I post a promotional piece for my Cape Hatteras mystery, I include these tags – mystery, suspense, lighthouse, cozy mystery, German shepherd, Cape Hatteras, Outer Banks, North Carolina coast, locket, skeleton, murder mystery. Each of these words pertains to my book and a person who would be interested in Lilah and the Locket – could enter any of these words in a search to find it. Be thorough with your keywords and tags, but don’t go crazy. Choose the words that are the most applicable to a search for your book. I ask for keywords, topic and themes on the book tour application.

Fiction and Non-Fiction Books

You can use your virtual book tour to promote fiction and/or non-fiction books. As you start to assemble information for the tour, consider some of the options listed below. They are just a sample of the things you can use to create tour posts, but they could spark additional ideas. No one knows your book better than you do, but I can make suggestions to get the creative wheels turning in your mind.

Non-fiction books

- Use the well defined topics that are included in the book
- Identify your specific target market – which people need to read your book ***
- Review blogs – what review blogs are available that focus on your book topic
- Interview Sites – what sites do interviews that will help you focus on your main topics
- Include information that helps to establish your credibility
- Why are you qualified to write this particular book

*** Who is within your target market? Simply, your target market or target audience is made up of the people who want and need your book. Who is interested in the topic or genre? These are the people you need to reach.

For a novel, you can use

- Theme
- Setting and location
- The writing process
- Genre specific blogs
- Find blogs that reach your target audience
- Review blogs

To Hire or Not to Hire a Publicist For Your Tour

The decision to hire a publicist or to handle the tour yourself is a personal decision. A lot of work goes into an effective tour, unless you have a long list of friends and acquaintances that have blogs that are suited to your book and your tour. Even with these contacts, there is a lot to be done behind the scenes. We’ll discuss the individual steps that are needed to coordinate a tour on the following pages.

A key personal quality is organization... organization is critical to coordinate a tour. It also take a lot of time to do all the work to coordinate a tour that runs smoothly and visits numerous blogs.

How to Hire a Tour Coordinator

- Cost – How do the rates compare with the companies you are considering? Remember the old saying that “you get what you pay for”. It’s very true. I am in favor of saving money and I understand what its like to be a struggling author. This can lead many people to pick the cheapest option. You’re going to put a lot of work into the tour, do you want to risk wasting all that time on an unsuccessful tour?
- Current Know How or Knowledge - I’ve read many “testimonials” for people who do online promotion and they brag about having many years of experience. The internet is a place where long term knowledge is good, but up-to-date and current knowledge is a key. Remember that Google and other sites change their criteria 2 to 3 times per year. That means that the search engine “tricks” that worked 1, 2, 3 or more years ago – don’t work anymore. Out dated information will lessen your results and can mean a lot of wasted time, effort and money.

- Experience – How much promotional experience do they have? What sort of experience is it? I have over 15 years of experience and have promoted a wide variety of businesses and products. That sort of experience is very helpful in any sort of promotion. Marketing and promotional work is very similar no matter what you are promoting.
- Genres and Topics – Ask the person what sort of genres and topics they promoted. Have they worked with an author in genre before? Are they familiar with your topic if you write non-fiction? It isn’t absolutely necessary that they have worked with that topic or genre, but they need to understand enough about your book to properly identify your target audience and to communicate with potential blog, newsletter and website owners who will be important to the success of your tour. Another important thing is to find out if the coordinator is interested in your topic and excited about promoting the book.
- Track Record – What has the tour coordinator accomplished in the past? Some tour coordinators will tell you that they will increase your search engine rank. There are easier ways to do that and your search engine placement will be affected by the keywords you want to focus on. Your rank should definitely increase, but what about people who don’t use search engines – or who don’t know how to use search engines? You still won’t reach those people. Some clients are happy if they sell a couple of books. I saw a post by a woman and her rank on Amazon increased from 4,000,000 to 1,500,000 and she was thrilled. I aim to get people into the top 100,000 or higher and within the top 10 -20 in their target categories on Amazon – many times it is higher, depending on the categories they are in. My best results to date was a book that reached the top 20,000 on Amazon and in the top 1-3 on target categories during the tour.

Blog Tour Options

Many people have heard of a variety of ways to do a virtual book tour. Some authors chose to visit one or two blogs a week. Others visit a different blog each weekday. Some authors have a very intense couple of days where they visit a number of different blogs. But, there was one thing that I didn’t see online. I offer a number of different tour choices and I’m always willing to discuss other ways to customize a tour to fit you.

I’ve seen plenty of promotional messages from tour coordinators who “claim” that the author doesn’t need to do anything. That’s simply wrong. Even when you have a coordinator to handle the tour, the author does need to supply information for the tour and the author needs to answer a lot of interview questions. If you have someone who can “speak” for you, that is an option – but one goal for the tour is to share information about you and your books. When you see the list of information that is needed, you will have a better idea of how involved an author needs to be. We’ll talk about the authors’ responsibility soon.

Organizing the Tour

These are many of the steps involved in organizing a tour.

- Research the tour stops
- Contact the site owners
- Explain how a tour works to many site owners and answer their questions
- Coordinating dates for visits
- Coordinating details for blog host and get the information to them
- Have the author answer the questions or write articles etc
- Return the information to the host
- Plan the schedule
- Prepare and distribute a press release
- Promote the tour before it begins
- Remind blog hosts about your visit
- Post promos each day of the tour

Responsibilities of the Author - With or Without a Coordinator

Any author who wants to do a tour needs to decide how much time they can spend. You will need to answer interview questions, write articles, etc and there is a list of information that I need you to compile for the tour. In addition, the amount of time you need to invest in the tour depends on whether you plan to coordinate the tour or if you hire me to handle the tour details for you. Even when I coordinate the tour, there is plenty of work for the author to do. These are a few things to consider before deciding when to do your tour.

During the tour, I highly recommend that the touring author pop in once a day to say hello and answer any questions that might be posted. I liken it to being at an author event and having a potential reader approach you. When a reader walks up to you, do you talk with them or ignore them. You need to talk with them. It’s the same on the blog tour – if someone comments on the site, you need to respond. It is also very good to post a thank you to the site host. It makes a good impression on your host and on visitors. Its good PR and easy.

I’ve been shocked by the low number of people that post comments. I like to post comments online, but I’ve been a member in enough forums to know not everyone shares that idea. We’ll talk about this in more detail, but running a contest for people who post comments can be a way to generate comments on your posts. It’s not a guarantee, but it can generate

more activity. Here are some of the things you need to do before and during the tour – they will look familiar, but it doesn’t hurt to mention it again.

- Answer interview questions – can easily be 100-200 questions
- Write or compile guest posts
- I highly recommend that authors post promos for each visit on all sorts of blogs, websites, forums etc
- I also recommend the author visit each blog stop and post a message. On some sites there may be comments and it is very effective when authors answer these questions and acknowledge the comments.

There are a large number of things to consider when you start to organize the tour, whether you do your own tour or if you will hire a publicist. These are some of the things to consider.

1. Do you have time to answer 15-30 sets of interview questions?
2. Can you set aside the time to visit each blog that is on your tour at least once or twice a day? It really doesn’t take much time and I send a copy of the schedule with all links.
3. Do you have a new book being released or do you want to promote a book that’s already available? I’m happy to work with people who have a book that has been available. It doesn’t have to be new books.
4. If you want to promote a new book, schedule your tour for a time after the book is officially available for sale or once it is available to pre-order.
5. Authors who want to promote an existing book can pick a time that works for them. Consider whether there is a way to tie the tour to an event that coordinates with the book or the anniversary of its release. That isn’t necessary, but can be a good hook.

Tour Options and Details

These are the main tour options that I offer. Which is better for you? Or, we can definitely talk about other possibilities. I’m open to suggestions and love to brainstorm campaigns.

Check our latest tour packages at: <http://bookpromotionservices.com/book-a-tour/>

Bargain Tour – 2 Weeks or 4 Weeks

- Author visits 8-10 blogs
- Tour is 2 weeks or 4 weeks
- Author receives "Insiders' Guide to Virtual Blog Tours"
- Each blog visit is promoted on various blogs & social sites
- Each tour stop is archived and you are given to link to share after the tour

The authors supply information about themselves, their books, guest posts and interviews for each blog visit. Your information will be sent to the blog owners that host you and promotions for your tour will be posted on a number of high traffic blogs and on social sites.

~*~

5 Day Blog Blitz

- Author visits 15-30 blogs
- Tour is 1 week (the time may be expanded in some cases)
- Each blog visit is promoted on various blogs and social sites
- Author receives "Insiders' Guide to Virtual Blog Tours"
- Author receives a customized tour promotional banner
- Press release will be written to promote the tour and distributed
- Each tour stop is archived and you are given to link to share after the tour

This is an intense campaign and can include 15-30 blogs. For this campaign, I need a wide variety of information from the author and the author needs to be available to work with me and to visit these blogs during that week. *This can be especially useful with a timely topic or if you want to coordinate the tour with other promotional events.*

~*~

“Golden Ticket” Tour

- Author visits 15-20 blogs
- Tour is 4 weeks
- Each blog visit is promoted on various blogs and social sites
- Author receives "Insiders' Guide to Virtual Blog Tours"
- Author receives a customized tour promotional banner
- Press release will be written to promote the tour and distributed
- Each tour stop is archived and you are given to link to share after the tour

The authors supply information about themselves, their books, guest posts and interviews for each blog visit. Your information will sent to the blog owners that host you and promotions for your tour will be posted on a number of high traffic blogs and on social sites.

~*~

“Reach for the Platinum Ring” Tour

This is an all around campaign which provides a virtual tour, some promotional training, a promotional e-book and banner to use in your promotional long after the tour is over, we can also help you build some promotional relationships, for non fiction authors, there are many

ways to help increase your credibility and to establish you as an expert in your field. The podcast recording from my radio show can also be used to promote your book, in addition I post the podcast on a variety of sites to gain extra exposure for you.

- 4 week tour where the author visits 15-20 sites, blogs, radio shows, etc that target your target audience
- or 5-7 day tour where the author visits 15-20 sites, blogs, radio shows etc that target your target audience usually used to promote a special event, class, teleseminar etc
- Each blog visit is promoted on various blogs and social sites
- Author receives "Insiders' Guide to Virtual Blog Tours"
- Press release written and distributed to promote the tour
- 10-20 page promotional e-book in PDF form to use to promote your book
- One month of promotional posts created for the author to post on their blog, social networks, www.booktour.com and recommendations for other online places to post
- Customized banner created to promote your tour and your book - can be used anywhere to promote and at any time.
- One hour personalized radio show interview with Nikki Leigh to promote your book
- Press release written and distributed for radio show appearance
- Recommendations throughout the month to help you make the most of your tour
- Review by Nikki Leigh, posted on her review site, on Amazon and on EvanCarmichael.com (high traffic business site) if the book is business related
- Complete archive of your tour is created and posted on a website which is easily accessible and which you can direct people to after the tour is over. This allows you to "recycle" the articles and interviews that were compiled for the tour.

The authors supply information about themselves, their books, guest posts and interviews for each blog visit or radio show that you visit. Your information will be sent to the blog owners that host you and promotions for your tour will be posted on a number of high traffic blogs and on social sites.

~*~

2 Month Platinum Blog Tour - 8 Weeks

- Author visits 30-40 blogs
- Tour is 8 weeks
- Each blog visit is promoted on various blogs and social sites
- Author receives "Insiders' Guide to Virtual Blog Tours"
- Author receives a customized tour promotional banner
- Press release is written to promote the tour and distributed
- Each tour stop is archived and you are given to link to share after the tour

The authors supply information about themselves, their books, guest posts and interviews for each blog visit. Your information will be posted by me on the archive site, sent to the blog owners that host you and promotions for your tour will be posted on a number of high traffic blogs and on social sites.

~*~

Around the Cyber World Campaign – 4 to 6 Months

- This is a multi faceted campaign – which is tailored to YOUR needs.
- Tour is **4-6 months**
- Each blog visit is promoted on various blogs and social sites
- Author receives "Insiders' Guide to Virtual Blog Tours"
- Author receives a customized promotional banner
- Press release is written to promote the tour and distributed
- Each tour stop is archived and you are given to link to share after the tour
- The virtual tour is only the tip of this promotional iceberg – we also establish and/or expand and automate your social media presence
- We also recommend, establish and train you to use other Web 2.0 and social media options to expand your online presence – to reach your target audience better.
- This campaign is very diversified and great for people who need to build an online presence, who need to expand their presence, to build or expand their credibility with their target audience and for business people who need to learn to better utilize the presence they have. Contact me for more details – nikki@nikkileigh.com

~*~

Additional Social Media and Web 2.0 Campaigns to Build and Expand Your Presence -

For non fiction authors or businesses - a diversified credibility building campaign

<http://bookpromotionservices.com/social-media/online-credibility-building-campaigns/>

For anyone who needs to establish or expand their online presence and to learn to use that presence - <http://bookpromotionservices.com/social-media/social-media-set-up/>

Customized Tour Options

If you would like a customized tour, we can discuss the options that are best for you. My goal is to be flexible and to make a virtual blog the most effective for YOU and YOUR BOOK.

~*~

If you prefer to tour longer or to visit more blogs, contact me and we’ll talk about a timeframe and prices. Also remember that the tour site archives all of your tour sites. These posts will continue to show up on search engines and people can visit the site to learn more about you at any time during or after your tour.

For the most up to date tour options and additional information, visit <http://virtualblogtour.blogspot.com/2008/04/virtual-blog-tour-options.html>

Choose the Type of Post for Each Tour Stop

This is a list of some of the information that we will need for the tour. If you have another idea, feel free to pursue it or we can brainstorm about it.

- an author bio – this isn’t just a couple of lines of information, give us some real details about why you wrote the book. This is especially important in non-fiction. Tell us why you’re qualified to write the book.
- a book summary – don’t give any story secrets away, but give enough details to attract readers
- book reviews – pick some detailed reviews – not just a word or two
- a few excerpts – pick excerpts that show off your writing skills and will make people want more of the book
- the first chapter – your first chapter should hook the reader – share it with visitors
- character details – for fiction, share details about characters, shows us why will we love or hate them
- information about the setting for novels – where is your story set, share information and make us want to go there
- a book trailer – if you have book trailers, you can post messages and provide the links
- a podcast that relates to the book – just like trailers, post links to applicable podcasts
- other information that will appeal to potential readers – get creative – what can you offer to make people more interested in your book

- a short story to show your style – this can be related to the book, but it can be used to just show off your skills
- a back story for the book you’re promoting – share back story and background
- a post or two can and should focus on special services you offer – this would be services that relate to your book

This is a short list. What other things do you have to offer visitors? You will have a variety of interviews. You can also use any of the interviews on my promotional blogs. The list is posted below and I have them listed with the blogs to be used for fiction or non-fiction books. There is a wide variety of topics and possibilities in these blogs.

We’ll talk in much more detail about site owners host you on their blogs during the tour. This helps you get much more exposure during the tour. Most authors will visit at least 15 blogs throughout the month.

Find Blog Hosts

There are millions of blogs on the internet and we use blogs and other types of sites to generate interest in you and your book. These sites provide ways to reach your target audience. Before we approach other blogs, I talk with you about your target audience. The following questions help identify your target audience.

- Who needs or wants to read your book?
- Who needs or wants to learn more about that topic?
- Who likes to read the genre you write?
- Where do the people mentioned above congregate on the internet?
- What topics are included in your fiction or non-fiction book? Any topic in the book will lead you to potential blog hosts and target audiences.
- Newsletters that are sent to your readers are a great way to include another stop on your tour.
- You can also submit relevant articles to online sites and promote the link for the articles as a blog stop if you want to use that option.
- I encourage you to find your target audience and that is important, but exposure to any people who like to read will be beneficial for you.

When we search for blogs, it’s good to make a list of the topic or theme of the blog and the address. I create a spreadsheet for each tour which includes this information:

- Site name
- Site address
- Name of the site owner
- Contact information for site owner
- A notation about the number of comments or the number of hits (If available)
- Date you contacted the site owner
- Their reply or a note if they didn’t reply
- If they agree to be a host, list the date the tour stops at their blog
- Note if they difficult to work with (this can be helpful for future tours)

There are many resources that can help you find possible blogs to visit. Use the search option on these sites and enter your keywords to find potential tour hosts. You can do a similar search on Google to find websites or newsletters that would be good for your tour. This list is a good place to start finding blogs. One great thing about Blog Catalog is that you can send the blog owner a message through the Blog Catalog site if you can’t find any contact information on the blog. I’ve been amazed at how hard it can be to find contact details for site owners.

- Blog Catalog – www.blogcatalog.com (Huge directory for blogs-this is critical.)
- Bloggerfind – www.bloggerfind.com
- Blog Hub - www.bloghub.com
- Blog Search - www.blog-search.com/blog-submission.html
- Blog Wise - www.blogwise.com/submit
- Fast Blog Finder - <http://www.fastblogfinder.com/> - download software
- Google Blog Search - <http://blogsearch.google.com/>
- Master New Media - www.masternewmedia.org/rss/top55/
- My Blog Log – www.mybloglog.com/
- Suite 101 - www.suite101.com
- Technorati – www.technorati.com/signup/
- Weblogalot - www.weblogalot.com

Information to Send Blog Hosts

After lining up tour hosts, there are certain items we send to the site owner. I compile this information and email the details to each person that participates in your tour. Some people may request additional information, but this list should be sufficient for most of the people that host you during the tour.

- Author name and book title
- Author photo
- Book cover art – photo file, not PDF
- Back cover blurb for your book of various lengths – 50, 150 and 250 words
- Book order information and link to purchase – provide a link directly to your book, not a generic link like - www.amazon.com or www.fictionwise.com
- Include a list of specific keywords that we want the host to use on your post – these should be the same keywords and tags that are being used by everyone during your tour. We can discuss possible keywords.

Schedule for the Tour

Once your schedule is ready, it’s a great way to announce the tour by posting the schedule on a wide variety of places. Below is a list of some places to post information about your tour. This can include daily invitations to the sites you are visiting each day.

- Your blog – any blogs you have and especially if you have an Amazon blog
- Message boards and forums that you frequent – be sure they allow promos
- Newsletters – yours and others who will post information for you
- Press Release – write and send to a wide variety of media outlets (many are free)
- Through Interviews – you can mention your tour and include the tour page link
- Social networking sites that you use – MySpace, Bebo, Ning etc
- Blogs, newsletters etc that belong to friends and acquaintances

After your tour schedule is complete, it is very good to submit that information to www.booktour.com. Promote the information that will be posted each day – whether it is an interview, a chapter or excerpt from the book, or any other information. The schedule can show the diversification of the information that you are sharing during the tour.

Create a Contest or Giveaway

People love free stuff and the people who visit your tour will enjoy free things too. I don’t suggest giving away a bunch of the books you are promoting, but there are other options. If the book you’re promoting in the tour is part of a series, you could give away a couple of copies of an earlier book in the series. You can ask people to post comments during your tour and then pick one of these people to win a copy of one of your book or another gift. Or, get creative and give away something really unique. However, its good to keep the explanation of the contest easy or people won’t read all the details.

The Tour Begins

The fun is just beginning when the tour starts.

- Write and distribute a press release a day or two before the tour begins.
- Send a reminder to each blog tour host the day before they are scheduled to host the author. We all forgets things, so it never hurts to send a friendly reminder.
- Be clear about what time the information should be posted (I had a tour where over half of the hosts waited until the evening to post their information. If I’d known that in the beginning, I would’ve promoted their tour stop for the next day. Different time zones can also make a difference. I’ve worked with blog hosts in a number of different countries, so be clear about the actual day you need the information to be posted.)
- Post promotional announcements the morning of each blog stop or the night before. These can be posted on your blog, blogs owned by friends, message boards that allow promos, and any other place that you can use to get the word out. I post them on a variety of blogs.

Below is a sample book tour promo that I posted for a tour stop. The promos I put together provide the day, the author name and book title, the website address, a bit of information about the book and sometimes I include a tidbit to give a short sample of the author’s work. I also included a small blurb about the blog owner to promote her. My name is listed at the bottom so that people know who to contact if they have questions. The promos can vary and feel free to include information that you think will get people’s attention. Also, remember that you will be posting a lot of promos, so try to keep them interesting and a bit different. How can you make your promos interesting?

A sample book tour promo -

Monday Nov 19 on the blog tour trail –

Christee Gabour Atwood continues her tour today to promote her book – *Three Feet Under: Journal of a Midlife Crisis*.

Visit today with Christee Gabour Atwood as she talks with Dee B J Owen. Click here for more information - <http://marjo-mumswritings.blogspot.com/>. This blog visit takes us to Panama for the day.

A thought for the day from Christee – *“This year when I am in traffic jams, instead of feeling stressed, I will pretend I’m in a parade and wave at everyone”*.

I invite you to take a few minutes out to drop by and say hi to Christee. She likes to answer questions and I bet she can make you laugh. Each interview is different and has a variety of information for you to learn more about Christee and her books. While you’re on Dee’s blog, you should check out her story. She discovered unpublished stories that were written by her mother in law, after she died. They are now being published by Dee and her husband.

Nikki Leigh

<http://www.bookpromotionservices.com>

I always recommend that people use an open mind when working on their promotional efforts. That advice applies to a virtual book tour. Let your imagination work because there are all kinds of ways to find readers and many ways to create unusual and memorable posts to promote your books.

As your tour gets under way, it’s important to check the sites where your posts are located. It’s good to post a comment and check in during the day to see if there are any comments. Many times there aren’t any comments, but you wouldn’t want to miss any. Checking in 2 to 3 times a day is fine unless there are an unusual number of comments.

Before and during the tour, I recommend that you post promotional blurbs on many sites to promote the tour. Some people will follow you on the tour and visit every stop, but other people may only read one post. That is one reason why it can be very beneficial to have all your information posted on one site – the virtual book tour archive site. It is also beneficial when people read the posts after your tour – they are archived on the site and the links will continue to be live in search engines. Each link you post on the site which refers people back to your site is beneficial. Other people say they archive your tour schedule – but I archive the

information from each stop on your tour and I include the perma link where the information was originally posted. To see examples, visit - <http://virtualblogtour.ning.com/groups>

Get Your Feet Wet By Hosting an Author on Tour

Anyone who is curious about how a virtual book tour works should be a host for other tours. I’m always looking for tour hosts. If you know anyone who would should be added to the notification mailing list about new tours, email nikki@nikkileigh.com. Being a tour host provides promotion for the touring author and the blog host. It also gives people an idea of how part of the tour works. Any people who are interested, are welcome to contact me for more information.

These are some of the questions a touring author or a tour coordinator might ask a person who wants to be a blog host. There are always other options, but these ideas will give you some examples of ways a person can host you and what you need to know about them and their blog or forum.

- Name of the contact for the blog and how to contact them
- Website or blog address
- Mailing address to send a copy of the book (if applicable)
- E-mail address to send a PDF of the book for the host to read if needed
- How many visitors they have weekly or monthly and page rank if they know
- How many members are on your forum or message board (if using a forum)
- What sort of topics does the host usually cover on their blog
- What sort of books does the person want to host – fiction, non-fiction, specific genres or topics? They may want to do interviews which are tailored to any author and their book.
- Are there any sort of books they don’t want to host? If so, what types.
- Do they want to do an interview or a review?
- Would they prefer the author do a guest post about specific information
- Do they have a place to host a chat and would that be productive for the author

Use a Blog Tour to Promote Other Products and Services

Blog tours can be used to promote any products – not just books. To promote other items, you simply need to find blogs that attract your target audience – the same way we do for a book tour. When you promote other items, you can post articles about your product, information on how to use a product, the benefits of a service, and any other information that helps potential clients or customers understand more about your product or service. One of my favorite things about promotion is that it gives you a great way to stretch your creativity and that is certainly true with blog tours. Blogs, website, newsletter, forums and discussion boards are some of the promotional avenues that are available to anyone who wants to use a blog tour to promote their business, product or service. Feel free to contact me about any sort of product or service you want to promote. I’d be happy to discuss the possibilities with you. I can be reached at nikki@nikkileigh.com.

Promotional Resources From Nikki Leigh

Self Promotion Articles & Tips - <http://promo101tips.wordpress.com>

Promotional Interviews – <http://promo101interviews.wordpress.com>

Promotional Services –

<http://bookpromotionservices.com/social-media/>

& <http://bookpromotionservices.com/tour-prices/>

Book Promo 101 – Learn the Basics of Book Promotion -

<http://bookpromotionservices.com/books/book-promo-101>

Book Promo 201 – Harness the Power of the Internet with Web 2.0 and Social Media Marketing – <http://bookpromotionservices.com/books/book-promo-201/>

To Be Added to My Mailing List – e-mail me at nikki@nikkileigh.com – Please put “Mailing List” in the subject line of your message.

For more information about novels by Nikki Leigh, visit www.nikkileigh.com. The tagline I use for my novels is “Coastal Suspense with a Touch of Romance”. I offer “samplers” for each of my book series. These provide quite a bit of information about the series and I’d be happy to send these to you. I can send all four, or only certain ones if you prefer. For your own copy of the

samplers, visit - <http://bookpromotionservices.com/social-media/promotional-ebooks> and download any or all of these.

Misty Cove Chronicles – Novels set along the Cape Ann coast of Massachusetts

- Stormy View – Contemporary Romantic Suspense (currently out of print, limited copies)
- Widow’s Walk – Historic Romantic Suspense (Part One of Lizbeth Sullivan’s story)
- Lady Lightkeeper – Historic Romantic Suspense (Part Two of Lizbeth Sullivan’s story)
- Stormy Shores – Contemporary Romantic Suspense (planned for 2009)
- Rebels and Rogues – (Part Three of Lizbeth Sullivan’s story – planned for 2010)

Cape Hatteras Series – Novels set along the Outer Banks of North Carolina

- Lilah and the Locket – Cape Hatteras Series 1954 – Mystery
- Sequel to Lilah and the Locket – Cape Hatteras Series 1962 – Mystery (2009)

Book Promo Series

- Book Promo 101 – Learn the Basics of Book Promotion
- Book Promo 201 – Learn the Basics of Online Book Promotion (coming early 2009)

Business Books Released Under the Name Shri Henkel

- 365 Foolish Mistakes Smart Managers Make
- How to Open a Financially Successful Pizza & Sub Restaurant
- The Non-Commercial Food Service Manager’s Handbook
- Successful Meetings: How to Plan, Prepare, and Execute Top-Notch Business Meetings
- Restaurant Manager’s Handbook – 4th Edition (Ghostwriting project)