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A Formula for the Reluctant Marketeer

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HURRAH! THE LONG-AWAITED, momentous occasion has finally arrived. My debut picture book will be published next summer! Yet, I know that hundreds of amazing titles will be released at the same time. How will my hard work become noticed amongst the remarkable mix? In efforts to quell my angst, I embarked upon a quest to discover how to develop a promotional strategy designed to raise my visibility in an authentic way. In doing so, I've discovered an algebraic formula that even Albert Einstein might find to be impressive: $C^3 = V$, the variables being C for Content, Community, and Consistency, with V representing Visibility, no matter where you are.

Research suggests that quality content is the foundation for any successful marketing and publicity campaign. Content created with a personal slant helps to deflate the awkward impressions of being pushy, sleazy, or “salesy.” Content centered around the author/illustrator's core message, being who they are as artists and how they desire to be perceived in the market, will do the trick. In efforts to clarify a core message, a person must explore their unique personality qualities, interests, and strengths. After that's nailed, this core message becomes the bedrock of all marketing and publicity content. Websites, blog posts, SWAG, podcast participations, publication contributions, teacher guides, e-newsletters, presentations, and involvement in social media should complement a platform comprised of relevant content aligned with their core message.

A word to the wise, however: research reveals that, while engagement in social media can boost a message, it's best not to rely on these outlets as the sole means of promotional efforts. Furthermore, experts suggest that artists should choose publicity venues that feel natural to them. It's not necessary to master every publicity platform listed. And, if making certain that one's website is well-crafted is all a marketer can manage, that'll do.

Fostering a sense of community with fellow authors, illustrators, educators, librarians, book sellers, local organizations, business groups, and the like is essential to elevating visibility. I've discovered a three-step strategy designed to enhance community involvement, a plan that is founded on sincerity and reciprocity. The first step is to nurture current relationships. Whether via social media, blog posts,

or face-to-face, be a friend to those around you. Next, support those who have helped you. Share a post. Send a note. Write a review. Such efforts will be deeply appreciated and will likely be reciprocated when the time is right. Lastly, actively seek opportunities to help others and to share knowledge. Pitch a presentation. Write a guest blog post. Chime in on a social media thread. Do these things with a spirit of genuineness and good faith, then watch your community connections grow.

The final variable used to solve for V (visibility) is consistency. Research shows that, if a dedicated author/illustrator does something substantial two times a week, in a year their visibility will explode exponentially. Platform content will become noticed by like-minded individuals and interest groups. Community connection will be firmly founded on friendship and advocacy, be it on the national or international stage! Best of all, the practice of consistency will develop a sense of confidence, as well—confidence in their message, delivery, and in themselves. In the end, elevated visibility will become a constant rather than a variable, no matter where you live.

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