

## What Do You Mean I Need a Platform?

By Wendy Delaney

Promotion is for published authors. I can't tell you how many times I've heard the advice that unpublished fiction writers should just focus on writing a great book. It's a tough market, a shrinking midlist, blah, blah, blah.

Enough! I get it.

I need to tell a great story, and if it's going to have a snowball's chance of selling, it had better be a fabulously marketable, entertaining page-turner. So, it's important that I understand my market, focus on craft, focus on character, and focus on pacing.

I get it. Really I do. Focus on the writing.

Then, while I was intently focusing on my writing like a good unpublished author, a writing buddy asked me about my platform. Uh...my what?

She told me about a book, *Get Known Before the Book Deal*. I made a mental note to order the book and add it to my collection of Writers Digest books. I'd try to find some time to read it—later. Maybe after I work on that website I've been putting off, or come up with a tag line for those business cards I need to order. Right now, I'm busy writing. I am unpublished after all. Don't want to lose focus and put the cart before the horse.

Little did I know that a week later, I'd be at my local library, attending a workshop presented by Christina Katz, author of *Get Known Before the Book Deal*. I figured if nothing else, this would be an expedient way for me to acquire a copy of her book. As a bonus, I'd absorb some salient details about this platform stuff, especially since I'm busy writing and already have my summer reading planned out. (It's the left-brainer in me. I have a to-be-read list.)

Katz started the session by reinforcing the message that in this economy and very tight market, craft has never been more important. Okay, that provided an all too familiar jumping off point for where we were heading in the next fifty minutes—how I need to start planning my professional development. Why? Because I'm responsible for my writing career.

Of course, I am. Who else would be responsible?

However, that statement came as a minor revelation. *I'm responsible for my writing career*. As in one hundred percent responsible. I need to start thinking of this not only as a business, but as a relationship with my would-be readers that I can influence. How? With a platform—starting with baby steps to increase my visibility and build potential readership. Now, not later.

Christina Arbini was one of the few writers at the workshop who was already actively developing her platform, preparing to hit the ground running with her first sale. As she put it, "When that first book

contract comes through, you want to already be established and have a built-in networking system, or ready-made list of readers to market your books to.”

Christina Arbini gets it. I’m no dummy. I get it too.

The Christina Katz workshop came as an unexpected turning point in my writing career. I highly recommend both her book and her workshop, especially if you’re like me and you’ve had plans for a website simmering on the back-burner for the last year or three, but establishing a web presence has never been a priority. Hey, you and I have been busy writing, and that’s something we’ve had penciled in for later. Guess what? If you’re serious about your writing career, it’s later!

Wendy Delaney is the author of several writing-related articles and writes humorous mysteries with romantic elements. Originally from California, Wendy now lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and has two grown sons.