

Building a Publishing Platform #2: Demonstrate Your Expertise

By Stephanie Gunning,
"The Publishing Insider"

When you're putting together your nonfiction book proposal, it's essential to clearly demonstrate your expertise. How? What would certify you as an expert in the eyes of the publishing industry? Common sense factors like your educational and career background, your life experiences, your lecture and workshop schedule, and your media appearances make a good impression. In other words, promote yourself.

Pitching journalists and publications to do features on your activities or cite your opinions is similar to building connections with anyone else. First, you want to understand them and their interests. Then you want to build a bridge that leads them to your subject matter. You have to be willing and creative enough to modify and target your message to their needs. Ask, ask, ask: "What do you need for your show (your article, and so forth)?"

It is always possible that the journalists you're interacting with by phone or email won't need you today, but they could come back to you tomorrow. And ... you may plant the seeds of some ideas in their minds for powerful articles or shows.

When you're pitching the media, also remember to tie your work into holidays, anniversaries, special

events, and the missions of like-minded organizations. Alignment is the key!

To get invited to speak at a conference or before a group may involve reaching out to your network of personal contacts--friends, family, business associates, and so forth--or you may have to apply through formal channels (most organizations have websites today, but you can also phone and ask the correct procedure). If you are nervous about rejection or having the "right" credentials, just aim to be charming and set your best foot forward, and then let them make up their own minds about how "appropriate" or "inappropriate" you are as a guest speaker or workshop leader. That's their assignment. Yours is promoting YOU!

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Stephanie Gunning is one of the most sought-after nonfiction writers in the publishing industry. She is the coauthor or ghostwriter of 12 published books, and has 4 more in the pipeline for 2006. Her



essays have been featured in the anthologies *More Hot Chocolate for the Mystical Soul*, *Hot Chocolate for the Mystical Teenage Soul*, *Magical Souvenirs*, and *Angel Visions*. She resides in New York City.

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