

Scams, Shams and Snark Marketing Panel

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1. Defining the good and the bad
 - a. A scam happens when someone gains your confidence then deceives and/or defrauds you.

I want to point out what a true scam is so that we all understand the difference between someone who is scamming you and someone that is not. Please note that the outcome is exactly the same.

Company A promises you that they are a “guru” or “expert”. They have a secret way to make something happen. They have industry leaders clamoring to know how they do it. They promise you’re going to sell, sell, sell, make the lists and your name will be seen “everywhere”. All you have to do is pay them a fee of \$xxx.xxx dollars and sit back to watch them work their magic. The outcome is you’ve seen an increase of 1% in sales and your press release was read 1000 times. You were mentioned on FB to 3000 people and of those 75 came over to LIKE your fan page.

Company B offers write and distribute your press release, send out an email encouraging people to LIKE your fan page, write blogs for several social media sites then let you know the outcome. No promises are made, except for the promise that the work they say will be done is in fact done.

The outcome is you’ve seen an increase of 1% in sales and your press release was read 1000 times. You were mentioned on FB to 3000 people and of those 75 came over to LIKE your fan page.

Though the outcome is the same *Company B* did not scam you; why?

Poor results do not mean you were scammed.

Having been promised something, even if it was inferred, paying then not having the work done OR the work was done but the promised results did not happen would constitute being scammed.

Also, be aware that some campaigns may not do well at one point, but do great at another. So much of marketing is timing, opportunity and execution. There’s a lot that cannot be controlled. So what didn’t work for you in January might work for you in December. What didn’t work for your YA series may work for your contemporary series. If there were an exact science to marketing we’d all be rich.

Good promotions, PR and marketing people use their vast resources and experience to create the campaign MOST LIKELY to succeed for you. The odds are in your favor if you’re experienced at what you’re doing.

How can you protect yourself BEFORE you spend your money?

1. Check references
2. Online search (if they say they are a guru you better be able to find others saying that online or it is a lie)
3. Know your goals and expectations in advance

OPEN THIS DISCUSSION UP TO THE PANEL – What do YOU tell your clients, or what do you suggest to people on how to protect themselves from scams?

Do you have any examples you can share of someone getting scammed?

Are there any places/resources you can suggest to check claims (i.e. editors and predators)

DIY Marketing

Without a doubt you can do a lot of marketing yourself if you have more time and energy than money, or if you have a true gift in marketing and can do a great job for yourself.

If you do determine to your own marketing you need to know where to go to find out how and to determine what works.

There are people out there whose services include “helping you help yourself”. Find resources that are established and reliable. Again it goes back to the main three things-

1. Check references
2. Online search
3. Know your goals and expectations in advance

If the DIY free help company or person ALSO makes money from doing it for you ask why they would give away what they could be selling. Some companies or people will purposefully make something sound more difficult than it is so that you will become frustrated and just hire them to do it for you. This is a sham. It’s a trick.

People give away a lot of advice and help for free because it proves they are an expert. But, no one gives away everything for free. Most professionals are eager to help. It builds their reputation. So a certain amount of free makes sense. But, ask yourself what this person is selling. What are they getting out of this free help? Don’t let “free” entice you into a trap. Check references. If they won’t allow you to check their references- walk away.

OPEN THIS DISCUSSION UP TO THE PANEL – What do YOU tell your clients, or what do you suggest to people who are looking to do a lot of stuff themselves and need help?

Do you have any examples you can share of good DIY resources? Newsletters, sites, etc.?

How do you know if what you paid for was worth it? What constitutes a successful campaign?

1. You must have personal responsibility in researching and executing your marketing and promotions. Check those references. Create a goal plan. Know your expectations.
2. Determine in advance what your budget is. Budget your money. Budget your time. Budget your resources. Budget your effort. If you don't know what your limit is, how will you know when you've gone over your limit? Make a list of all your resources before you start creating your goals and your campaign plans. It will help keep both of them within realistic expectations.
3. When you hire someone, or if you do something yourself, be extremely clear on what your expectations are. Keep your expectations realistic. Everyone wants to be a bestseller, but if this is your first book and you are an unknown person with little resources you may want to consider name recognition building for your first campaign, or branding.
4. How do you know the campaign was successful? Look at how many of your goals you were actually able to meet or come close to meeting. Look at how much of what you thought would happen did happen, regardless of the outcome.
5. Analyze what worked and what didn't. Did it work enough to try it again? Was it a total waste of resources?

OPEN PANEL DISCUSSION: What constitutes a successful campaign?

Snark Marketing

Snark marketing happens when someone uses snark or negative communication to bring attention to themselves.

Everyone loves a little snark now and again when it is harmless and funny. But, snark meant to harm someone is no laughing matter.

There is always going to be someone willing to go around and put bad reviews all over Amazon and give themselves a glowing review so they appear better than their competitors. There will always be someone willing to make things personal and talk about a writer's appearance or other personal matters while they are also slamming their book. This kind of talk often brings a slew of looky-loos to see the train wreck that is snark. But, participating in snark can come back to bite you later on.

OPEN PANEL DISCUSSION: Bad things can happen to those who spread snark

Wrap up-

PANEL DISCUSSION: What is your final recommendation to people on how to stay safe from scams, shams and snark marketing?