



MARKETING

Your Book For

HOLIDAY

SALES



*Build your audience and
sell more books this holiday season
with tips from successful authors*

Lulu.

Introduction

There's one time of year that accounts for the majority of all book sales in the U.S. It's coming up soon, and the telltale signs of arrival are the abundance of holly strung between aisles and candy canes glistening at the counter of every pharmacy, grocery store, and department store.

That's right. The holidays are here! And with the season of giving upon us, there is a unique opportunity for authors of all shapes and sizes to capture the attention of readers when they're most likely to buy a book – for themselves or someone else, online or in stores, and on any myriad number of topics that might cause delight for them and theirs.

To help you, the Lulu author, find success in the holidays, we sent a survey to 4,000 of our top independently published authors of all time* and distilled the results of their responses, along with best practices from industry experts, into what we hope is an easy to use guide to marketing your book for holiday sales.

On the next page you'll find a brief overview of what to expect in this eBook. The goal of this book is to arm you with a list of key takeaways to consider and a specific action plan for maximizing book sales for the holiday purchasing rush.

Here's to your success this holiday season! We wish you the best of luck!

Your friends at Lulu.com

** The published authors surveyed were identified based on sales figures in the 2012 holiday season and total number of units sold all time, among other variables. The total number of survey respondents was approximately 200.*

Table of Contents

Step 1: Know Your Audience

<i>The key to self-publishing success</i>	1
<i>Finding and building your audience</i>	4
<i>Know where your audience shops</i>	6

Step 2: Know Your Book

<i>Positioning your book to the reader</i>	9
<i>What matters most?</i>	12
<i>The more books the merrier</i>	14

Step 3: Know Your Plan

<i>Driving traffic and sales online</i>	16
<i>How much time and money does book marketing take?</i>	19
<i>How best-selling authors spent their marketing budgets</i>	24
<i>Will you need help marketing your book?</i>	26

Appendix: Steal These Resources

<i>The Lulu.com Forums</i>	30
<i>Your Author Platform</i>	30
<i>Tell us what you think</i>	31

Using this Guide

Key Takeaways, Action Items and Lulu Tips

Throughout the guide you'll see a number of key takeaways, action items and tips for using Lulu.com. When you see these icons, this is what they mean:



Key Takeaways

The top pieces of advice to remember from each section.



Action Items

Add these “to-dos” to your holiday marketing tactics.



Lulu Tips

Resources on the Lulu.com site to help you succeed.

Step 1: Know Your Audience

The key to self-publishing success

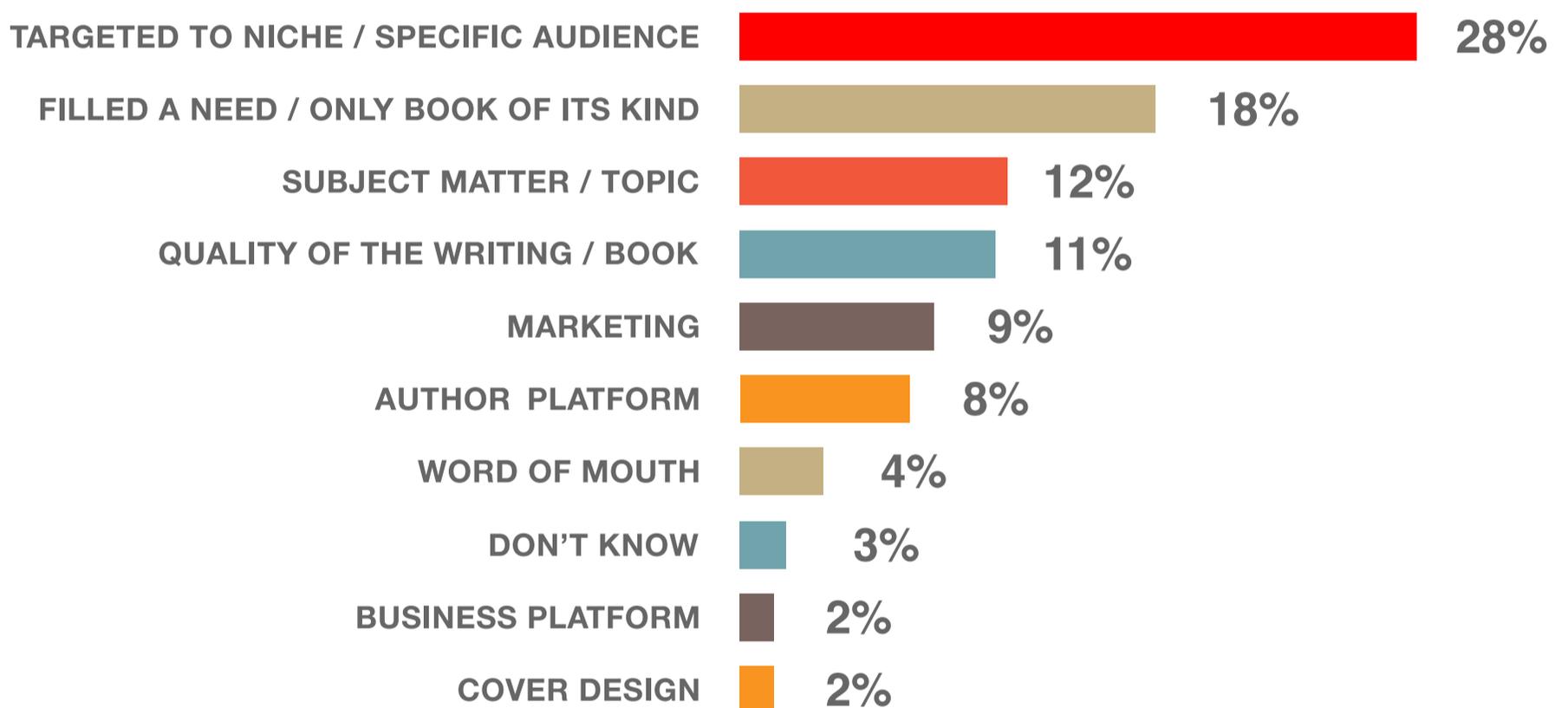
Step 1: Know Your Audience

Spoiler alert.

The most important step towards effectively marketing your product – whether it’s a book or a business or a lemonade stand – *is understanding your audience.*

We knew this was true for Lulu.com as a business, and wanted to see if this basic principle was also true for successful authors. So we asked the question: “Why do you think your book was so successful?” **Here’s what they said:**

How Lulu’s best-selling authors answered the question:
“Why do you think your book has been so successful?”



The top 3 answers that authors credited for their book’s success are all representative of understanding and providing content for a very specific audience. Again and again the words “niche,” “audience,” and “filled a need” came up in answers to this question.

As one author said, “Make it your overriding passion to learn as much as you can about your audience and then give them what they crave.”

60% of best-selling authors attributed their book’s success to the targeting and meeting the needs or interests of their audience.

Step 1: Know Your Audience

For now, take note of two related answers “Only book of its kind” and “Subject matter / topic.” Many authors stress that successful books require a fresh perspective on a popular topic or that they cover a subject that’s never been written about. One author said their book was successful because “it fills a niche with no competition either for content or quality and clarity of presentation.”

Also, take a second look at the votes for “Author platform.” Later on in the book we’ll look at the different elements of an author platform, and which parts of the platform our best-selling authors think helped them the most.



Key takeaway

Successful independently published authors credit knowing their audience and filling a niche as their key to success.



Action item

Define your audience. What are they interested in? Where do they spend time online and in the real world? How do they already satisfy their need for content similar to yours – for example, blogs, magazines, social communities, events, or video? What can your book offer them that’s not available anywhere else?



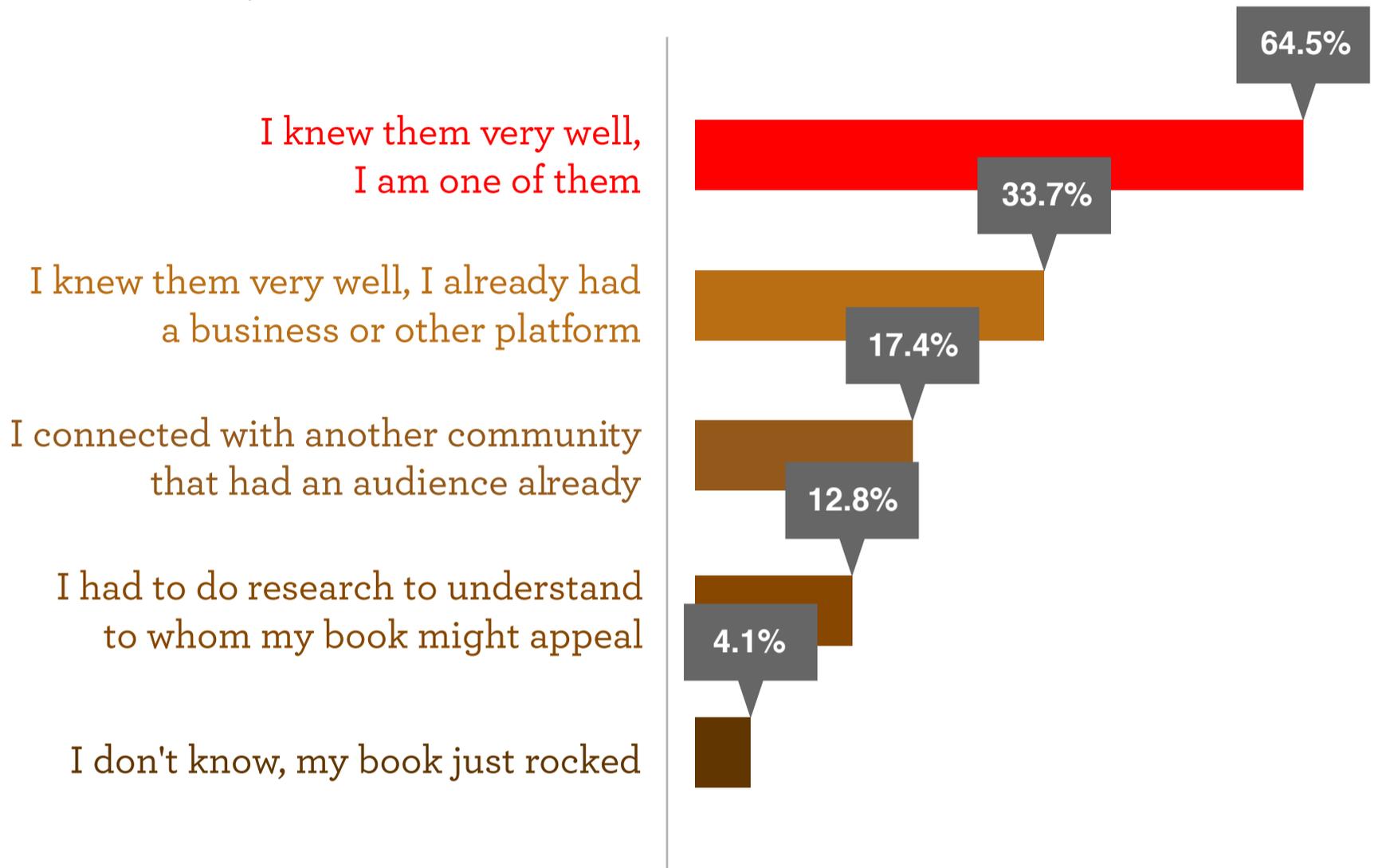
Lulu Tip

Browse the top titles in your genre on the Lulu.com bookstore here: <http://www.lulu.com/shop>.

Finding and Building Your Audience

Now that you know the importance of identifying your target audience, it's time to go out and get them. We asked successful authors how they found the audience for their book.

Here's what they said:



Most authors wrote for audiences they either consider themselves to be a part of or whose needs and shopping behaviors they were already familiar with. This may have made the process of determining how to reach their audience easier because they had an idea of which marketing channels would effectively grow their reader base. Is this also true for you? For example, if your book is on health and fitness and you have identified your audience as other like-minded fitness enthusiasts, you may already know several websites they may regularly visit to learn about fitness and make related purchases.

If you're writing for an audience you don't know that well, you're not alone! Nearly a third of authors conducted research to find out what made their audience tick and how to find them. They used pre-existing professional networks, organizations or online communities to reach readers that would respond to their content.

Step 1: Know Your Audience



Action item

Make a list of professional networks, organizations or large communities you can connect with to promote your book.



Key takeaway

Often times, best-selling independent authors are part of the group they're writing for. If you're not a member of the group you're writing for, research ways to find out what they're interested in and reach them based on those interests.

Step 1: Know Your Audience

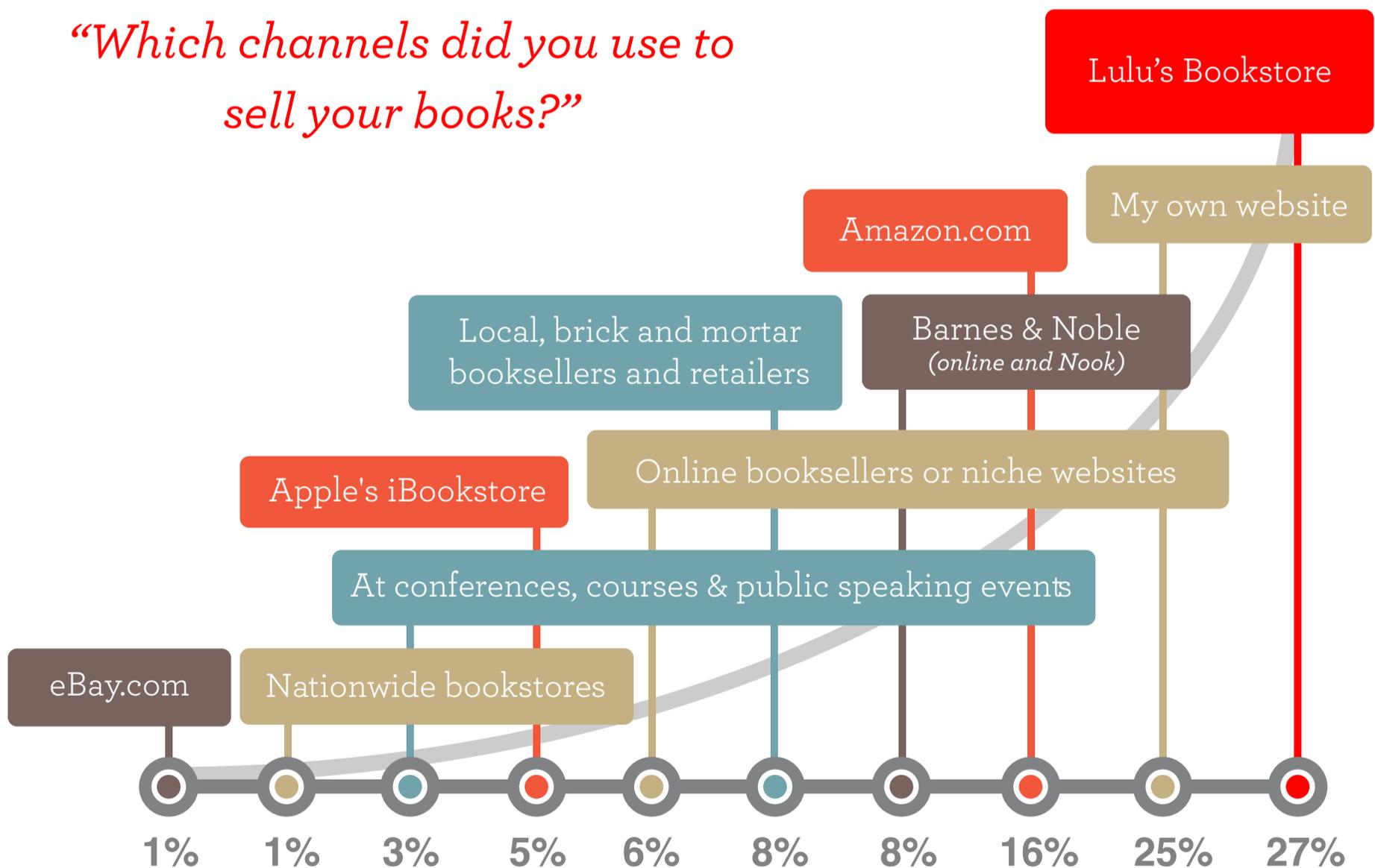
Know where your audience shops

In the book business, figuring out where people shop and how to get books to those places is called a distribution strategy.

There's more to a distribution strategy than just bookstores. Some authors leverage their professional connections to make sales. Others teach classes and sell their books to students. And still others sell their books through churches or partner with niche websites.

There are numerous ways to distribute your book, and it takes some trial and error to find the right distribution channels. Every book is different, but we wanted to see if there was a pattern in where authors sold their books. Here's where our best-selling authors sold their books:

“Which channels did you use to sell your books?”



Keep in mind that this chart shows successful Lulu authors' responses, so Lulu's Bookstore ranks high for them.

Step 1: Know Your Audience

Beyond the Lulu Author Experience

Distribution channels for authors, both traditionally published and self-published, are changing. With the closing of many large brick-and-mortar booksellers, the most notable of which was the exit of Borders, all publishers are reevaluating their distribution strategy. In August 2013, Bowker released study findings citing a 5% increase in online book sales in the U.S., up to 44% of total book sales compared to 39% in 2011.

What does this mean for you? Focus on your audience and the best distribution strategy for them. If you can reach them via your own existing channels or easy-to-find networks and communities, selling to them on Lulu.com's marketplace can be a strong component of your distribution strategy. If you need to target a broader audience that seeks content all over the Internet and in stores, you may want to expand to additional distribution channels.

Another more recent survey of book buyers' perceptions may be helpful. The eBook formatting fairies did a survey of readers in August 2013 (http://e-bookformattingfairies.blogspot.com/2013_08_01_archive.html) that revealed fantastic insights into how readers perceive books and authors. We've compiled a few highlights of their findings below.

Ninety-five percent of readers are "more likely" to buy a self-published book from an author who is known to them

95%

From an infographic designed by Author Marketing Club, based on the eBook Fairies survey data.

The results for the primary source of information about books were all over the place with the top vote getter being Facebook at 18 percent, followed by retail sites at 17 percent, Goodreads at 13 percent and author websites at 10 percent. Lots of interesting data in the "Other" field for this question.

18% FACEBOOK

17% RETAIL SITES

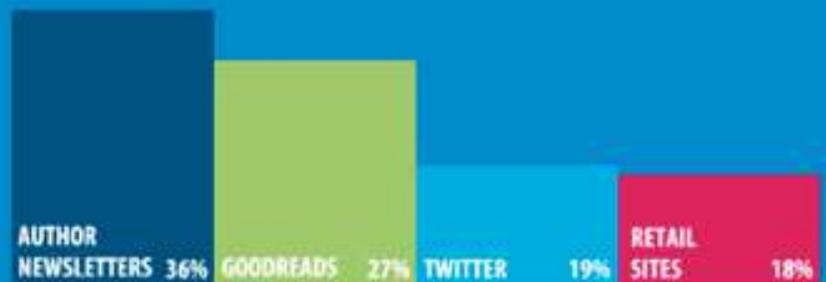
13% GOODREADS

10% AUTHOR WEBSITES

Facebook came in first place for where readers get information about books in general:



Facebook (62 percent) and Author Websites (63 percent) were virtually tied for first when readers were asked where they get their information about their favorite authors. (This was a "choose all that apply" question.)



Author newsletters were a distant second at 36 percent. Goodreads scored 27 percent and Twitter 19 percent. Retail sites were next at 18 percent. It's probably safe to conclude from these results that if you have limited time, it's best spent on Facebook and keeping up your website.

Facebook tied with author sites for where readers get information about their favorite authors.

Step 1: Know Your Audience



Action Item

Ask your readers how they heard about you and where they shop for books. If you don't have readers, ask people you think are in your target audience how they find out about books and where they would buy them. Those two answers are key to your distribution strategy and overall marketing plan.



Key takeaway

To make sure your potential readers can find you, create a distribution strategy based on where they get information about your topic or genre, and how they shop.



Lulu Tip:

You can find information about the distribution channels Lulu offers here: <http://lulu.com/services/distribution>.

Step 2: Know Your Book

Positioning your book to the reader

Step 2: Know Your Book

Many best-selling authors pick their topic or angle specifically because they know it will be of interest to their audience. The pairing of those two strategies – targeting an audience and delivering a unique message to them – is what sells books. As one author said, “We wrote the book for a specific market giving them information we knew they needed.”

In the marketing world, this is called positioning - understanding your audience and explaining why your book is uniquely suited to their interests. You might also think of it as “finding your niche.” Once you’ve found your niche, you’ll have a clear, easily articulated understanding of what your book is about, who it’s for, and how it fits into the existing body of published books within your domain.

Here’s an analogy for you. Entrepreneurs are often challenged to come up with an elevator pitch for their business – it’s a short, interesting way to explain what value their business offers to the world in the time you’d have in the elevator with them. It has to be concise and informative while driving the person you’re speaking with to take action. For you as an author, the elevator pitch for your book may sound a lot different from that of a start-up, but it still affords you the benefit of successfully positioning your book to your audience.

To show how powerful a good elevator pitch can be, let’s play a game. Below are four elevator pitches for best-selling books, presented as though they were new books on the market.

Western meets suspense meets a Tarantino-esque hit man. A cowboy stumbles on a drug deal gone bad, takes the money, only to find that he’s being hunted by a relentless killer.

~ ~ ~

Hearts will race for lovers of fan fiction. For the tween girl that would risk her soul for the everlasting love of the vampire version of James Dean.

~ ~ ~

If you love puzzles, religious symbolism and a great crime mystery, you’ll hang on every action-packed moment as our hero decodes his way across Europe to uncover an ancient secret, zealously guarded by a clandestine society that will stop at nothing to protect it.

~ ~ ~

What if dinosaurs could be cloned? For the child in all of us that still marvels at T. Rex in the natural history museum, this sci-fi adventure novel set in the modern age tells the story of an adventure theme park whose proprietors have brought dinosaurs back from extinction.

Step 2: Know Your Book

See how just a few sentences can create interest in a book for the reader? That is the power of positioning. Think you know which books these are? To see the answers, visit this link on the Lulu blog.

<http://www.lulu.com/blog/2013/10/crafting-an-elevator-pitch-for-your-book>



Key takeaway

Best-selling independent authors know how to pitch their book idea to readers, and so should you!



Action item

Develop an elevator pitch for your book and practice with members of your target audience to see how they respond.



Lulu Tip

We partnered with The Book Genome Project to bring you The Helix Review: The Personality Profile for Your Book. The Helix Review is an automated way to get insight into what makes your writing unique and how your work compares to other best-selling titles in your genre. It helps you better market your book.

Find The Helix Review here: <http://lulu.com/services/helix-review>.

Step 2: Know Your Book

What matters most?

Okay, you've conquered the art of developing an audience, positioning your book and targeting your readers with an effective distribution strategy. Now let's talk about that book you want them to read — *yours*.

Ever looked at the bestseller lists and wondered, “*What are they doing that I'm not doing?*”

It's important to know what attributes of your book will make it stand out and what marketing activities will best highlight these strengths to help drive sales. To help you understand these steps, we asked our authors what made a difference for them.

Here's how authors ranked specific items and the frequency with which they said they were important:



Step 2: Know Your Book



Key takeaway

Positioning your book and understanding your audience are still key. Offering an attractive printed book as well as an eBook version online to generate word of mouth via customer reviews should be your goal.



Action items

- ① *Prepare your book in eBook and print formats.*
- ② *Get a professionally designed cover for each format of your book.*
- ③ *Focus on building reader reviews and add them to your book cover and website.*



Lulu Tip

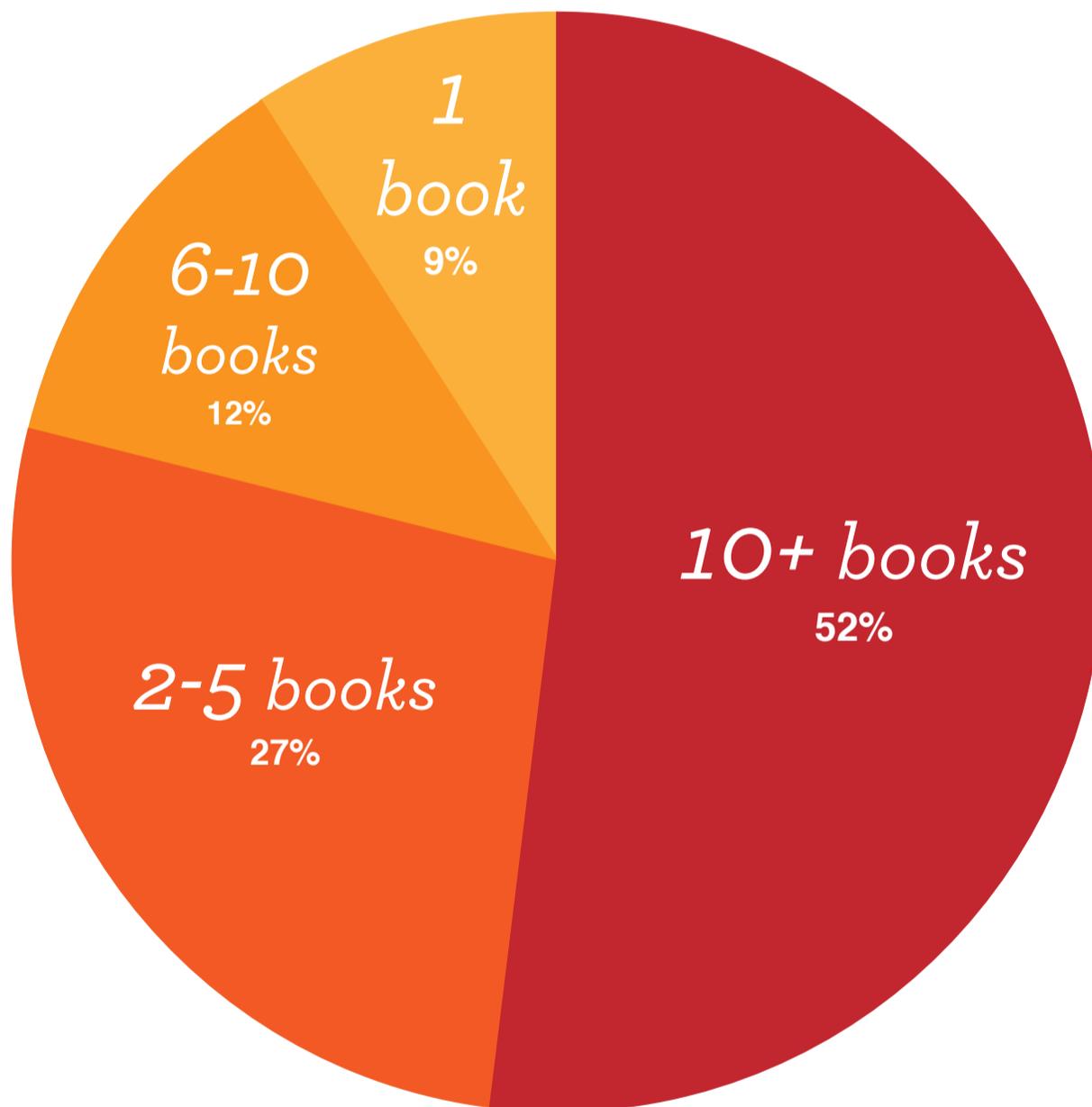
If you ever need professional services in a hurry, you can browse a list of our offerings here: <http://lulu.com/services>.

The More Books the Merrier

There is another secret to selling lots of books: writing lots of books. We asked best-selling authors how many books they had written. Here's what they said:

Nine out of ten best-selling authors have published more than one book. More than half have published ten or more books.

“How many books have you published?”



Writing lots of books in one niche has many benefits. For starters, you don't have to relearn your audience. And if you write non-fiction, you'll also be able to re-use a lot of the research you did for your first book.

Step 2: Know Your Book



Action item

If you only have one book, map out how you can expand your catalog to meet your audience's needs. It may not be possible in time for the holidays this year, but you can always work toward launching a new book to your audience for next year's holiday season!



Key takeaway

51% of best-selling authors have written 10 or more books.

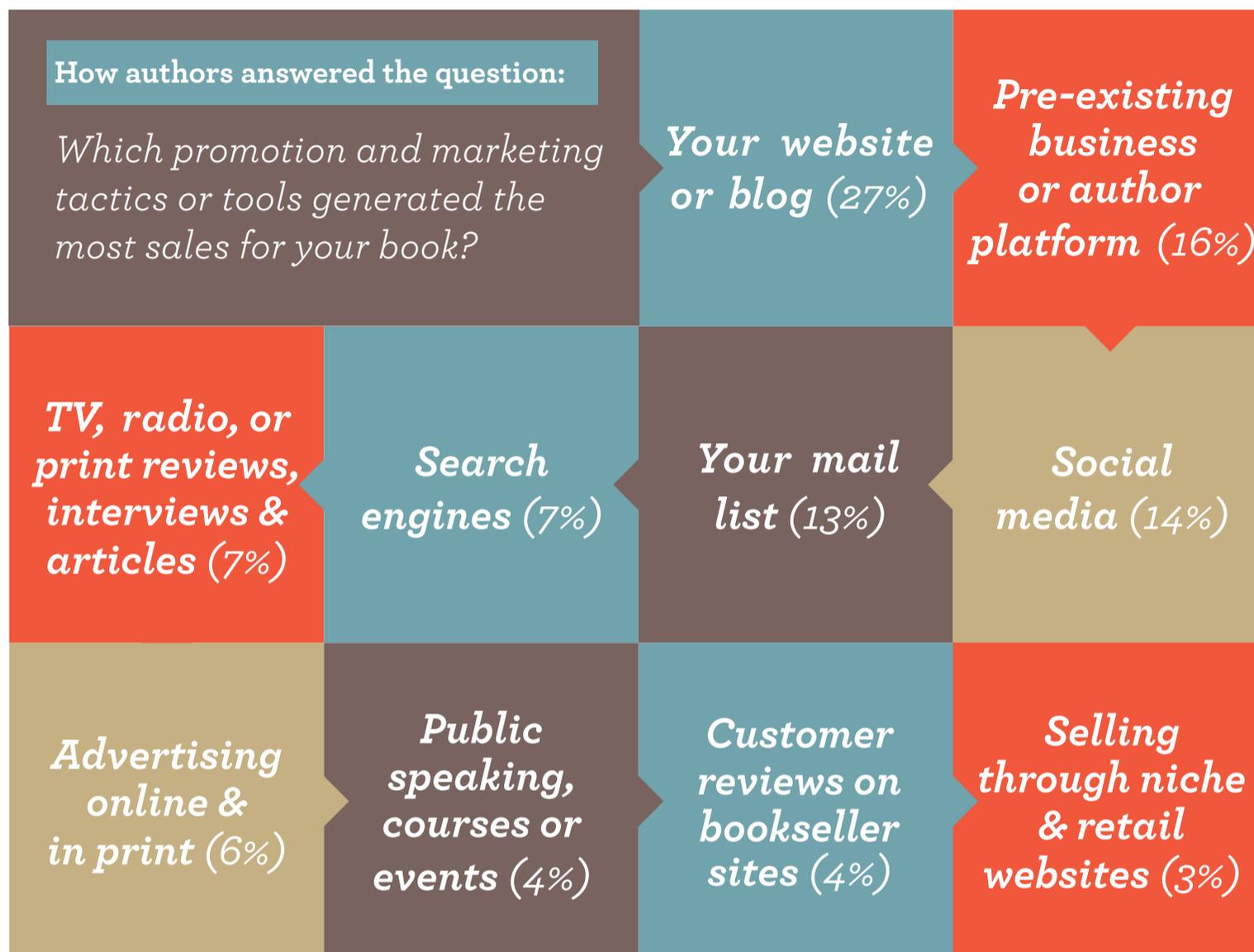
Step 3: Know Your Plan

Driving traffic and sales online

Step 3: Know Your Plan

Now that we've covered two of the key components of marketing your book (knowing your audience and knowing your book), let's talk about how to drive sales. Let's talk marketing tactics.

There's one question about marketing tactics that trumps all others: What works best for reaching your audience and prompting them to buy your book? Here's what our best-selling authors listed as their top marketing channels:



Self-publishing authors credited their website with the lion's share of their sales. Pair the website-related responses with "Your email list" and "Search engines on your topic" and almost half of authors credited their website as the best way to sell books.

To bring this to light, think about how you respond when you want to learn more about something. If you've ever searched for a company, person or event online and been unable to find any information, you have an understanding of the importance of having a website to market your books. The harder you are to find, the less likely you are to sell your books.

In addition to websites, many authors mentioned social media as a tool for generating sales. Of all the social media marketing techniques, having a Facebook page was overwhelmingly the most often cited way to sell books. You'll remember that we saw similar results earlier in our discussion of distribution strategies on [page 7](#).

Step 3: Know Your Plan



Action items

- ① *Create a website with an easy to use tool like Wordpress.com.*
- ② *Make it easy for people to sign up for an email list with a service like Mailchimp.com.*
- ③ *Sign up for and begin posting on your Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/about/pages>.*
- ④ *Write regular blog posts for your website and, when possible, on other websites, too.*
- ⑤ *Find events where you can speak or share your knowledge, or hold your own events.*
- ⑥ *Improve the visibility of your website, either through advertising or search engine optimization.*
- ⑦ *Send promotional copies of your book to influential people, like bloggers in your niche or book reviewers.*



Key takeaway

Best-selling independent authors employ a mix of tactics to promote themselves and their work.

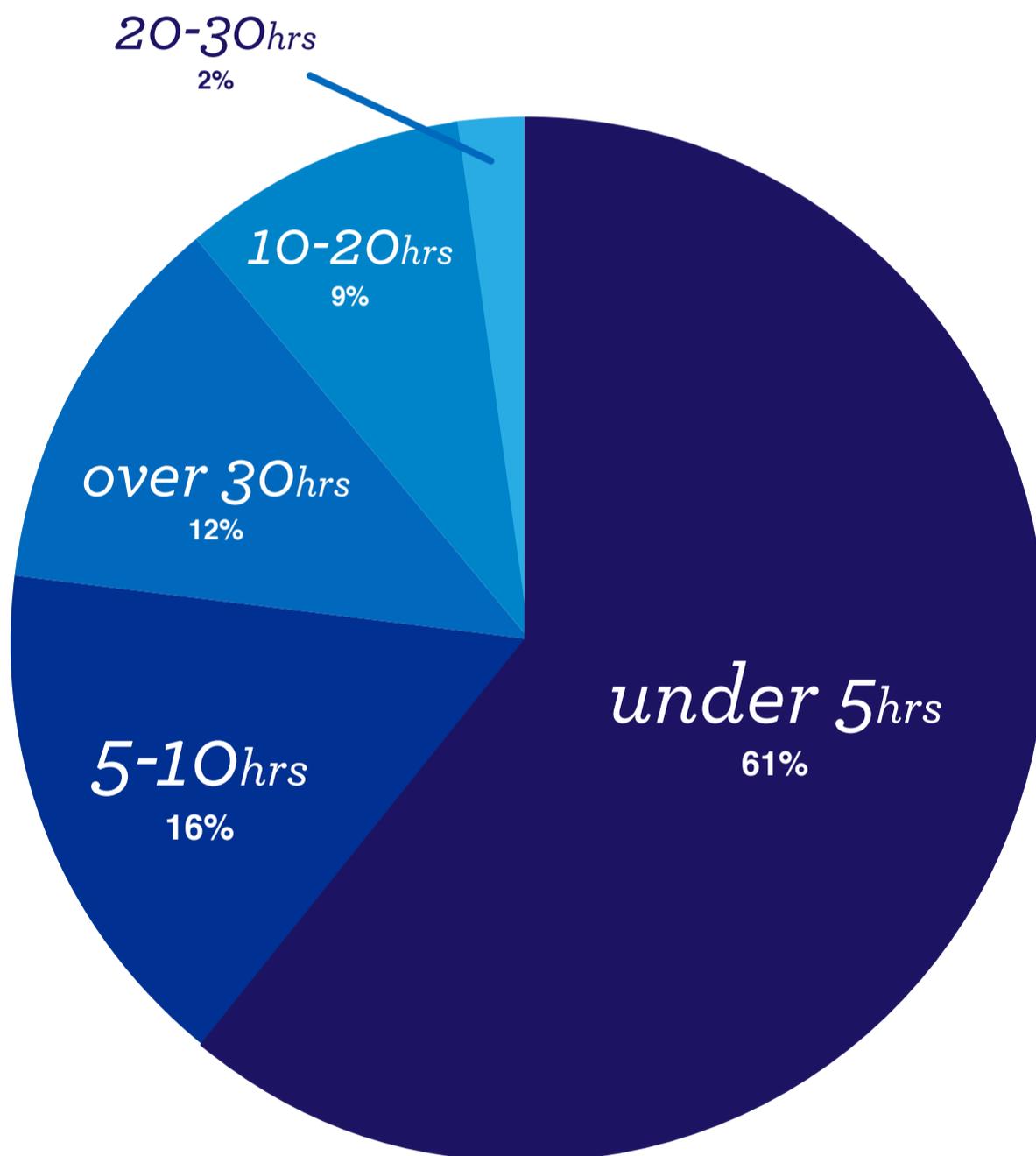
Step 3: Know Your Plan

How much time and money does book marketing take?

To round out your marketing plan, you need to define how much time and money you're willing and able to spend on marketing. It doesn't have to be a lot, especially if you think of it as an investment in future sales.

Here's what our best-selling authors had to say about the amount of time they dedicated to marketing their book.

“How many hours a week authors spent marketing their book.”



The majority of best-selling authors (61%) dedicated five hours or less to the marketing of their book each week. 16% — about one out of every six — said they spent 5-10 hours each week fulfilling marketing tasks. Finally, one out of every four of the best-selling authors said they spent more than ten hours a week marketing their book to their audience.

Step 3: Know Your Plan

How much will it take for you? Print this page.

We can break the answer down into small steps to make it manageable, regardless of your time constraints. If you only have five hours a week, work in blocks of one to two hours. Keep going until every item on the list below has been addressed:

- 1. Define your audience**
 - If you aren't familiar with your audience and their shopping habits, research them to gain that understanding.
 - Write a one-paragraph description of them – what they like, where they shop, etc.
- 2. Write your book's elevator pitch**
- 3. Create a website**
 - Write a detailed author biography page and include a nice headshot of yourself
 - Set up an email opt-in
 - Add a page for editors and bloggers to request review copies of your book
 - Add transcripts of recent interviews or reprints of book reviews
 - Add a blog to your site. Update it weekly, or (even better) twice a week
 - Add a page about how to hire you for public speaking or contact you for events
 - Add a page for your coaching or consulting services (if that makes sense for your business and market)
- 4. Get a Facebook page for your book**
 - Update it at least weekly
 - Add a way to sign up for your email list
 - Like other Facebook pages in your niche and comment on their pages
- 5. Set up an email list with an email service provider**
 - Send an email update at least every two weeks
 - Use content from your blog, or update your readers on your marketing efforts or how your next book is coming along
- 6. Identify 20 people of influence to send your book to**
 - Create a promotion package
 - Mail the promotion package to those 20 people
- 7. Secure 3-5 speaking gigs**
 - Bring copies of your book to sell
 - Be sure to be on the lookout for other authors targeting the same audience! You can build a relationship with them and cross-promote each other's books to build each other's audiences and drive sales
- 8. Research 1 or 2 conferences or book fairs you could attend or sponsor for a booth**
- 9. Find 3-5 niche websites where you could advertise or write a guest blog post**
- 10. Make your printed book look as good as possible. Does it need a new cover? Better typesetting?**
- 11. List your book on eBay**
- 12. List your book on GoodReads**
- 13. List your book in "Shameless Promotions" in the Lulu forums**
- 14. On an ongoing basis, spend one hour on each major bookselling site polishing up your book's description and appearance**
- 15. Reach out to potential reviewers on the big bookselling sites. Aim for at least 20-30 reviews for your book**
- 16. Don't give up. As one author said about marketing, "It's hard work! But it's also essential for the author to relentlessly promote a new book for at least 18 months after publication."**

Step 3: Know Your Plan

Phew! ... Sounds like a lot, right? Well, put in just five hours a week and you'll be further along than you'd think. And – here's the best part – you'll also be closer to making enough sales to support yourself from your books.



Action item

Schedule one hour every weekday to promote your book.



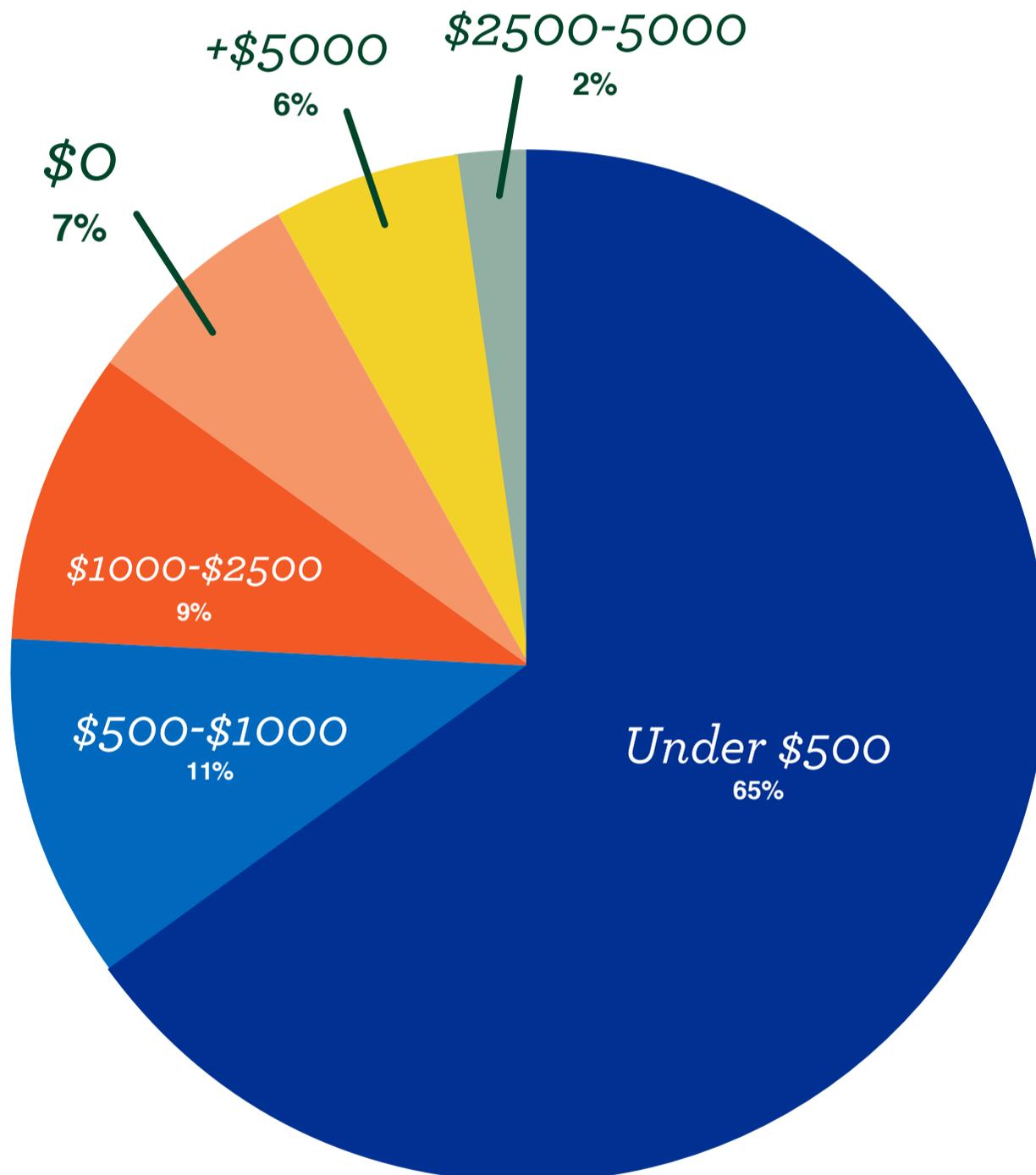
Key takeaway

Once you've got everything set up, marketing shouldn't take too much of your time. The majority of successful independent authors spend 5 hours or less on marketing a week.

How much will it cost?

The next question is how much will this cost? Again, we've got good news. Here's how much Lulu's authors have spent marketing their books:

“How much authors have spent marketing their book.”



Not so bad, right? 65% spent less than \$500. If you add in the authors who spent nothing (7%), the total for \$500 and under is 72%. In other words, almost three out of four best-selling authors spent less than \$500 promoting their book.

Step 3: Know Your Plan



Key takeaway

\$500 or less is enough to promote a book. You don't need to spend thousands of dollars.



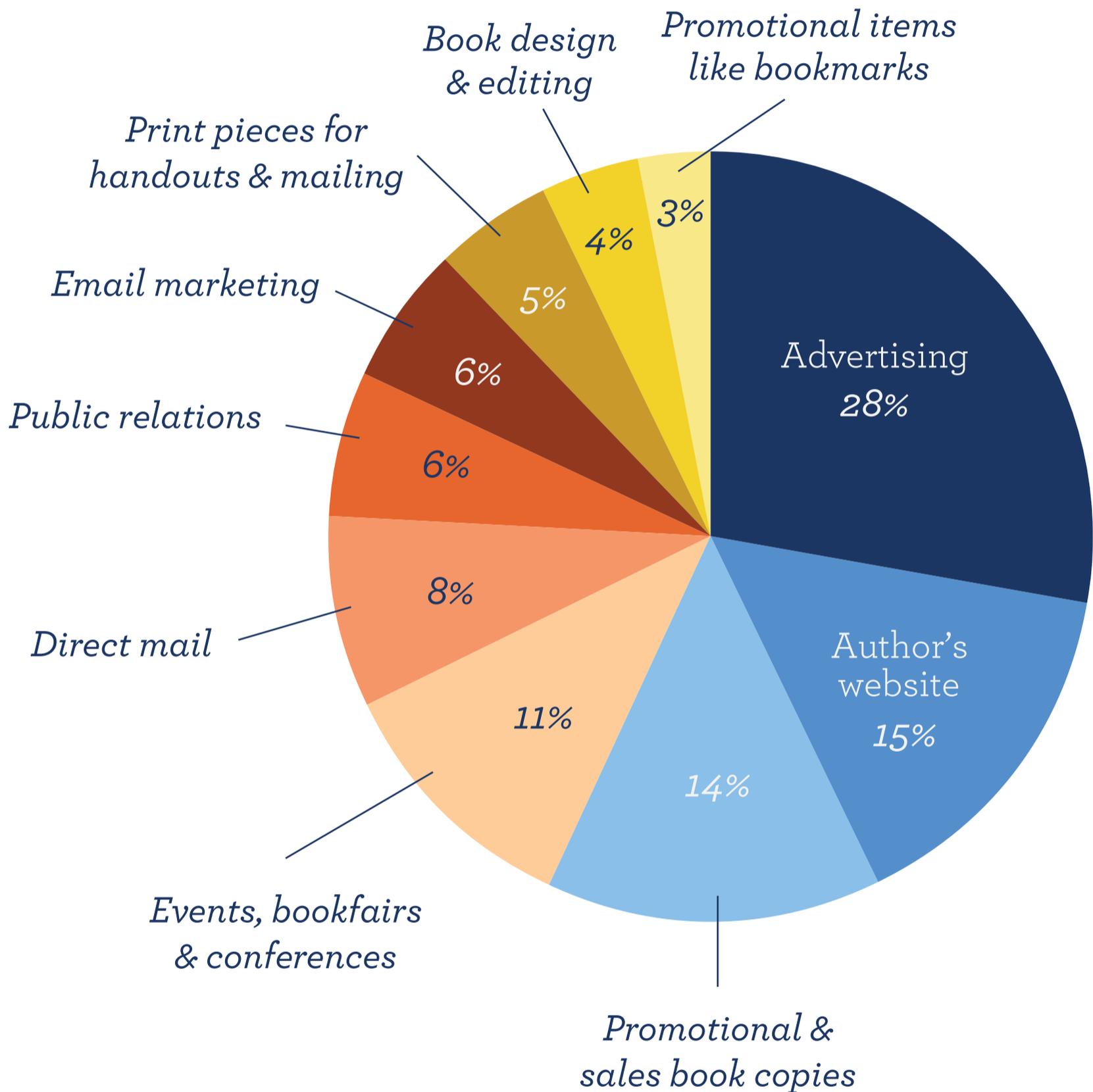
Action item

Figure out a marketing budget for promoting your book based on how much you think you might be able to sell in the holidays.

Step 3: Know Your Plan

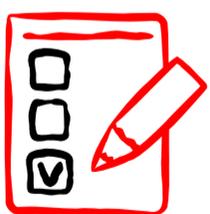
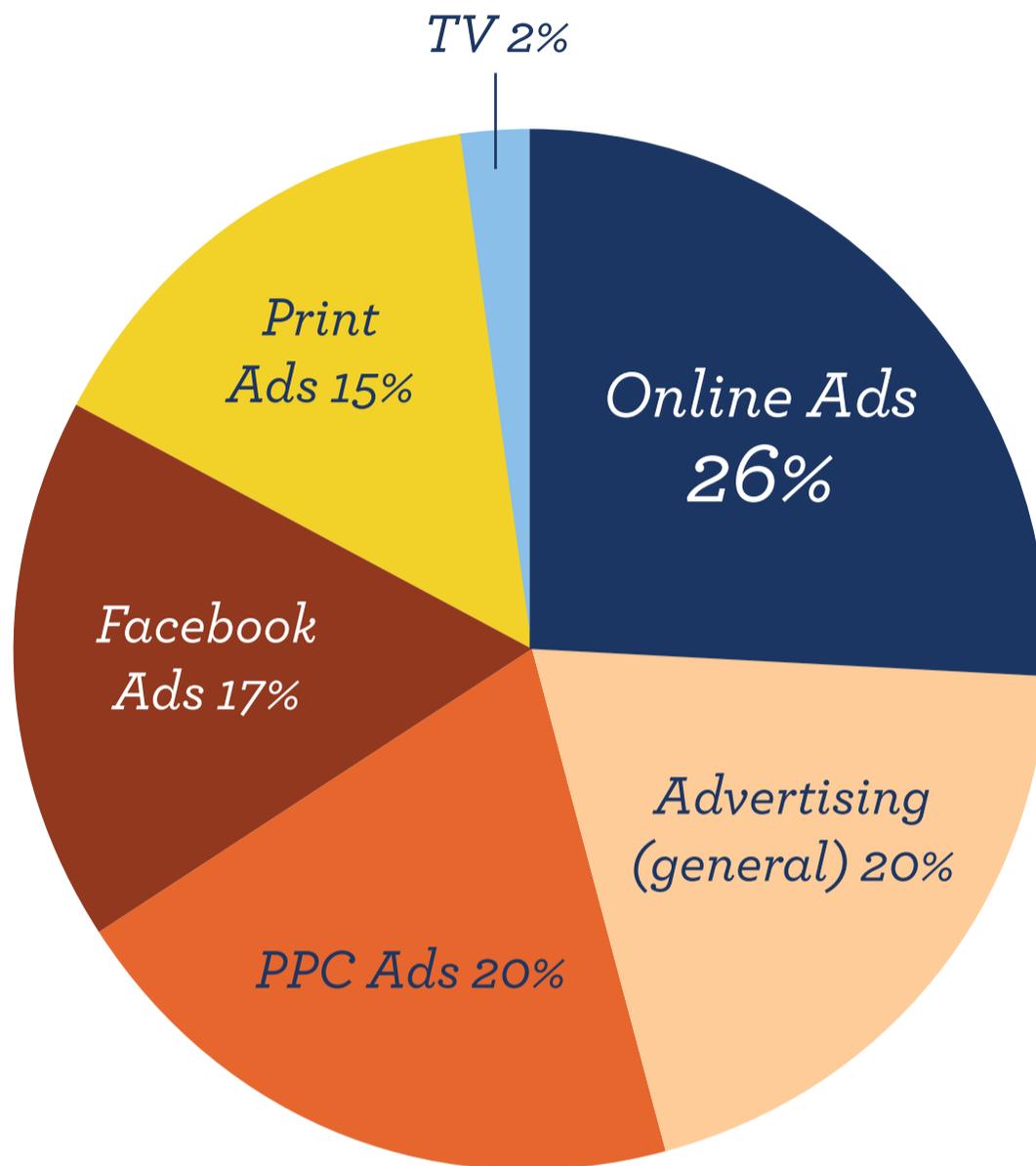
How best-selling authors spent their marketing budgets

Next, let's take a look at our best-selling authors' marketing mix.



Step 3: Know Your Plan

As you can see, authors spent the most on advertising, with their website and promotional copies of their book coming in second and third, respectively. Below is a detailed breakout of how authors spent their advertising budgets.



Action item

Find out how much you've spent on promoting your book so far. Decide what's worth spending on now that you have the information from this report.



Key takeaway

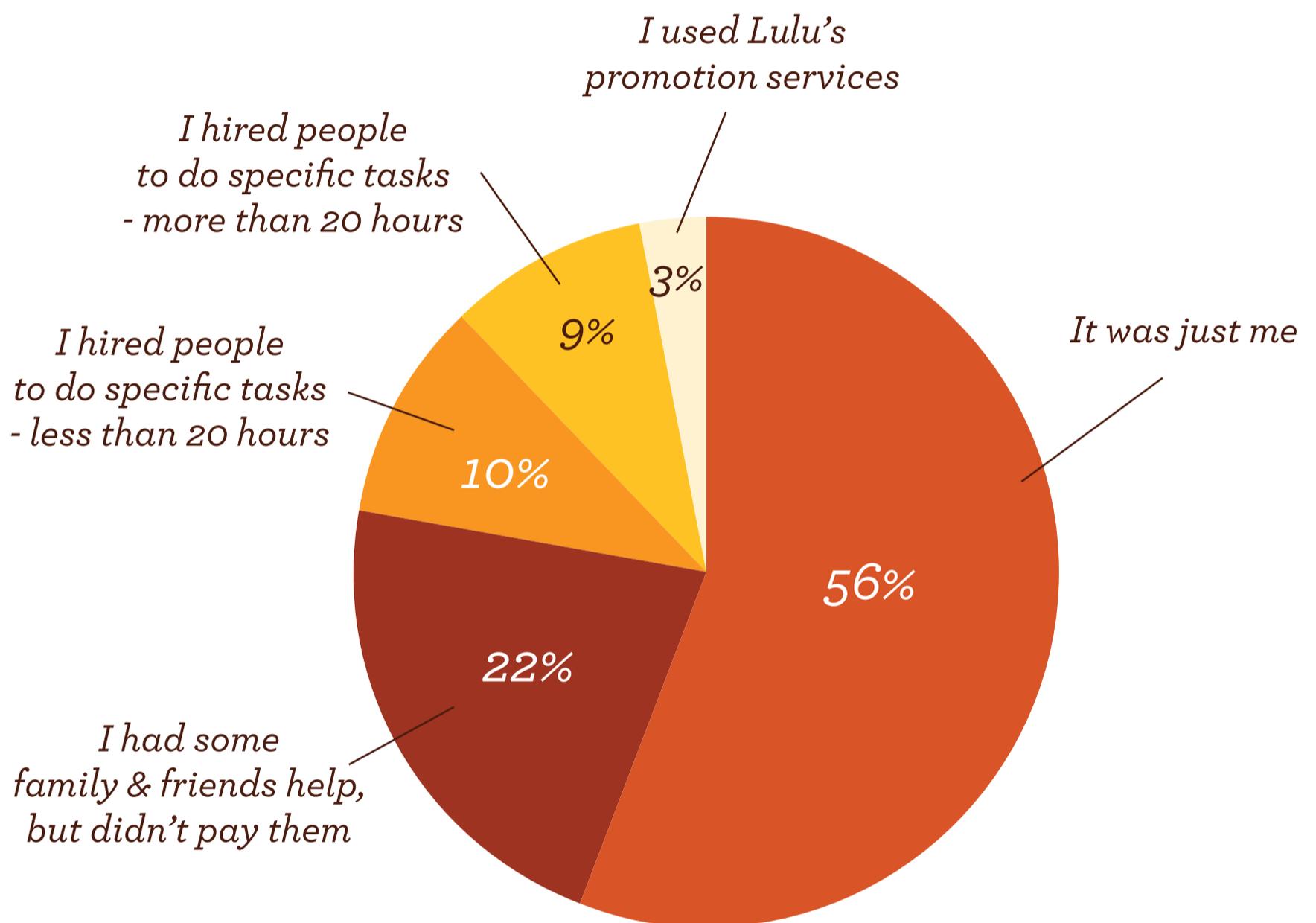
Most authors spent 28% of their overall budget on advertising, 15% on their websites and 14% on buying promotional copies and copies to sell direct to readers.

Step 3: Know Your Plan

Will you need help marketing your book?

The last question we asked our authors was how much help they may have asked for while marketing their book. It's easy to imagine best-selling authors with a team of marketing experts on call. The truth is, based on their responses, most of them did it alone.

“Did you have help with your promotions, including paid support?”



It's not surprising to learn that 56% of authors did it all on their own, and 22% found help via unpaid resources. No wonder they were able to keep their marketing budget so low! But you're certainly not alone if you think hiring an expert is for you - so did 22% of our best-sellers.

If you need help

While most authors did their marketing alone, don't hesitate to get help if you need it. Whether it's hiring a designer to make a new cover (something many of our authors recommend) or recruiting a family member to stuff envelopes for a promotional mailing, there are plenty of ways to get the support you need. Here are a few ideas that we heard from the authors responding to the survey:

- ① **If you don't have a big budget, offer to trade services.** For example, write something for the graphic designer who you want to redo your book cover or website.
- ② **Engage your fans, followers and subscribers.** One of the best ways to get noticed on social media is to ask for help. You could ask your audience which new book cover they like best or which email service provider they recommend. Hold a contest and give away signed copies of your book to the winners.
- ③ **Check out Fiverr.com.** You can get a lot of marketing tasks done for cheap on this website. Be sure to select someone with at least ten reviews of 4.5 stars or better and test them out with something small before dedicating a large portion of your marketing budget to them.



Action item

If you could get help with just two tasks for your book marketing, what would they be? Identify and reach out to people with those skills.



Key takeaway

56% of best-selling authors had no help with marketing. One in five paid for marketing help.

Conclusion

We've come to the end of our short tour through the world of book marketing. Hopefully, you have a much clearer idea of:

- ① **What it will take to promote your book** (*5 hours a week and less than \$500*)
- ② **What your goals should be** (*build your platform and engage your audience*)
- ③ **What you'll need to get there** (*a website, email list and a Facebook page*)

The most important thing to know is that you can do this. Many authors just like you started out with just a few hours a week to promote their books. They kept at it, and now make significant sales every month. You can do it, too. As one author said, "It is not as hard as you think. Go for it!"

Get Started Now

Now is the best time of the year to get started. There's still time to get a website up and launch your book promotion efforts before the holidays. And, as you know, holiday shopping is the biggest bookselling opportunity of the year. The national federation of retailers estimates that holiday sales account for 20-40% of annual retail sales. That's something to get in on!

So take out that checklist and get going. Feel free to call us at 1-888-265-2129 if you want to learn more about how we can help. There's still plenty of time to make 2013 your best year ever for book sales.



Action item

Schedule what you need to do to break your last book sales daily record.

Appendix: Steal These Resources

Resources

The Lulu.com Forums

Get free help by asking questions to other independent authors in the Lulu.com forums at connect.lulu.com.

Your Author Platform

Author platform is everything you use to position yourself as an author that people should know. We mentioned it at the beginning, and here it is in a simple list.

- ① *A website / blog*
- ② *An email list*
- ③ *A Facebook page*
- ④ *A business card*
- ⑤ *A headshot*
- ⑥ *A book and elevator pitch*

Optional:

- YouTube book trailers / videos*
- Mailer for promotional copies*
- Presence on niche forums or guest blog posting on related websites*
- Regular public speaking*
- A way to make money tied to the book (like consulting, coaching or other professional services)*
- A monthly newsletter (better: every two weeks)*
- More than one book*

Tell us what you think

We'd love to hear what you think of this eBook!

Did it help you create a marketing plan and drive increased holiday sales? Did you create a robust author platform for reaching your targeted audience? Did you find friends and family with skills that could help you be a better marketer and trade services with them? Whatever your adventure, please tell us your thoughts by leaving a comment on our Facebook page or sending us a Tweet using #luluebook. We look forward to hearing from you!

Find us, like us, follow us:

facebook.com/luludotcom

twitter.com/luludotcom

About Lulu.com

Since 2002, authors have published more than 1.5 million books using Lulu's self-publishing services, print on demand options and book-selling tools. We're the original independent publishing option for authors looking for full creative control and flexible publishing choices.