

# Five Tips for Better Branding Online

By Steve O'Keefe

## 1. Put Your Logo on the Cover

Most books on bookstore and library shelves have a logo on the spine. That's because books on shelves are usually displayed with the spine—not the cover—facing out. In direct mail catalogs and online, it's a different story; the front cover is almost always the only image displayed. With about 25% of all book sales coming from the Internet and direct mail catalogs, you'd help your branding a lot by putting the logo on the front cover. You can do it tastefully. I've had publishers tell me that retailers, wholesalers, and distributors will complain if you put your logo on the cover. Actually, if the book sells, these vendors will likely keep their thoughts to themselves.

## 2. Get Linked

Try this: go to AltaVista.com and search for your own home page like this: **link:www.name.com -www.name.com**. That is, type your URL with the word "link:" in front, then a space, then again with a minus sign in front. This search will tell you how many people link to your home page *excluding* internal links from your own site.

Now try the same search, but instead of *your* home page, try someone else's. If you're stuck for ideas, try **link:www.seussville.com** and see how many sites link to Random House's Seussville site.



Links get your brand out there. Just ask Amazon.com. Their "Associates Program" was a successful at-

tempt to get logo links all over the web. The branding helped immensely with their IPO, even though associates probably contribute little to Amazon's revenue stream. For the record, on the day I checked AltaVista, I found the following number of links:

678 to seussville  
35,403 to randomhouse  
30,164 to barnesandnoble and bn  
4,117,575 to amazon

## 3. Cross Promote with Every Book Launch

Almost all the book promotions I do focus on one title. While you don't want to split the attention of the media by pitching multiple titles, it doesn't hurt to simply mention other titles that are in the same series or have similar subject matter. This is what Amazon and Barnes&Noble do when they recommend similar titles, offer extra discounts on purchases of multiple books, or tell you what other books customers who bought this title also purchased.

## 4. Promote Series, Not Books

If you publish books in series, promote them that way, rather than one at a time. When you promote series, the marketing focus shifts from the author to the publisher, from their brand to yours. Dearborn publishing had a hit with *The 100 Best Stocks to Own in America* that established the brand of the author (Gene Walden) and the brand of the series (*100 Best Stocks...*). But Adams Media also offers *100 Best Stocks* titles, so Dearborn does not have an exclusive on the brand.

In 1999, I helped produce a Dearborn Personal Finance Chat Series that included a Gene Walden *100 Best Stocks* title. The focus of the series was not on Walden or *100 Best*

*Stocks* but on the publisher, Dearborn, and their depth of product in the Personal Finance category. Emerging authors such as Blanche Evans and Stephen Littauer were able to benefit through association with brand-name authors in the series such as Gene Walden and Kirk Kazanjian.



## 5. Partner with Brands Important to Your Target Audience

No matter what categories you publish in, there are certain brands that have great influence with your target audience. Savvy publishers open lines of communications with those influential brands, then work to build-up marketing relationships over time. If you're publishing sports books, you'll want to develop partnerships with the teams and leagues that dominate brand loyalty in sports.

There are about five web sites that are essential to the online architecture audience; if you publish architecture titles, you should be working to build relationships with those five sites so that each new title you release is prominently featured. In the Dearborn Personal Finance Chat Series, we partnered with *Money Magazine* on Yahoo, The Whiz on America Online, and the Investors Forum on CompuServe. We provided excerpts of new books and chat guests every two weeks for three months. Three months of continuous promotion on the leading web sites in your target market can do wonders for your brand.



COM