How to Take Your Book Tour Online

I had big plans to hit the road to promote my new novel. And then the world completely changed.

April 7, 2020 6 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

My second novel, *Raphael, Painter in Rome*, comes out on April 7, 2020, and yes, I've had to cancel my book tour because of the COVID-19 outbreak. A book tour is an invaluable promotional tool, where authors get to engage with fans and inspire people to read.

Related: How to Write a Book (and Actually Finish It) in 5 Steps

So, what's an author to do without a book tour? Over the past couple of weeks, I've tried to answer that question by talking to marketing, PR and publishing experts. Since I'm not the only one with a publication date in the middle of a global pandemic, I wanted to share what I've learned so you, too, can transition from an in-person book tour to a virtual campaign that will inspire your readers to escape the real world and disappear into yours.

Livestream events

There's no reason to lose the spontaneity of an in-person event when you can livestream your book talk, reading or Q&A on social media. These days, people are on the hunt for interesting content that they can consume from the privacy of

their own homes.

Why It's Better Than In-Person: Facebook Live automatically records and saves your livestream to your videos, so anyone who couldn't make the live event can view it anytime. You've just added a permanent digital resource to your files.

Pro Tip: Ask for questions on social media in advance to help you prepare and also drive up engagement on your post.

Most Repeated Advice: Be human during a livestream. Being polished is fine, but being real goes viral.

Note: Facebook and Instagram Live don't work from the same phone at the same time. Don't worry, just set up Facebook Live on one device, then use your phone for Instagram at the same time. Concerned that you'll look "unprofessional" doing it this way? Don't. It's what everyone is doing: musicians, comics and yes, authors.

Related: 5 Ways Writing a Book Can Help Your Business

Host interactive digital parties

Livestreaming can be frustrating because it's difficult to engage when your viewers can't talk back. So, once your book-talk is over, move to an interactive platform – like Zoom or Google Hangouts – to turn your book event into a digital cocktail party.

Why It's Better Than In-Person: You can invite friends from different parts of the world to the same event.

Pro Tip: Some people are not accustomed to platforms like Zoom, so you'll need to warn people that if they talk they will be "on camera" for everyone to watch.

Most Repeated Advice: You need to "produce" the conversation or else it can get out of hand. Assign one of your friends as

the “host” to guide the conversation, have tentpole questions planned in advance, or – instead of one big event – invite a few people to a bunch of smaller events.

Note: The free version of Zoom only allows for meetings to last up to 40 minutes. You’ll either have to pay a monthly fee to get longer conversations or move to a different platform.

Create a YouTube channel

If you want more control over your content, you can create a YouTube Channel for your book talks, readings, trailers or some other unique content. (I’m going to interview other authors on mine!)

Why It’s Better Than In-Person: By producing your videos, you get more control over your content. Plus, they live forever on your channel, attracting more viewers over time.

Pro Tip: Worry less about “production value” and more about producing high-quality, surprising content. No one will care if it looks good if the content is weak.

Most Repeated Advice: Don’t forget to work toward monetization. YouTube can eventually become a great new stream of income.

Note: The default upload time for videos is 15 minutes. If you want to longer, you’ll have to “verify” your account. It’s easy. Go to YouTube Studio / Settings / Channel / Feature Eligibility, and verify using your phone number.

Digitally join a school, book club, library, museum, book store, etc.

By offering to provide digital content, you’ll help workers keep their customers engaged and their businesses afloat when everyone is stuck at home.

Why It’s Better Than In-Person: Even before this pandemic, I’ve spent countless hours video conferencing into schools, book clubs and other venues. It allows you to reach readers all across the country, no matter where you are.

Pro Tip: Did you know that many teachers are struggling to learn how to teach online? By offering to lead a digital section for them, you’ll be giving them valuable time to prepare their own lessons.

Most Repeated Advice: Book club members would love to be getting together to talk books. If you become a master of digital spaces and host events for them, they’ll love you (and read you!) forever.

Note: With all of these ideas, try your best to hardwire your internet connection. Nothing ruins an event faster than spotty WIFI.

Related: Why Every Entrepreneur Should Write a Book

Connect with other authors

The author community has really come together during this time to support each other, so join in.

Why It’s Better Than In-Person: As an author, you need to build up your network of fellow author friends. Now is the perfect time to develop these connections across the world.

Pro Tip: If you’re traditionally published, novelists Caroline Leavitt and Jenna Blum have formed A Mighty Blaze to promote fellow authors who have had to cancel book tours.

Most Repeated Advice: Scour hashtags on social media (#writingcommunity and #authorshelpingauthors are two good ones) to find opportunities.

Note: While you’re looking for other people to help you, also

try to help others. Share news about other books on social media, write reviews, attend other author’s digital events. Not only will it make you feel good to help others, but your connection to those authors will grow stronger, and maybe your fans will become their fans, and their fans will become yours! Wins all around.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/348271