

How to Woo a Romance Writer to Your Store

by Stephanie Bond

You'd love to attract a big-time romance writer to your store for an event, but your efforts in the past to bring in famous names have failed. So what's a bookseller to do?

First, step into the romance writer's shoes. The more popular a romance writer becomes, the more hectic her schedule becomes. To entice her to come to your store, you have to anticipate her personal and professional needs. For instance, you're more likely to attract a big name if:

- **Your event takes place within the first two weeks of her book's release.** The first two weeks are considered the most important promotional period for a romance writer because that's when the velocity of sales will determine whether the book lands on a major bestseller list.
- **Your event is tied to a charity.** Romance writers can't resist the opportunity to help causes near and dear to their hearts, such as children's charities, women's health issues, and literacy programs.
- **Your event is tailored to the romance writer or her newest release.** If you name the event after the author, or come up with a catchy theme that has something to do with her book's title, you're more likely to capture her attention.
- **You can guarantee a certain number of attendees.** Have you cultivated a large romance following? Do you sponsor a loyal readers group? Is your mailing list legendary?
- **You have media contacts.** Can you secure coverage by the newspaper/radio/television station?
- **The writer has ties to or an interest in your city.** Is she from the area where your bookstore is located? Did she attend college nearby? Does she have relatives in the vicinity? Is there a popular tourist location close enough for her to combine a business trip with pleasure?
- **You make the event easy to access.** Will you provide an escort to pick up the author at the airport and drive her to your store and/or to her hotel afterward? Have you scheduled the event so as not to take up more than one day of the author's time in terms of getting to, participating in, and departing from the event?

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- **You give a no-strip guarantee.** You might want to pledge that if there are leftover copies of the book, you will not strip them, but will instead hand sell the extra inventory.
- **You make your event a pit stop between other planned events.** Call the publisher's publicist (or check the author's website) for a list of stops planned on the "official" book tour. If your store falls between any of those events, you have a better chance of being squeezed into the author's schedule.
- **You endear yourself to the author as a fan first, bookseller second.** If you truly love an author's books and you hand sell them like crazy, let her and her publicist know! A bookseller who loves the genre, loves books, and is a true fan will make a good impression.
- **You follow protocol.** An established author typically relies on her publicist to approve/plan her promotional events. A professional phone call or letter to the publisher's publicity department with details of your proposed event will go a long way toward getting you on the "preferred bookseller" list! ~\$Bond

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