

Book Signings – Do I Sit or Stand?

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Part 1:

When I'm at a book signing selling my books, I "bounce." I'll sit for a while, then stand. Standing allows me to be more interesting and to show my interest in my audience. It also draws more attention; others will notice. When it's quiet or if I'm tired, I'll sit for a while, always focusing on the people around me. This gives me an open, relaxed look and makes me approachable, as long as I'm not sleeping on the table or reading my own book. Yes, I've seen authors do this.

Sitting or standing is part of your approach—how others perceive you greet them. As an author who has held over 300 events/signings and is very comfortable promoting books, I've noticed that style of approach differs from author to author. The key is to find your comfort zone, and it's always the one that works the best for *you*. If you're getting decent sales, then your approach is working. If sales are dismal, you need to change something about your approach.

A while ago, I read an article where the author said one should always move toward the customer and never sit or stand behind the table. I had to chuckle because I was once at an event where an author did exactly what the author here suggested. He went into the aisles, books and bookmarks in hand, smiling and talking to everyone, while I stood behind and sometimes beside my table, bookmarks in hand, smiling and greeting everyone. Sometimes I sat down.

At the end of the event, he had sold 5 books at \$14.00 each. I had sold 30 books at \$26.00 each. *Why?* Many people who came to my table said they felt "jumped on" by the other author. By moving *toward* them, he had invaded their physical space. He seemed "desperate" to some customers and it turned people off, whereas I seemed genuine and open to them, and they were curious about what was going on at my table.

At another multi-author event, an author stayed beside her table, just slightly out front and it worked for her. She had good sales, but was exhausted by the end. I stood and sat at intervals, outsold her and I felt great.

There have been occasions where I have left my table. If I miss giving a bookmark to a customer or I see someone loaded down with books by comparable authors, I'll sometimes go up to them and give them a bookmark. "For your books", I'll say. Or, "I forgot to give you this." That small, non-invasive action often led to natural discussions. Many times the person who had been in the lineup left it to check out my books.

Successful signings are a combination of advertising prior to events, ads in the stores, signage near the author (on the table or in sign holders) and the book itself, but mostly it's how the author presents him- or herself. So make sure you present yourself as a successful, interesting and happy writer who can't wait to meet your next fan.

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Cheryl Kaye Tardif is a national and international bestselling author of numerous works of fiction, including WHALE SONG, DIVINE INTERVENTION, THE RIVER and CHILDREN OF THE FOG. As well as being a successful author she has worked as a book marketing coach and is the publisher and acquisitions editor at Imajin Books.

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Part 2:

It is definitely less invasive to have the customers come to you than for you to pounce on them the second they enter the bookstore. The key is knowing *how* to get them to visit your table. I'll often have a draw box at one corner of the table, with a visible sign posted that describes the prize(s). Once in a while, I'll have chocolates in a bowl. But most often, I reach across the table after making eye-contact, smile and hand them a bookmark.

Tip: Hand them a bookmark. Most people will just take it. Don't ask if they want one. Try not to ask any question that can be answered by "yes" or "no". That usually results in "no". Just hold out your bookmark and go directly into your greeting, tell them who you are and what you're doing.

And don't forget to smile and enjoy what you're doing. I love signings. I genuinely enjoy meeting people, talking to them, and many times there is no advertisement prior to my events, except online. But it makes no difference. Whether I sit or stand, every customer who walks by me is a potential reader of my books--or they know someone. I like to approach strangers in the same way I would a long lost friend. And I can't wait to meet them. :)

So what really sells a book? I think it's an author's genuine love for his or her craft, for the particular book that they're promoting and for people in general. At least, that's how it is for me. I love book signings and events.

If you're an author, I'd love to hear about your thought on this, and your own approach to book signings.

If you're a reader, I'd also love to hear from you. I hope you'll share with me what kind of approach you think works best. What do you prefer and why? How can an author improve your experience in a bookstore?

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