

Publicity ... The Necessary Evil

It's the bane of nearly every author with whom I speak. We just want to write, but alas we must publicise, and most horridly of all – often in front of a crowd.



This week I had the pleasure of meeting Dr Tiana Templeman, lecturer from the Queensland University of Technology, award-winning freelance journalist, author and media industry academic who delivers courses for writers' centres, corporates and libraries. She has delivered 'Working with the Media' courses for Tourism & Events Queensland and teaches Feature Writing at the Queensland University of Technology. We secured her for a session with Brisbane Book Authors and it was full of specific, relevant information. I liked the detail she provided; she doesn't speak in overarching concepts, she gives solid, concrete tasks writers can take on immediately. In fact, I'd even go so far as saying that after hearing her speak I became excited about my upcoming publicity efforts ... perhaps publicity is not so evil after all.

So I hit her up with a few questions with you in mind.

What should authors keep in mind when approaching media to promote their books?

It's important to think about the publication they're

approaching and what the readers at that publication are interested in. This is what drives editorial decisions so authors need to present their work in a way that will appeal to the readership.

What should be included in a media release, and how long should it be?

One page is perfect. Ideally, it should contain a paragraph up front drawing on any central themes in the book which will resonate with readers, followed by a brief synopsis and something interesting about the author. Contact details and a link to an online image library should also be included. It can be annoying when large attachments clog up an inbox, however, on the flipside a journalist may need access to the images immediately if they're filling a last-minute space in a newspaper. A link to an online image library solves both of these issues.

Does a media release stand alone, or is it the body of the email that has to grab a journalist's attention?

A media release will stand alone but the biggest challenge is often getting the journalist to read it when they're busy. For this reason, it's a good idea to include a couple of paragraphs in the email introducing the central themes in the book, the story and the writer. It's fine to show a bit of personality in the email as long as it remains professional.

How do we know to whom to pitch our particular story?

Research, research, research. Keep an eye on the arts pages of newspapers and magazines, look for online sites that promote authors, and see which outlets are running reviews or even snippets with a small blurb and cover photo. The local library is a great place to find a wide range of newspapers and magazines which can be reviewed for possible coverage opportunities at no charge.

What is the lead-time for approaching magazines, newspapers and radio with a story idea?

It varies depending on the publication but a good rule of thumb is 6 months for glossy magazines, one month for weekend newspapers, one or two weeks for dailies and the same for radio.

What are the common mistakes authors make when approaching media?

Definitely sending out mass press releases to journalists without checking if the journalist writes about books and authors. Whether a journalist is a staff writer working at a newspaper or a freelancer, they generally have areas they specialise in. For example, I love books but write about food and travel. Even if I get an amazing press release from an author, it isn't something I would write about as I don't have editorial contacts in this area.

How should an author prepare for an interview to be an engaging interviewee?

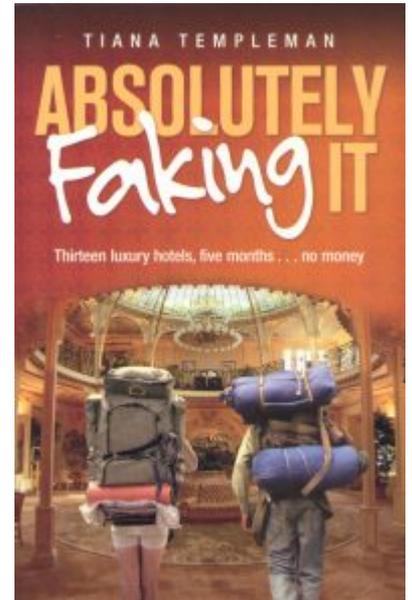
The most important thing to remember is the interviewer probably hasn't read your book, especially if it hasn't come out yet. Think about what questions they might ask – your introduction email and media release will help drive these – and have some anecdotes ready to go. Keep them short and sharp and don't limit yourself to the book itself. A quick, funny or poignant story about the writing process or a story behind the story can be interesting and make your interview come across as less of a sales pitch. Also, don't forget your aim is to get people to buy your book, so don't give away all those juicy plot twists!

What's next for you – what are you currently working on?

I'm heading overseas on assignment for the NZ Herald and also redesigning my website. One promises to be much more fun than

the other!

Tiana's book *Absolutely Faking It* has nothing to do with publicity – in author terms, she's a travel writer. Although, I have to say, I think *Absolutely Faking It* would be a great title for a book on publicity for introverts! If you're interested in securing Tiana as a speaker or copywriter you can find her [here](#). If you're like Tiana and travel means hiking boots and hostels – you might like reading [Absolutely Faking It](#).



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