



The Ultimate Guide to Building Your Author Platform

Build Your List in 2020

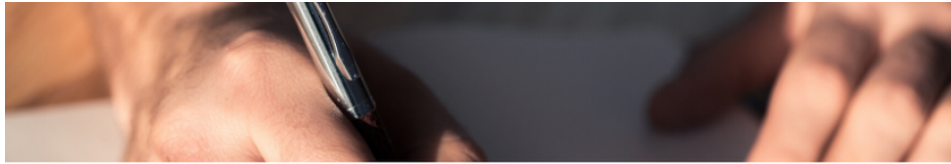
This step-by-step playbook will guide any writer in creating a solid platform on which to build their brand, attract followers, and showcase their work.

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River Braun

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If ever there were 9 words strung together to evoke a visceral response, the most cutting are these:

“You need to have an author platform to publish.”

Nothing kills my enthusiasm for writing more than that phrase—and I know I’m not alone. I remember the first time I was slapped in the face by this phrase. I hadn’t even finished my debut novel and already, I had this amorphous obstacle I had to overcome, which at the time, seemed more impossible than keeping a reader interested in a book about a man and a robot lost at sea.

[The jury's still out on that one, but I'll keep you posted! 😊]

But honestly, when are we supposed to have time to build an author platform when we're also supposed to be:

- Writing
- Reading books about writing
- Reading books in our genre
- Editing previous works
- Workshopping our writing
(and of course, my personal favorite...)
- Worrying about whether we'll ever be part of the "Published Author Club"

My writing group spent hours lamenting this new requirement for the modern writer. **Seriously, can't we just be dark, mysterious, and anti-social and publish our books *because of our natural proclivities?***



Having never published anything more grand than a series of ebooks, based on my research and experience, the best advice I can give you on the matter is this:

Dedicate your best energy to writing your book, and focus on your platform after.

Why?

Because as artists, writing is the end **and** the means. If you're anything like me, if you're not creating something, you're lost. Your mind starts screwing with you. You begin doubting whether you can even call yourself a writer. You wonder...well, let's not slide down that spiral staircase of doom.

Alright, if you've slapped your name on the cover of at least one book or byline—CONGRATULATIONS! Keep reading.

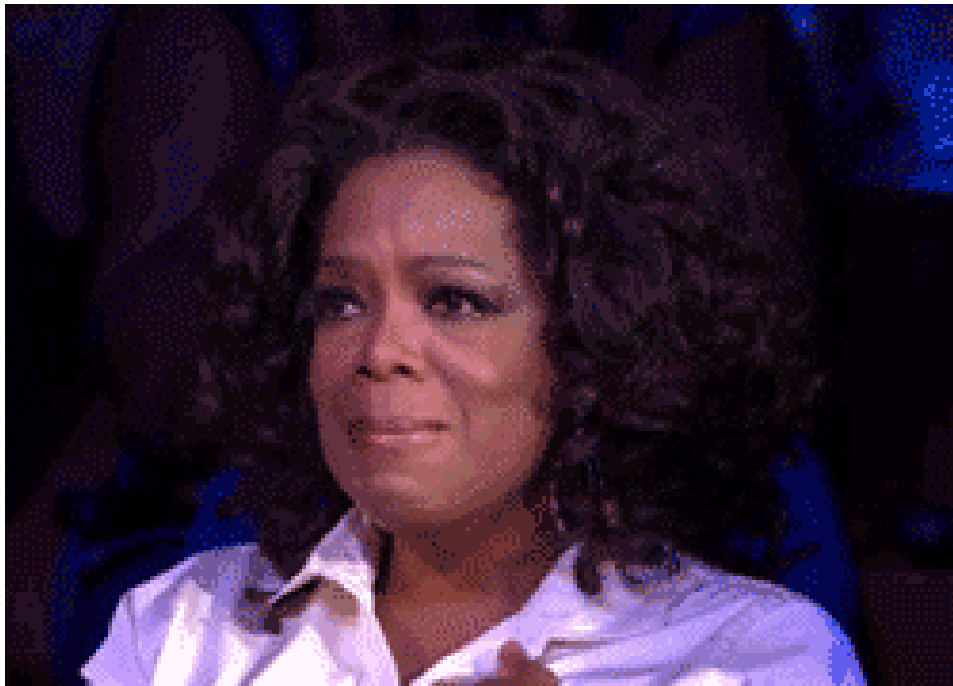
If not, put this down and go write.

I'm serious. GO!



Now that they're gone, let's get down to it.

Have you ever been to the Winchester Mansion in San Jose, California? If you haven't, look it up. For those that have, imagine your writers platform as that house—it will never be finished. Oprah is still building her platform and she's...Oprah.



With that said, the best thing you can do is get started. I'm going to walk you through, step-by-step, how to create your writer's platform so that you can:

1. Develop an online presence—your BRAND
2. Interact with people with similar interests — get them interested in your book
3. Get your work seen — and hopefully published!

The minutiae are slightly different for fiction than for non-fiction writers, but the essentials are the same. In fact, if you're a fiction writer, you don't necessarily *need* an author platform to get published, but it does help to have somewhat of a following to help get the word out that you've got a book coming out.

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Writers Platform

Don't worry if this all sounds Ukrainian to you—I'll explain in more detail later.

1. Create a website
2. Purchase your domain name (ideally, your name, or nom de plume)
3. Purchase a web hosting plan
4. Create a sign-up form to build your email list
5. Start your own Blog
6. **Post at least weekly** on your Blog
7. Create a Social Media Profile on **at least 1** Social Media Platform
8. Post daily on your Social Media Platforms - use #hashtags to grow your following
9. **ENGAGE** with your followers/tribe/minions **OFTEN**
10. **Interact** with members of your creative community
11. Generate Publicity

There you are—11 easy steps. I've always liked the number 11 (and all numbers divisible by 11).

Yes. I'm weird. Thank you for noticing.

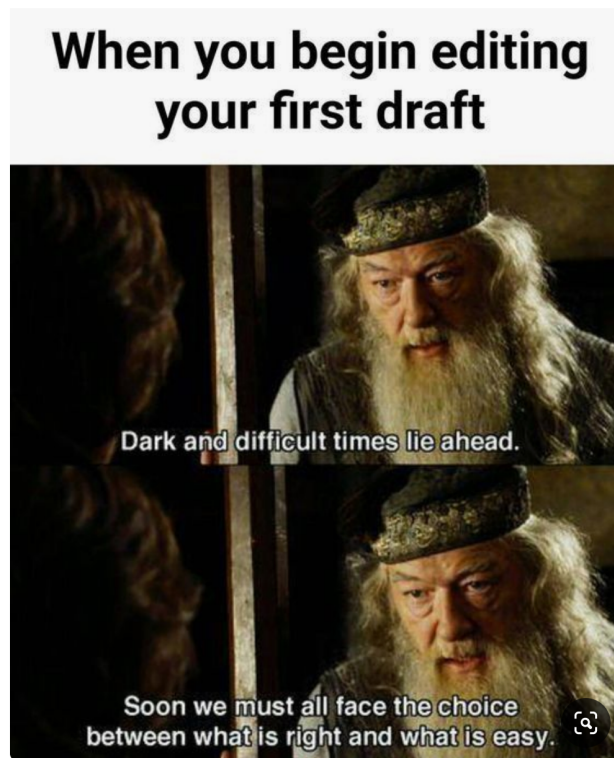
Alright, I know what you're thinking—~~can I really have minions?!?!?~~ I can barely log into Facebook without having an anxiety attack.

Like I said, don't worry—I've got you covered.

Let's dig a little deeper.

Creating an Author Website

Think of your website as your personal billboard. It is here that you can shout to the world what you're about, what's going on in your world, and how they can learn more about you and your obsession with Harry Potter memes (I'm not here to judge).



There are a variety of ways you can have a website developed, ranging from DIY to entirely hands-off, just-do-the-darned-thing-for-me. Odds are, you are (a) not super-tech savvy and (b) on a budget, so I'm going to give you three options for sites that you can do yourself, or have [moi](#) design for you, and that you can manage on your own or with a little help.

1. Squarespace
2. Weebly
3. Wix



All three of these platforms offer:

- Pre-made themes (or templates)
- Web hosting
- Domain Hosting

Right there, you've just crossed off the first three items from your list. Fist Bump! 🎉

All of these can be customized using some form of drag and drop functionality. I've listed them in the order I find are easiest to work with. Your brain may be wired differently. The good news is that they are free to try out, so take them each for a spin and see what's intuitive for you.

Why did I choose these and NOT Wordpress?

Because Wordpress is:

- **Open Source** - which means it's vulnerable to hackers and is ALWAYS under attack
- **Hard to Use** - yes, you can buy custom themes, but invariably, there's going to be something buggy that will cause you to curse your very existence.
- **Tedious to Maintain** - every time Wordpress updates its code and every time one of the gazillion plugins you added change their code, you have to go in and update your site.

Let's face it - you've got better things to do.

Stick with my top 3 and you'll do fine.

1. Squarespace
2. Weebly
3. Wix



Designing Your Author Website

Your website is your foundation. You'll want it to reflect your personality, show off your work, and market you even while you're sleeping.

At a minimum, an author website should include:

- A clean, responsive design (Responsive = looks good on mobile devices)
- Pics of your book(s)
- Your Bio, complete with your lovely mug
- Any awards or publications
- Links to your social media profiles
- A sign-up form to grow your email list
- A Blog
- A Media Page

A basic author website can be as little as one or two pages (to start)!

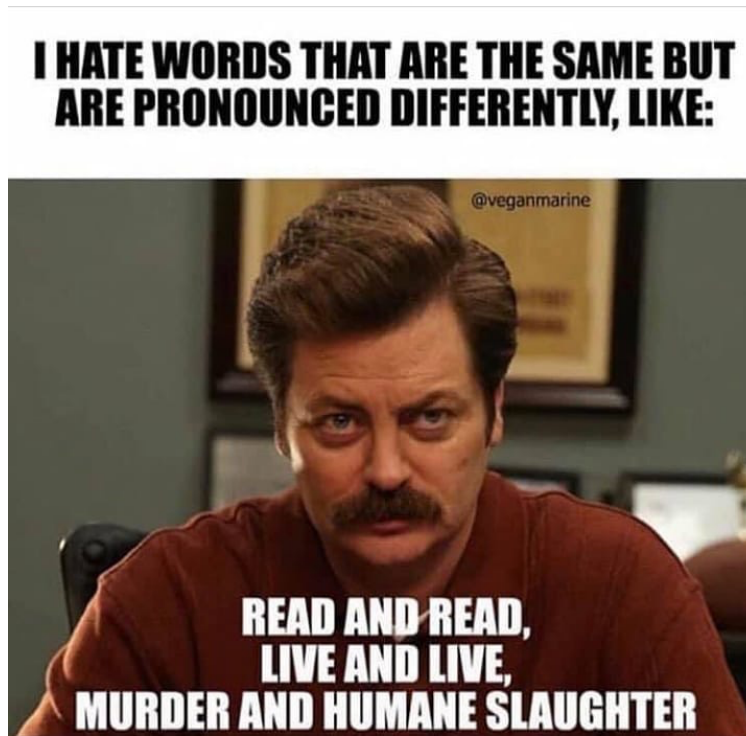
Remember: Rome wasn't built in a day and Oprah is still working on her platform.

Quick SEO Fact — The more pages you have of quality, appropriately-structured content, the more search engines will find you and place you closer to page 1.



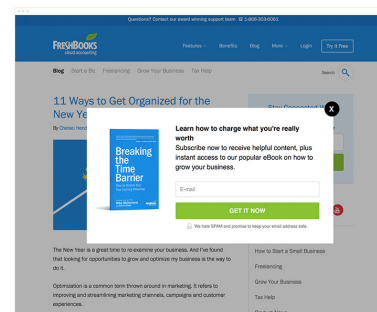
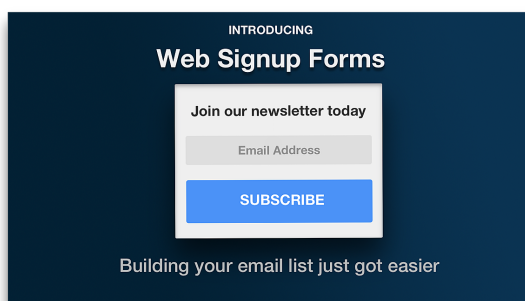
Building Your Email List

To build an email list from your website, you must have a form. The form can take any form (who doesn't love a homonym?)



It can be as simple as a “Join my Newsletter” call to action that appears somewhere (prominent) on your website, or as a popup. You’ll have more likelihood of people giving up their email address by giving them something for free. This is particularly common among non-fiction writers, who can often trade an ebook, infographic, or video, for an email.

For Example:



How do you create these forms?

Squarespace, Wix, and Weebly all have native functionality that will enable you to create these forms. The email addresses can go directly to your email account, into a Google Doc, or into a mailing list you create using a third party source, like [Mailchimp](#), [Drip](#), or [AWeber](#).

Through these services, you can create periodic author newsletters or special announcements and send them out on a regular schedule — probably not more than once a month—you don't want readers to tune you out.

Remember, your email list represents potential book sales, so do your best to add any contacts you meet offline to your master list.



Writing Blog Posts and Posting to Social Media

Here's the thing—don't start a blog if you don't intend to stick with it. It looks bad. Agents and publishers likely won't take you seriously because they want to see that you can pull your weight when it comes to marketing your book. With that said, let me point something out:

**YOU'RE A
WRITER.**

WRITE!



www.RiverBraun.com

Writing Blog Posts and Posting to Social Media

Writers are some of the most procrastination-prone bunch I've ever met. I can say that because I am guilty as charged.

Got writer's block? Cool. Write a blog post about writer's block. As Charles Bukowski wrote, "writing about writer's block is better than not writing at all." Write what you know. Write what you're curious about. Write about your characters. Just write something. Your fans will relate. And they will love hearing from you.

And, you know what? You may just find your next amazing book idea from blogging, so **do it at least once a week.**

That brings me to posting to social media. I know the question on everyone's noggin is:

What do I post?

Well, for one, post an excerpt of your blog article and link back to your blog. This gets people visiting your site, which makes the search engines happy and, who knows? They may even share your literary brilliance with their tribe. It's a start, at least.

Let's keep them engaged.

10 More Ideas for Posting to Social Media for Authors

1. Quotes from your Blog (get fancy and overlay them onto a relevant/cool/cute/inspirational image with [Canva](#))
2. Quotes from your book (you can get fancy here too!)
3. Pictures or facts about a location where your book is set
4. A selfie of you writing
5. Images of you on a road trip to research your book
6. Inspirational tidbits you've found to help you overcome...whatever it is you need to overcome
7. Helpful tips from conferences you are attending, a book you are reading, or an article you just read
8. Announcements about cool things that are happening (hopefully book-related!)
9. A collage of titles you want to read next
10. Writer memes



Of course, there are plenty of other ideas out there, but these should get your well on your way.

Want extra credit? Pick one of these for each day and plan out a month's worth of posts in advance.

Are you an over-achiever? Save time and your sanity by using [Buffer](#) or [Hootsuite](#) to automate the process.

Some More Thoughts on Social Media

Keep things simple. You don't need to be on 130 different platforms trying to be seen. It will drive you insane(r).

Recommended Social Media Sites include:

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. Snapchat
4. YouTube
5. LinkedIn
6. Reddit
7. Pinterest
8. Twitter



Pick 1-3 platforms, ideally where your readers hang out, and stick with those.

Post daily and engage with your tribe. This means commenting on other people's stuff and answering when people comment on your posts. Offer useful information if people are seeking advice. Encourage fellow writers when rejections happen. Celebrate successes when those happen.

In short—**be real!**

Grow your following **fast** by using #hashtags in your posts for Twitter, Insta, Reddit & Tumblr.

Generating Publicity for Authors

This is generally reserved for those who have (or are about to) publish a book, but it can also be relevant to writers of non-fiction. It's always prudent to create buzz before a launch and to keep that buzz going as long as possible.

Here are 5 ways to generate some buzz around your work, regardless of your genre:

1. Book speaking engagements (think conferences, independent book stores, local libraries or even coffee shop reads)
 2. Approach local radio shows
 3. Inquire about interview potential on a Podcast relevant to your genre
 4. Drip-feed a chapter of your book or short story on social media
 5. Make a video trailer of your book, publish it on your blog and link from social media
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The Big Take-Away

Fiction writers need a web presence, not necessarily a huge platform with a following Oprah would find intimidating. For all genre writers—keep it professional, but personable and just be yourself. Non-fiction writers need a respectable following—and none of this happens overnight. It's a long journey, and it all happens one step at a time, so for now:

1. Get your site up.
2. Post daily on your Social Media platform of choice.
3. Blog at least once a week.
4. Talk to people, both virtually and IRL (in real life).
5. **KEEP WRITING!**

Author Platform Checklist

Create your author platform by following these easy steps:

- ☐ Create a Website
- ☐ Purchase your domain name (ideally, your name, or nom de plume)
- ☐ Purchase a web hosting plan
- ☐ Create a sign-up form to build your email list
- ☐ Start your own Blog
- ☐ Post at least weekly on your Blog
- ☐ Create a Social Media Profile on *at least* 1 Social Media Platform
- ☐ Post daily on your Social Media Platforms
- ☐ ENGAGE with your followers OFTEN
- ☐ Interact with members of your creative community
- ☐ Generate Publicity

20 Author Platform Building Resources

Here is my personal list of resources I use everyday to develop digital platforms for myself and my clients.

1. [Squarespace](#) - Website design, website hosting, domain name hosting
2. [Wix](#) - Website design, website hosting, domain name hosting
3. [Weebly](#) - Website design, website hosting, domain name hosting
4. [Canva](#) - Quickly design images for your website and social media posts.
5. [Pexels](#) - Free Stock Images
6. [Mailchimp](#) - Email campaigns
7. [Drip](#) - Email campaigns
8. [AWeber](#) - Email campaigns
9. [Buffer](#) - Automate your social media posting
10. [Ubersuggest](#) - Don't know what to write? Type a topic into this tool to get ideas.
11. [Hootsuite](#) - Automate your social media posting
12. [Rocketium](#) - Create book trailer videos, training videos, or interviews.
13. [Facebook](#) - Join groups!
14. [Instagram](#) - Use #hashtags!
15. [Snapchat](#) - Connect with the YA crowd
16. [YouTube](#) - Videos are the future, the future is NOW
17. [LinkedIn](#) - Particularly for NF writers
18. [Reddit](#) - Underrated source of info
19. [Pinterest](#) - Quick & Easy way to grow your following
20. [Twitter](#) - Agents & Publishers hang out here.





Are You Ready to Build Your Author Platform?

Join me virtually on **May 23-24, 2020** for a guided training where we will **create your author platform**.

During this 2-day event, you will:

1. Create your author website
2. Develop your email list growth strategy
3. Create branded social media profiles
4. Develop a 30-day Social Media Plan
5. Brainstorm 10 blog article topics

Cost: **\$849**

Early Bird Discount: **\$649 (\$200 OFF!)**

Reserve your spot before midnight April 15, 2020 and get \$200 off the regular price of the course.

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!



Hey there!



I'm River Braun. I help writers, entrepreneurs, and attorneys create their online presence and develop strategies to gain attention in their industries.

If you need help with web design, content creation, or general coaching on social media strategies, you can reach me at:

beawesome@riverbraun.com