



BECKY WICKS

Starstruck Series, New Adult Romance

A behind-the-scenes trip into the world of fame and celebrity, to the heart of how it takes its toll on relationships.

beckywicks.com; thehonestauthor.com

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BIO: Becky Wicks lives in Bali and scribbles books, and she's mostly powered by coffee. She had three travel memoirs published by HarperCollins before going the indie route. Her first book in the Starstruck Series, *Before He Was Famous*, reached No. 1 in Amazon's Coming of Age and New Adult & College categories. The next in the series came out in fall 2014 and she's working on the third. She blogs at beckywicks.com.

HOMETOWN: Watford, England.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Twitter: @bex_wicks; Facebook: Becky Wicks: Author; Google+: BeckyWicksauthor.

My promotional strategy, in a nutshell: It never ends. I reevaluate my strategy every day, as we're in an industry that's changing daily and that's the most important thing to remember! Before switching from mainstream to indie, I made it my full-time job to learn how to become a serious contender in the self-publishing game. I went all out on all social media platforms, enlisted help via TweetDeck, Canva, Pagemodo, oDesk and many more sites. I read every book to ever come from every self-publishing success story and bound it all together to create my own campaign. I was already blogging every day but I was aware that my book and I were at the bottom of a mountain, looking up through the clouds.

Why I decided to focus my efforts this way: I had three books published by HarperCollins from 2011–2013 but decided to try indie publishing after a lack of marketing on all parts contributed to minimal success. I had

a background in online marketing as well as writing, so I studied the indie game for six months solid while I wrote my first novel, determined to outsell HarperCollins and go above and beyond what they did/could ever do for me.

How I put my plan into action: Aside from hiring a cover designer and editor, lining up a blog tour, and other givens, here are some essential tools I've discovered:

- **TweetAdder:** Most traffic to my blog and to my books comes from Twitter. TweetAdder (\$19 a month with 30 days free trial, tweetadder.com) lets you make a list of Tweets and then sends them for you at random while you scribble away. You can also search for interesting/like-minded people by keywords in their profiles (i.e., “book blogger,” “reviews books,” etc). I added 800 useful followers in just over a week using this tool.

- **Author Marketing Club:** Paying for a Premium Membership (\$105 a year, authormarketingclub.com) grants you access to a world of coolness, like a handy Amazon Description Generator, and a Reviewer Grabber, which scans Amazon for readers who've enjoyed books similar to yours, and lets you email them to see if they'd like a free copy of yours to review. There are lots of other great tools—it's been well worth the membership.

- **oDesk:** Using this online directory of freelance professionals (odesk.com), I found a great guy to format my e-books. (Tip: Ask for your table of contents at the back of your book. It's easily searchable by readers on all devices so why waste that precious “sample” space at the front when it's up on Amazon?) Another oDeskier cleans up my mailing lists and helps with other small admin tasks.

- **Sigil:** Once you get your formatted epub file back, you can use the free downloadable app Sigil (code.google.com/p/sigil) to make changes yourself. (For example, I can add a call to action to enter a giveaway whenever I have one running, in order to gain more mailing list subscribers. I can then re-upload the file to KDP whenever I like.) It's very simple to use and if you get stuck, there are tutorials on YouTube.

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- **MailChimp and Rafflecopter:** These are two tools I wouldn't be without, and both are free. You can use Rafflecopter (rafflecopter.com) to run giveaways, whereby each entrant is entered (willingly) onto your mailing list. I've found that the more competitions I run, the more people I get to add; Amazon vouchers are alluring as prizes, as are advanced copies of my books. MailChimp (mailchimp.com) can keep track of your email lists; I maintain one for bloggers/reviewers and one for readers.

- **Canva:** I discovered this by mistake but now I wouldn't be without it. Canva (canva.com) lets you create (for free) a host of professional-looking memes and social media posts that you can then send out on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. I use it to mix images with quotes from my books. Tweets with these memes attached have a much higher click-through rate than others.

Which efforts worked best: For Book 1, I launched a four-day promo, during which I utilized Amazon KDPs promo days to give my book away for free. After being rejected by the holy grail of free e-book newsletters, BookBub, I was forced to go another route in order to get the downloads. Through a combination of social media, keywords and strategic paid ads, I ended up shifting over 24,000 copies across four days. I then sold 350 copies on day one of the book going live on Amazon.

Other signs that readers were engaged: After my promo (designed to raise awareness of Book 2 in my series) I was still in the Amazon top 100 in three categories a week later, and on Goodreads over 2,000 people added my book “to be read” in four days. My second book had almost 150 preorders as a result and more reviews come in every day, all of which pushes me higher in Amazon's rankings. If I were an author with more than two books, I'm sure I would have seen greater benefits, but obviously I'm just getting started! My Twitter followers are going up by 30+ a day now and blog hits are climbing, too.

How much money and time I've invested in my promotional efforts: Twelve hours a day mini-

mum, sitting at that laptop with a *lot* of coffee (and sometimes wine). I also have a part-time job (social media for a global communications company, which helps!) and I'm working on my third book at the same time. As for money, along with blog tours, admin assistance and some paid advertising, I spent up to \$1,000 per book. I consider this an investment in my career because there is nothing I want to do except write (and sell) books. But I'm aware some people don't have this much money or time. It's all about finding what works for you and getting into a routine.

Copies sold to date: I've sold over 8,000 copies of Book 1 since May 25, 2014, on top of the 24,000 copies “gifted” during my promo, which I see as helping to raise awareness of my brand. Book 2 is still very new as of this writing, but it has both debuted and remained in the top 100 on Amazon for humorous romance.

What I'd do the same with the next book: Keep up with my guest posting on blogs, and social media—Twitter is far more helpful and active than Facebook. Also send out ARCs to readers via NetGalley, with an incentive to encourage early reviews on Goodreads and Amazon (I'm offering the chance to win a \$100 Amazon voucher to readers who send me the URL to their review). My Canva promo posts are eye-catching and encourage a lot of clicks, too. I'm also experimenting with keywords to help Amazon promote my book, as I learned from *How to Sell Fiction on Kindle* by Michael Alvear.

What I'd do differently: I wouldn't do any Facebook advertising or invest in a Kindle Nation Daily promo. I don't think either worked very well. I'd rather spend the money on Goodreads advertising, and on more blog tours. I wouldn't do a four-day promo either, as most downloads occurred in the first 24 hours.

Takeaways for fellow writers: Make time, more than anything. There are so many tools out there that things can be fun as well as rewarding. Respond to every reader who writes you, as relationships are key, as is building that all-important mailing list. Also remember, things are changing every day. Read, read, read and learn, and never think you can't do it. (In tandem with traditionally published author Sarah Alderson, I'll be sharing more about what works for me—or not—on thehonestauthor.com, and invite you to follow along.) If I can do it, anyone can.