

REVISITING THE PORTHOLE VIEW:
AN ANALYSIS OF OUTREACH STRATEGIES IN PURSUIT
OF MARKET EXPANSION

By

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ABSTRACT

This report is intended as a follow up to the 2014 Amanda Peters report, “The Porthole View: Marketing to the Masses Through the Little Window,” which provided a top down analysis of Now Or Never Publishing’s marketing tactics, as well as a list of suggested action plans for improving company visibility. This report revisits each of these recommendations, analyzing their continued appropriateness for Now Or Never, while simultaneously documenting any progress or setbacks the company has faced in its attempts to expand its audience. Organized into a general dichotomy of digital and physical outreach strategies, this report employs personal interviews, sales data, and social media insights to determine what amount of marketing improvement and success a boutique publishing house can realistically achieve within a one-year time frame. As a result of these analyses, this report concludes two things. First, that within the given time frame, Now Or Never Publishing has been generally unable to follow the action plans outlined in the Peters’ report, or to embrace them with the full level of commitment needed for success. Second, that these failures do not necessarily imply a lack of effort, but rather may highlight a disadvantage unique to small press publishing, wherein marketing is sacrificed in favor of production and editorial deadlines.

Key words: book publishing, small press, online marketing, social media marketing, event marketing, boutique publishing, Canadian publishing, analytics, community engagement.

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A big shout out to my publisher at Now Or Never Publishing, thank you for letting me be a part of your awesome company, and for giving me my first real look into the world of book production. I'd also like to thank my professors for reading this report for what I know seemed like an endless amount of time, and lots of love to my friends and family for talking me off of the ledge when I was sure this paper wasn't going to happen.

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INTRODUCTION

“For trade book publishing is by nature a cottage industry; it is essentially a craft, a vocation that depends on the commitment and judgment of editors and on the unpredictable tastes of the public. It is not the kind of business that lends itself to corporate synergies and high returns on investment – ‘a cottage industry within an industrial conglomerate makes no sense.’”¹

Book publishing is by definition a conflicted industry. Propelled forward by cultural passion and financial profit, attempts to balance these dual motives can result in monetary influence on acquisitions and conglomeration, and are often seen as being detrimental to literary diversity. By introducing higher profit lines and a tendency to publish titles based on their perceived monetary value rather than their cultural worth, these processes are often credited with narrowing the book industry’s scope. As this value system shifts, many are left convinced that publishers are no longer “interested in the real talent pool, or in a wide variety of literature,”² but rather only in bestsellers, which tend to be particularly narrow types of books. This perspective is echoed in a statement by Andre Schiffrin of Pantheon books, who nearly twenty-five years ago claimed that “intellectual quality and literary merit [had] been sacrificed on the altar of the market.”³

Given that these concerns first surfaced decades ago, one would expect the current landscape of book publishing to be exceptionally bleak. And yet, this is hardly the case. Thanks to increased technologies and tools of digital outreach, these twin processes

¹ Thompson B., John, *Books in the Digital Age: Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2005,) 5.

² Smith, Russell. “Are book publishers blockbusting themselves into oblivion?” *The Globe and Mail*, November 28, 2014. <http://www.globeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/are-book-publishers-blockbusting-themselves-into-oblivion/article21834263/>.

³ Thompson B., John, *Books in the Digital Age*, 5.

of conglomeration and literary decay have been effectively countered. While the aggregation of presses continues to occur, a mass resurgence of the independent press has begun to usher in “a small time publishing renaissance.”⁴ Advancing technologies have transformed the industry, opening up digital markets and marketing tactics that have for the first time truly given small presses a level playing field. Often run by members of the creative community such as authors and artists, small publishers “play an important role as an alternative to the giant conglomerates.”⁵ With smaller profit margins and potentially greater creative freedom, independent presses tend to take chances on titles and authors that the conglomerates won’t. This in turn repositions the small publisher as the midwife of literary value and ensures a flourishing of cultural variety. Never before has the small press had the tools to compete and take their share of the market so completely. The return of the cottage industry is now, and Vancouver is on the forefront.

INTRODUCTION TO NOW OR NEVER PUBLISHING

Conceived in 2005, Now Or Never Publishing exemplifies the qualities and determination behind the resurgence of the small press. A petite boutique publisher located in Vancouver, British Columbia, Now Or Never is a member of the Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia, the Association of Canadian Publishers, and the Literary Press Group of Canada. A minute operation, Now Or Never runs on the sweat and dedication of a four person team that includes the publisher and owner, Chris Needham, an associate publisher, an editor, and the Director of PR and Marketing, who is

⁴ Priluck, Jill. “Byte-Sized Books: Digital Publishing Levels the Playing Field for Small Publishers.” *Slate.com*, August 5, 2010.
http://www.slate.com/articles/business/small_business/2010/08/bytesized_books.html.

⁵ “Small Presses,” *SFWA*. <http://www.sfwa.org/other-resources/for-authors/writers-beware/small/>.

also his wife. Like most small presses, Now Or Never operates on a shoe string budget supplemented by grants and employee sacrifice, with each person involved agreeing that the true value of the company comes not in its profits, but in its products itself. While such tight bottom lines can be a hindrance, “small presses with skeletal operations and tiny budgets”⁶ can find themselves with more creative freedom since they do not face the same financial pressures as the larger houses. Such is the case with Now Or Never Publishing, an alternative press determined to use its sovereign status to publish what it wants, how it wants.

As an intern at Now Or Never Publishing in the summer of 2015, I came to better understand the unique set of circumstances associated with boutique publishing, and the obstacles that a small press can face in trying to be seen in a larger market. Functioning mainly as a marketing assistant, my time with the company was spent developing and preparing internal marketing documents such as tip sheets, on boarding packages, and other supplementary items intended to simplify and streamline the marketing process, as well as in assisting in social media marketing, analytics reporting, and advertisement design. Though my internship was done remotely, these tasks provided me with valuable insights into Now Or Never’s business model, and more specifically, its marketing tactics. Using these experiences as the basis for my interpretations, the following report will provide a closer analysis of Now Or Never’s marketing and publicity strategy, and seek to understand all factors that contribute to its subsequent success or failure.

Currently following a two-pronged digital and physical marketing approach that relies heavily on social media and traditional review publicity, Now Or Never Publishing

⁶ Thompson B., John, *Books in the Digital Age*, 5.

has built itself a small, loyal audience composed almost entirely of trade and social peers. Instead of working to capture a spontaneous general audience, the press tends to focus its marketing efforts on the authors' and publisher's circles of acquaintances, family, friends, and professional connections. While this has provided the boutique press with a reliably comfortable platform, it has not effectively promoted the company's continued growth. As a result, the press's audience size and sales have shown very little improvement from year to year. For an independent press with so much potential, this lack of growth is detrimental, and is unlikely to be reversed unless an expansion into the general market can be achieved. With four staff members and a miniscule budget, internal and external expansion is key to the company's continued progression, yet impossible given Now Or Never's current marketing tactics and sales figures.

In 2014 a similar conclusion was reached in a comprehensive analysis of Now Or Never entitled "The Porthole View: Marketing to the Masses Through the Little Window," by Amanda Peters. Written through research, interviews, and internship experience, the Peters Report offers an extremely reliable view of Now Or Never Publishing's strengths and weaknesses from a semi-external source. It is able to pin point that the press's strengths lie in its personal approach to authors and consumers, as well as in its "acceptance of submissions from authors with all levels of expertise."⁷ It espouses the endless possibilities that the dedication of the staff can bring, while recognizing that limited visibility and restrictive budgets pose a legitimate threat to continued growth. The primary take away from this report, however, is the perception that Now Or Never

⁷ Peters, Amanda. "The Porthole View: Marketing to the Masses Through the Little Window," (Master's Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2014), 26.

Publishing needs to increase its market presence and its successive market share if it ever hopes to expand and grow as a press.

With the reality of this fact in mind, the report thus makes numerous suggestions, each directed at different elements of Now Or Never's business model and each intended to help the company achieve this goal. After being involved with this company, the rationales behind many of these observations are confirmed, as are their related recommendations. In the spirit of consistency, however, the following segments of this report will provide a systematic follow up and analysis of Amanda Peters' recommendations, while also presenting an updated marketing profile of Now Or Never Publishing. Functioning first and foremost as a progress report, this paper will work to document the press's successes and failures as it attempts to improve its marketing tactics and expand into the general market. It will also, and perhaps more importantly, seek to determine if such a total overhaul of marketing strategy is feasible for a small press within a one-year time frame, if at all.

This report is intended, in its completed state, to provide the publisher of Now Or Never with an accurate portrayal of the strengths and weaknesses of his current marketing platform, and will focus on online outreach and physical outreach strategies respectively. A study on the difficulties facing independent press visibility, this report will also offer insights into the level of marketing success that can realistically be expected from a boutique press.

NOW OR NEVER PUBLISHING OVERVIEW

*“The code is simple, really. Be loyal to your authors. Nurture the best that is in them and give them the best that is in you – including sticking by them in lean times. Publish the best writing you can find or that finds you. Don’t send books to the printer that you know can be made better. Be proud of the firm and give it books that the firm can be proud to publish.”*⁸

PUBLISHING VISION

Now Or Never Publishing offers an alternative, yet thoughtful perspective on the world. As a press, it seeks to not only speak on the important topics of life, but also to question our perceptions and assumptions of them. It is not overwhelmingly concerned with producing the next blockbuster, but rather with providing a platform for “the Canadian Urban voice”⁹ to be heard. By focusing on Canadian stories and points of view, Now Or Never occupies an editorial niche that allows them to separate themselves from the multitude of competitors found in general fiction. The press’s combined booklist is a testament to this mantra. Comprised of 35 literary works, Now Or Never’s new releases and backlist books cover an array of topics that are at once universal and unique to the Canadian identity. There are stories about sexuality and murder, tragedy, disaster, discovering who you are, and laughing when everything goes wrong. Now Or Never does not restrict itself to one storyline or perspective, but instead embraces the eclectic tales of people from all walks of life, with the result being a collection that is authentically Canadian.

⁸ Howard, Gerald, “Mistah Perkins – He dead,” in *Editors on Editing*, Ed. Gerald Gross, (New York, Grove Press, 1993), 61.

⁹ Literary Press Group of Canada, Member Directory. <http://www.lpg.ca/publishers#N>

This openness is mirrored further in the various genres through which the press and its authors choose to tell their stories. While constantly maintaining the literary quality of its titles, Now Or Never refuses to stifle or constrict an author's vision, and as a result has come to specialize in "fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and memoir."¹⁰ Though their works tend towards literary fiction and poetry, the publisher is willing to accommodate his writers and their ideas to the best of his ability. This dedication is common in small presses since those who run them are often members of the creative communities that they seek to "sustain and grow"¹¹ with their books. The publisher of Now Or Never, Chris Needham, is himself a published author, and admits that this has helped him better understand how to work with and appease his clients. As soon as a manuscript is accepted, Now Or Never offers its authors "a guarantee of dedication to [their] title from inception to completion and beyond,"¹² a promise that highlights the very receptiveness and understanding inherent to their publishing vision.

BUSINESS MODEL SUMMARY

In regards to business model, Now Or Never is exceptionally minimalist in its structure. In an environment where many small presses "go out of business within the first year, sometimes without ever publishing a book,"¹³ the company has kept afloat thanks to a stringent bare bones philosophy. In order to keep down overhead costs, the privately owned enterprise operates from within the publisher's home, with other employees working remotely to communicate and complete their tasks. By reducing their

¹⁰ ABPBC, Member Directory. http://nooks.bc.ca/now_or_never/.

¹¹ Thompson B., John, *Books in the Digital Age*, 5.

¹² Now Or Never: Author Resource Package, 2015.

¹³ "Small Presses," *SFWA*. www.sfw.org/other-resources/for-authors/writers-beware/small/

fixed overhead costs, Now Or Never is able to devote more of their budget to vital aspects of the publishing process without having to worry about rent, electricity, or other overheads.

This cost efficiency is replicated in other areas of the company's finances as well. While the publisher acts as the main financial backer for the publishing house, the remaining staff members work in part time commission supplemented positions, rather than salaried compensation. Putting out three to four books a season, the press does not at this time have the revenues or grant allowance to hire a full time staff, and instead relies on a close network of committed individuals to donate their time and efforts. On average, each employee works approximately 15 – 20 hours a week during book production, with the publisher overseeing each task and communicating via email. Since reimbursement is not directly monetary, employee passion and artistic pride are the premium compensation over money.

In an effort to maintain organization and increase task efficiency, the press also only accepts completed manuscripts by email. With so few staff members and limited time, the press does not have the luxury of betting on proposals or excerpts of a book, and must instead maximize its efforts by viewing projects as a whole. This in turn helps the company avoid wasting time on incomplete manuscripts or unreliable authors. This strategy seems to work, and according to the publisher, the number of incoming submissions has grown consistently over the last several years. At present, the company receives approximately 10 submissions a week, an impressive number for such a small endeavor. The rising number of submissions is a very positive sign for the company, and

implies an increasing awareness of Now Or Never in artistic circles and the subsequent talent pool.

Once a manuscript has been accepted and undergone the publishing process, Now Or Never usually prints a first run of 500-800 books, depending on the genre and author platform. This merchandise is then warehoused in a small storage facility for a cost of approximately \$50 a month, raising the press's total office and administrative costs to "\$400 - \$500 a month total,"¹⁴ far below what they would pay in overhead if they had an external office space.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Although Now Or Never's editorial team is fairly specific on whom they accept manuscripts from, their target audience is slightly vague. In a past statement, Chris Needham admitted that in the hopes of appealing to a wider range of readers, Now Or Never has focused primarily "on appealing to 'general' readers'."¹⁵ More specifically, this refers to those readers searching through Contemporary, General, or Canadian Fiction sections for their latest titles, without specific thought to a topic or time frame. A more definable secondary audience has, however, developed through the press's penchant for working with the same writers repeatedly. While Now Or Never prides itself on taking chances on new Canadian talent, the press is willing to work with past authors on their newest projects as well. As a result, Now Or Never often works on more than one book with an author, ensuring a supplementary audience of fans developed from previous publications.

¹⁴ Email correspondence with Chris Needham. September 10, 2015.

¹⁵ Peters, Amanda, "The Porthole View," 18.

While this tactic has allowed Now Or Never to consistently profit off of their author's followings, this dependence on author platforms has limited Now Or Never to a small, if loyal, trade audience composed of "authors, distributors, and other publishing companies,"¹⁶ rather than the general consumers that it strives to reach. Since this audience is often already aware of Now Or Never, external marketing is wasted on an already converted segment, and as a result, audience size rarely increases. This inability to capture any significant percentage of the general audience has in turn begun to hold the company back, effectively freezing the press in its boutique frame.

SALES AND DISTRIBUTION SUMMARY

As for actively selling their titles, Now Or Never depends on LitDistCo, a literary book distributor that works almost exclusively with members of Canada's Literary Press Group. Through their system, retailers are offered a 40% discount and wholesalers are offered 50% on orders of five books or more, with publishers paying half freight.¹⁷ This sales channel is key as it places Now Or Never's books in a large number of physical and virtual retailers across North America, and conveniently offers returns on non-damaged goods three months after the invoice date and within twelve months of the invoice date. It also provides detailed data to any Canadian publisher that uses its services. Through this platform Now Or Never is given the opportunity to capture vital sales information, including the number of books that are ordered, sold, and returned month to month. Unfortunately, while these monthly LitDistCo sales reports would allow the company to

¹⁶ Peters, Amanda, "The Porthole View," 42.

¹⁷ LitDistCo Information for Booksellers. <http://www.litdistco.ca/info-for-booksellers/>.

more accurately allocate their resources and effort, the press does not at this time use these numbers to determine which sales channels it places its books in.

In the chart below, for example, one can see the relative effectiveness of a sample of the company's sales channels for the month of August 2015. While most channels are seeing some sales, the numbers are low across the board save for Chapters and Indigo; and some, such as Baker & Taylor, are seeing an influx of returns. Though some of this lack of activity can be attributed to discoverability since the press cannot afford to bid for co-op or placement in brick and mortar bookstores, poor placement may also be to blame. If the press isn't using these sales figures to determine placement, it risks wasting its budget stocking books in ineffective channels and taking on avoidable returns.

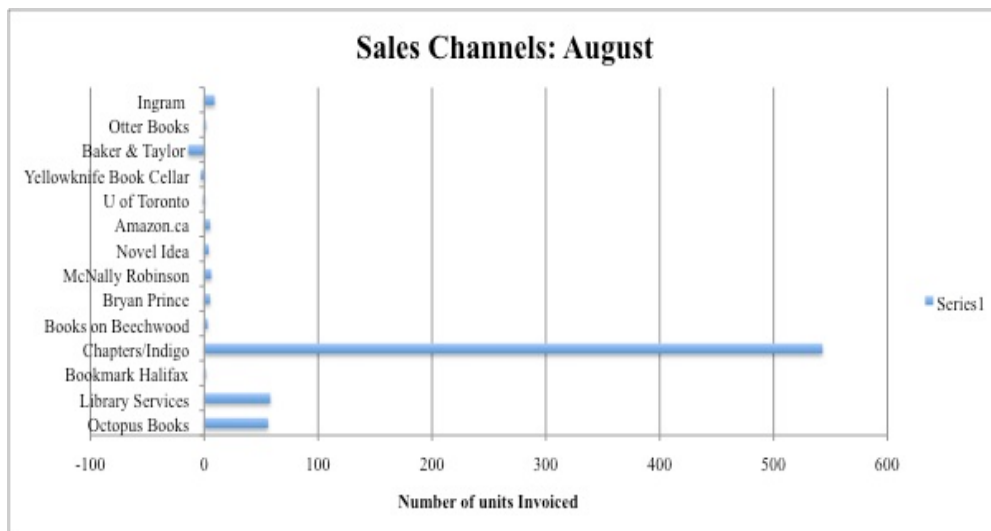


Figure 1: Sample of August 2015 Sales Channels (LitDistco)¹⁸

For proof of this statement, one only has to look into the company's rate of Sales and Returns. Although the company's ratio of sales and returns has been stable

¹⁸ LitDistCo Sales: Invoiced Sales Items for August 2015. Accessed September 13, 2015. Litdistcosales.ca/sales_items

historically, things have begun to shift. In 2014, there was a “general trend of sales outpacing returns,”¹⁹ and sales were recorded as being on the rise since 2013. Over the last year, however, there has been a slight decrease in total sales, as can be seen in the following data samples from the fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

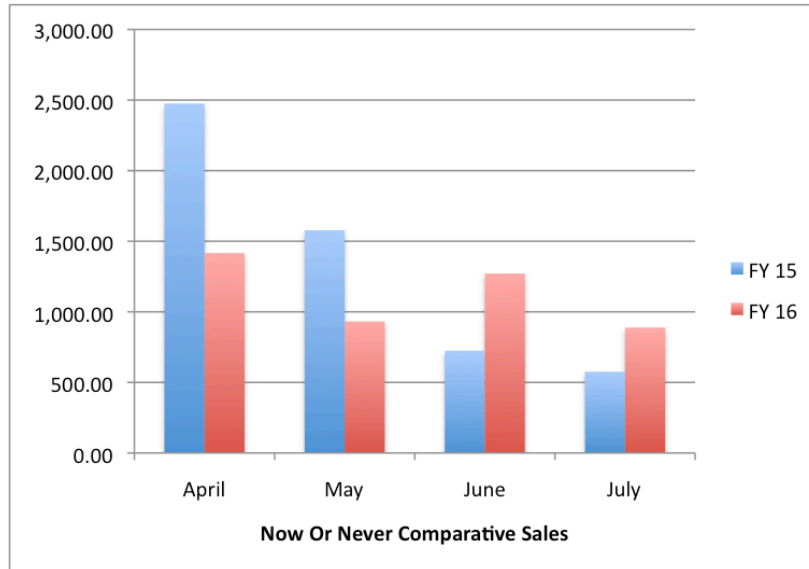


Figure 2: Sample of Total Sales, FY 2015 vs. FY 2016²⁰

¹⁹ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View: Marketing to the Masses Through the Little Window,” (Master’s Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2014), 22.

²⁰ Now Or Never Publishing LPG Sales Report: July.

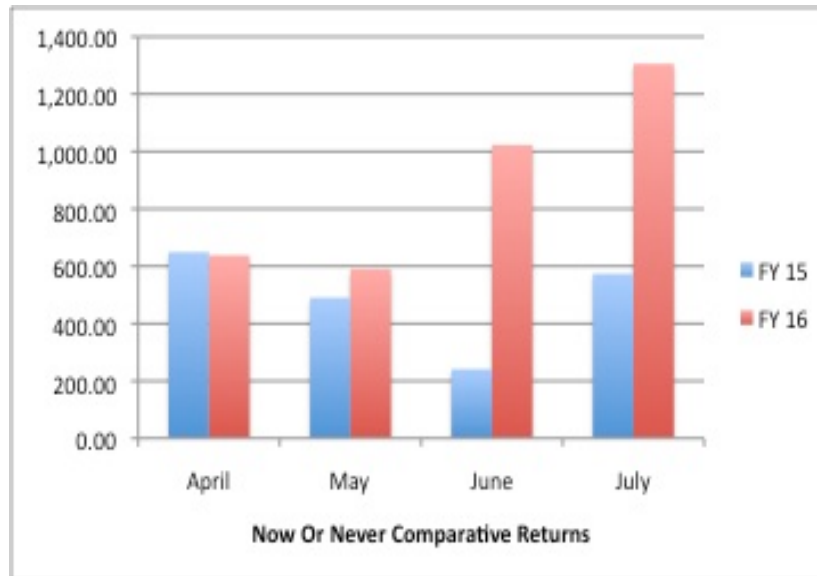


Figure 3: Sample of Total Returns, FY 2015 vs. FY 2016²⁰

While it is common for book publishing to slow in the summer months, a worryingly substantial drop in sales can be seen between the two years. In the month of April alone a difference of \$1,058.56 is evident, and this trend can be seen as continuing throughout the given data. To compound this problem, returns have seen a similar jump in the last year, with returns in June and July more than doubling their past counterparts. Though it is impossible to pinpoint the exact reasons behind this shift, the statistics cannot be denied. Down a minimum of 16% in gross income between the respective months, Now Or Never Publishing must increase its market share if it ever hopes to reverse this downward trend.

MARKETING SUMMARY

Given its small stature and limited budget of “\$500 - \$1,000 per title,”²¹ Now Or Never’s marketing tactics are somewhat limited. Much like the rest of the endeavor, the

²¹ Email Correspondence with Chris Needham. September 11, 2015.

Director of PR and Marketing is a part time position, which due to a continued maternity leave, has been shared with the publisher over the last two years. Arguably one of the most important facets of book publishing, only about “20 hours”²² of employee time is being spent on marketing outreach per title. A relatively small number, the part time nature and in flux state of this position means that the press tends to prioritize editing and production over marketing, and as a result has limited time to invest in new or unique strategies. Because of this limited number of free hours, the company often relies on the quickest and most cost efficient marketing tactics, which are not always the most effective.

At the time of this report, roughly 60% of Now Or Never’s marketing budget is spent on physical mail outs, with the intent being to capture reviews, blurbs, and features. These mail outs mainly consist of ARC copies and the occasional completed book, and are still considered a vital element of the company’s strategy. While the idea of the physical mail out may strike some as out of date, the press is working to vet its current mailing list, and has begun emailing its contacts beforehand to reduce wasted funds.

The remaining elements of Now Or Never’s marketing plan are extremely author-centric. The publishing house depends heavily on author platforms and appearances to sell titles, promoting book launches and events through their client’s social media and web presences. This reliance is outlined in the 2015 Now Or Never Author Resource Package, wherein the press’s expectations for the author to contribute, market, and “self promote”²³ are made clear. Since the author and their subsequent circle are the most

²² Email Correspondence with Chris Needham, November 27, 2015.

²³ Now Or Never: Author Resource Package, 2015.

consistent and reachable consumer base for the company at this point in time, this is a smart means of marketing delegation for the press.

That is not to say, however, that Now Or Never leaves total marketing responsibility with its authors. Rather, the company works hard to get their author's publicity at various writers' festivals and events, and helps to organize local launch parties and book tours when viable. The company also strives to increase author and book visibility through social media marketing and promotion on digital platforms such as Goodreads and 49th Shelf. Though limited in resources, Now Or Never promises its authors a commitment to their book, and to increasing its visibility as much as possible.

And yet, given the overlapping responsibilities of employees and the conflicting importance of other priorities, the twenty hours of marketing outreach allocated to each book are not always fully utilized. Using the Peters report as a frame, the following sections of this report will uncover how Now Or Never spends the remainder of its twenty hours after physical mail outs are complete, and compare those tactics to the marketing recommendations and expectations previously outlined.

ANALYSIS: DIGITAL MARKETING & OUTREACH STRATEGIES

*“Small presses market books in a manner that can be just as effective as, though quieter than, the ways of the larger houses. Because they publish so many books, the large commercial publishers can, at best, throw books into the standard book pipeline [...] A smaller house, because it needs each book to produce more, is more likely to delve deeper and more imaginatively for a book’s audience.”*²⁴

The active competition and current influx of small publishing houses is, in many ways, due to the advent of digital marketing within the industry. Online outreach strategies such as social media platforms, book club forums, blogs, and online reviews have greatly reduced the cost of marketing, allowing independent presses to make themselves increasingly visible to their consumers. Without having to constantly pay or bid for placement in physical publications, publishers like Now Or Never are able to put their resources towards building an online following and transforming it into a consumer base. In order to benefit from this leveling of the playing field, however, independent publishing houses must utilize every digital tool in their grasp. As competition in the sector continues to grow, small publisher survival becomes dependent on cross-media marketing and the ability to use a “combination of marketing methods for maximum impact.”²⁵

²⁴ Walker, Scott, “Editing for a Small Press,” *Editors on Editing*. Ed. Gerald Gross, (New York, Grove Press, 1993), 265.

²⁵ Coleman, Alison, “Small Publishers are benefiting from changes in the industry,” *The Guardian*. March 18, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/mar/18/small-publishers-changes-industry-digital-technology>.

WEBSITE

Given how firmly coupled society is with the virtual world, a company's website is one of the greatest tools that an online marketer can have in his or her repertoire. Though often downplayed in favor of flashy contests or 140 character social media posts, the website "forms the central hub"²⁶ of any strong digital marketing action plan, drawing the various outreach channels together into a unified strategy. It acts as the home base for a company, often providing their online community a place to congregate, while simultaneously promoting and connecting all relevant outlets and information.

In her 2014 report, Amanda Peters examined Now Or Never Publishing's website to determine if it was fulfilling this role within the press's digital marketing scheme. Found at www.nonpublishing.com, Now Or Never's website was originally outsourced to a small Coquitlam based company called Digital Art Designs Ltd. Very basic in structure, the website hosted multiple pages with an identical list structure, with various tabs available for upcoming titles, new releases, the backlist, and author profiles. These repeating pages listed ISBN numbers and prices beneath each book's description, but at the time of the report, the costs associated with single unit shipping prevented the company from offering direct purchasing through the website. Although the staff at Now Or Never is extremely dedicated and updates their author bios and title lists promptly, very little was being done to promote consumer engagement. Minus a twitter feed, social media connection, or blog, the only means of engagement the website allowed was an unused comments section on the bottom of each page. Given this lack of interaction and subsidiary information, the Peters Report ultimately classified Now Or Never's website

²⁶ Taylor, Martin, "The 8 Essential Digital Marketing Tools," *Digital Publishing 101*. <http://digitalpublishing101.com/digital-marketing-101/digital-marketing-toolbox/the-7-essential-digital-marketing-tools/>.

as more of “an online portfolio of the publisher’s works”²⁷ than the center of a marketing strategy.

Due to the less than complete state of the site, the Peters report concluded that the domain was being severely under utilized and was unlikely to garner the press any widespread attention. To correct the functionality of the site and attract greater visibility, the author suggested a complete overhaul of the existing website layout. The report recommended that nonpublishing.com be updated to include greater engagement tactics and increased SEO, and that detailed analytics be undertaken. The following paragraphs will thus look more closely at each of these respective recommendations in attempts to document the press’s progress in these areas.

Metadata

In order to increase the number of potential consumers visiting the site, the Peters report recommended that Now Or Never rework the site to utilize meta data “to allow for a greater degree of SEO”²⁸ or search engine optimization. Composed of detailed descriptors called meta tags, metadata greatly increases a company’s chances of being discovered online through the searching of relevant criteria. Since Now Or Never’s website was lacking metadata, their web visitors were likely already aware of the press or its authors and actively searching, thus preventing the domain from effectively expanding its potential audience.

Over the last year, the Now Or Never Publishing website has remained more or less the same, with minor updates in author bios and book lists marking the only visible

²⁷ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 30.

²⁸ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 43.

changes. The press is, however, currently in the process of correcting this oversight. In a recent proposal for Digital Art Designs Ltd., a series of revisions for the domain were decided upon, the first of which focused directly on SEO. The proposition authorizes the website design firm to improve the site's use of meta data and even offers a list of applicable terms to help the press find "a more spontaneous, stumble upon market."²⁹

Engagement

In 2014, the Now Or Never website lacked any legitimate way of catching or creating audience interaction and attention as well. Besides the aforementioned descriptions and biographies, there was nothing on the website to hold a visitor or help transform them into a consumer. To correct this, the Peters report recommended that the press look into adding social media and forums for updates and discussion. Having a "Twitter feed or RSS feed that could be partnered with updates or blog posts"³⁰ could go a long way in making the site a place where potential consumers could get acquainted with the brand and form a solid community of returning readers. The validity of this critique can be seen in the success of other small publishers whose websites read as highly active spaces of participation and commonality. If Now Or Never wishes to compete for a larger market against presses with greater visibility, such as Anvil Press or Arsenal Press, it must give its readers more uniquely identifiable content to interest them.

As such, this website proposal outlines several key actions that the publisher is currently negotiating. First, the proposal requests that Digital Art Designs Ltd. insert a Twitter feed sidebar to help connect the two marketing strategies and keep the website

²⁹ Now Or Never Website Updates Proposal, 2015.

³⁰ Peters, Amanda. "The Porthole View," 30.

more contemporary. It further requests the addition of a blog section with an enabled comments archive and detailed metadata. Updated daily or weekly, this section is to be designed as an endless scroll or drop down menu and will “include updates on author and company news, awards, events, contests, as well as general industry news and controversies. It [may] also include small poems or short stories that have been submitted as extra publicity for authors.”³¹ With the addition of more creative and informative content, the Now Or Never website will increase its visibility and expand the scope of its marketing outreach. With more articles and material, consumers will be more likely to find the domain and readers more likely to share and interact with the content. This as a whole, will help the company’s website to function as it should – as the social headquarters of its online outreach program.

Analytics

In contrast to the previous two, the report’s third and final website recommendation focused less on the functionality of the domain, and more on the utilization of analytics as a means of increasing accuracy. The Peters report highlighted the failure of Now Or Never Publishing to capture information through any analytics program and strongly recommended that the company devote time to understanding the “information captured by Google Analytics”.³² Analytics data gathered from the website would help provide the publishing house with insights into who was visiting their site and who was going on to purchase their products. Providing the basis of a customer profile,

³¹ Now Or Never Website Updates Proposal, 2015.

³² Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 46.

this data could help Now Or Never tailor both its products and marketing, effectively reducing the time and resources spent reaching out to the wrong demographic.

As of Fall 2015, Now Or Never's neglect for its website analytics has remained the same. With such a large workload spread across so few, the staff does not devote any time to website analytics and as a result, it is wholly overlooked. In order to successfully expand its audience, however, Now Or Never needs to be totally informed and aware of its intended market. Since Google Analytics is free for sites with fewer than 10 million hits a month, it is in the press's best interest to make the time to better understand their readers. If Now Or Never continues to disregard the benefits of Google Analytics and refuses to let it "lay the groundwork for, and influence, [their] publishing decisions,"³³ the company risks squandering a very valuable means of outreach.

Further Progress

Though not specifically recommended in the Peters report, Now Or Never Publishing is also planning on improving the website's ability to purchase. While it is still not feasible for the press to sell directly through the site, listing ISBN numbers and prices is a somewhat clunky substitute and forces buyers to open multiple tabs. In the proposal, the company is looking to amend this inconvenience through the addition of "links to the main buying channels including amazon.ca and chapters.indigo.ca"³⁴ underneath the descriptions of each individual title. Having these direct links means that consumers will be able to purchase books without having to search for an ISBN or go through LitDistCo's clunky portal. It will lessen the amount of time between a

³³ Woll, Thomas. *Publishing For Profit*. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2014), 28.

³⁴ Now Or Never Website Updates Proposal, 2015.

consumer's intent to purchase and the completion of the transaction, and is therefore likely to improve the company's number of single unit and spontaneous sales overall.

It is important to note that at the time of the current report, however, this proposal has yet to be implemented. Regardless, the items in the proposal represent a progressive step forward for the small press, and if undertaken, stand to drastically improve Now Or Never's digital marketing platform.

SOCIAL MEDIA: FACEBOOK

According to the publisher, social media is fast becoming one of the most important tools in his arsenal and is often more effective in reaching potential consumers than physical mail outs or other traditional forms of marketing. In the fiscal year of 2014, however, the press's social media accounts were reporting fairly low levels of loyalty and engagement. Neither the Now Or Never Facebook page, nor the associated Twitter account, were effectively drawing in a significant audience, and as a result, the Peters report suggested that a greater degree of effort be put into the maintaining and updating of all social media channels.

Engagement

During the writing of the Peters report, both the publisher and the Director of PR and Marketing were running the Now Or Never Facebook page, yet from the months of January 2014 to October 2014 only 26 posts were recorded. Despite the admitted value of social media to online outreach, this data sample suggested a lack of dedication towards the upkeep and maintenance of the channel. At the time, engagement was also extremely

low, with an average post reach of “approximately forty-two people [...] [and] a total of twenty-three likes and two shares”³⁵ within the same ten-month period. While some of this deficit can likely be attributed to the Director of PR and Marketing’s maternity leave during this time frame, the Peters report pointed the finger at the company’s most limited commodity: time. The report suggests that a lack of time was preventing the company from discovering what types of posts were most effective in capturing audience attention and participation. As such, it recommended that the press specifically devote time to experimenting with trial and error in order to gain “a greater understanding of the kind of outreach that [would] honestly benefit the company.”³⁶

Since the conclusion of the Peters report, Now Or Never Publishing has taken the first steps towards rectifying this lack of engagement on their Facebook page, but more consistency is needed. In a similar ten-month span from November 2014 to September 2015, the company recorded forty-four posts, eighteen more than the previous time frame. At the same time, Now Or Never has seen a significant increase in the reach of its posts as well. Up from an average reach of forty-two, post visibility has jumped 64.2% to a mean of sixty-nine people.³⁷ While these numbers are still small, the visible increase is a great reassurance, and can feasibly be traced to several sources. On one hand, this upward trend is likely the result of increased author platforms and popularity. The more one of Now Or Never’s authors is in the spotlight, the greater the possibility that their fans and readers will want to follow the press’s Facebook page and stay up to date. At the same time, this progress can also be linked to the Peters report recommendation to increase trial and error experimentation with post content. In the last few months, Now

³⁵ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View, 31.

³⁶ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 46.

³⁷ Now Or Never Publishing Facebook Insights Page.

Or Never Publishing started to follow this recommendation in order to help determine exactly what types of content their users are interested in reading, liking, and potentially sharing.

In the previous year, the press focused its posts almost entirely on author updates, reviews, and reminders of upcoming events and book releases. Such posts have extremely short circles of influence, however, and are unlikely to extend beyond the homepages and trade circles that currently make up Now Or Never's market. This is evident in the insights data from both the previous and current year, with posts specific to the press and its authors often boasting the least engagement from the page's 293 followers. The ineffectuality of these types of posts suggests that Now Or Never's Facebook followers are not looking to be constantly and blatantly sold to through their social media, but rather entertained. Working from this theory, the press has begun to experiment with posting a wider variety of content based less in self-promotion and more in general interest and current events, with surprising results. The chart below graphs the visibility of Now Or Never's Facebook posts from June 2015 to August 2015, and highlights the page's generally low reach.

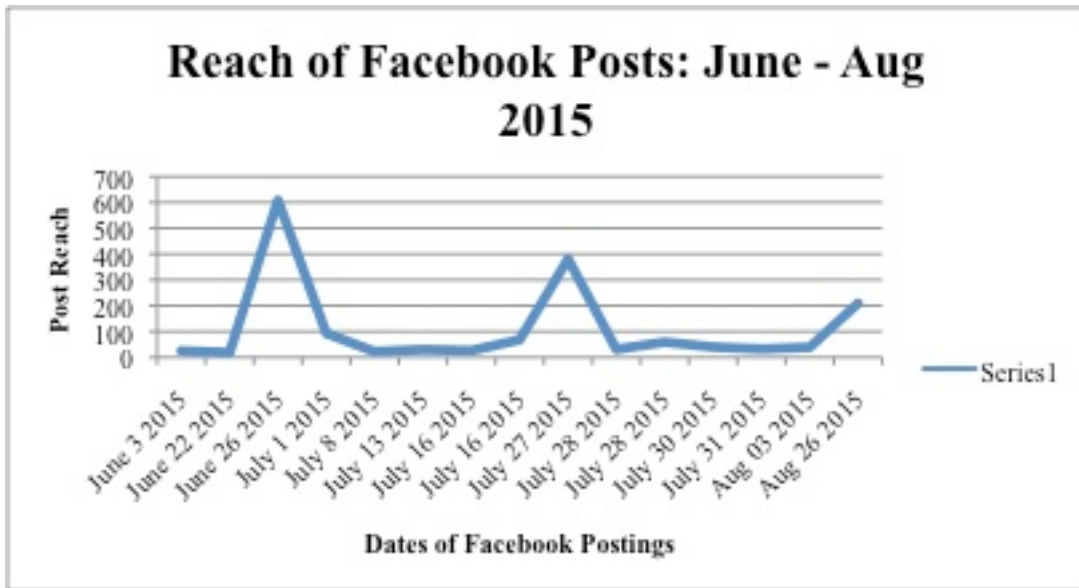


Figure 4: Now Or Never Facebook Post's reach, June – August 2015³⁷

In this three-month span just fifteen posts were made on the page, with the majority of them failing to exceed a reach of 80 people, and only four posts coming close to or exceeding 100. Each of these more successful posts, however, can be interpreted as a direct result of Now Or Never's experimentation with post content. With promotional pieces making up the majority of low ranking posts, the spikes on the graph can be traced to those dealing with relevant and timely information. On June 26, the company released a post of previously banned books in support of Gay Marriage, and received their highest levels of engagement at 20 likes and a reach of 608. On July 1, a Canada Day post garnered the press 4 likes, and a reach of 93, while a discussion of revenue minimums within the Canadian literary Industry on July 27 led to 3 likes, 1 share, and a reach of 381. On the 26 of August, this trend continued with a post dedicated to famous authors and their pets released in celebration of National Dog day that reaped 6 likes and a reach of 209. Each of these posts works to connect book publishing with events in the real

world that their consumers care about or show interest in. They also take advantage of hash tags to increase their visibility, which is something that many of the promotional posts tend to lack. By integrating the company's Facebook page with movements and cultural topics that already have a strong online following, Now Or Never is able to drastically increase its perceived relevance within the greater community, as well as its visibility. In order to continue improving, the press should try to follow the general rule of 75/25, wherein 75% of a company's posted content deals with related industry topics and events, and only 25% in self-promotion. By doing so, the press would help ensure reader interest, while simultaneously providing consumers with a greater sense of the company's personality.

These minor successes show that measurable improvements are possible in this channel, if Now Or Never can find the time to continue on in this experimentation. And yet, despite these promising steps forward and the publisher's own acknowledgement of the platform's importance, it appears as if the page is once more being neglected. As of the completion of this report, only one post had been made to the page in the months of September, October, and November of 2015. The publisher has not continued his trial and error posting, and has failed to promote multiple author book launches, readings, interviews, and reviews. Given the company's promise to promote its author's through this channel, this disregard for the Facebook page is detrimental to Now Or Never's digital marketing strategies and is doing nothing to help bolster expected sales.

Facebook Insights Page

In the Peters report, it was also recommended that the press utilize the Facebook Insights page, which “allows its users a good perspective on the kind of attention any one page [...] actually receives.”³⁸ Although the company does not at this time regularly make use of this tool, a brief analytics report was executed in July 2015 that outlined the beginning of the results found above. The analytics report documented the company’s Facebook posts throughout June and July, before concluding that the press look “for cultural or industry related news and events to promote, share, or comment on in the hopes of expanding [its] digital outreach in this channel.”³⁹

The report also developed a basic profile of Now Or Never’s 293 Facebook followers, a valuable means of market research for a company with admittedly little understanding of their base consumer. According to the Insights page, the majorities of Now Or Never’s Facebook followers are female, between the ages of 25 – 44, and overwhelmingly located in Toronto and Vancouver.⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, the majority of non-followers reached were of similar age, gender, and location as well, giving the press a fairly concrete demographic to target in this channel. Given this information, Now Or Never should be able to more specifically appeal to their followers, with for example, promotion of events or industry news local to their areas. This data also highlights the press’s current inability to effectively capture a significant male or millennial Facebook audience, thus providing the company with several specific markets at which to target their outreach.

³⁸ Now Or Never Website Updates Proposal, 2015.

³⁹ Now Or Never Facebook Analytics Report, July 27 2015.

⁴⁰ Now Or Never Website Updates Proposal, 2015.

Despite the value of this information, it should be noted that the analytics offered by Facebook are fairly vague, and not necessarily indicative of the consumers actually purchasing books. To develop a more legitimate and accurate market profile, Now Or Never must engage with all available tools of analytics, and do so regularly.

Facebook's Ad Functions

Given the company's low engagement in 2014, the Peters report concluded its Facebook analysis with a recommendation for Now Or Never to make use of the website's ad functions. Through this service, Now Or Never would be able to circulate ads promoting its own "website at a minimum of \$5.00/day depending on the number of clicks"⁴¹ incited. With more than a billion users, the potential benefits of buying ad space on Facebook are apparent, and could potentially increase traffic to the site greatly.

As of fall 2015, however, Now Or Never Publishing has yet to invest in Facebook ad space. Though strongly recommended in the previous report, such ads are not likely to fully benefit the company in its current position. With the website still awaiting reconstruction and a lack of proper analytics practices in place, Now Or Never will not be able to determine how effective this marketing tactic is at drawing sales. Until the website is functioning at full capacity and a consistent measurement system has been enforced, it is potentially more prudent for the press to preserve its tight budget for reliable, significant strategies.

⁴¹ Peters, Amanda. "The Porthole View," 47.

SOCIAL MEDIA: TWITTER

Besides Facebook, Now Or Never’s online marketing strategy focuses almost entirely on the other social media behemoth: Twitter. Though boasting less than half the number of users, Twitter is a valuable tool as its “immediacy, easy link-sharing, [and] conversational style”⁴² work quickly to attract like-minded enthusiasts and garner attention. According to the Peters report, Now or Never Publishing’s past presence on Twitter was fairly sporadic. Although the company joined the site in May 2013, the press did not begin tweeting until November of the same year. Despite this late start, Now Or Never ultimately managed to find success through this platform and developed a loyal following of 853 followers by October 2014.⁴³ During this time frame, the company worked diligently to curate their feed, tweeting an average of ten to twenty posts a month on upcoming and new releases and author events, as well as retweeting relevant reviews and comments from a variety of sources.

Much like the company’s Facebook page, however, the @NONPublishing twitter feed generally suffered from a lack of “continued engagement.”⁴⁴ At the conclusion of the Peters report and with the advent of the Director of PR and Marketing’s maternity leave, the number of tweets dropped from fairly regular to zero for the month of October, thus allowing the press to slip from public sight. This in turn led to a recommendation for increased dedication to the platform, lest Now Or Never fail to utilize one of its strongest means of outreach.

⁴² Now Or Never: Author Resource Package, 2015

⁴³ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 32.

⁴⁴ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 46.

Over the last ten months, Now Or Never Publishing has worked towards improving the consistency of its Twitter account, but the strength and timeliness of the feed can still be seen as overwhelmingly intermittent. With an increase of only thirty-five followers and a total of tweets now resting at 244, the available numbers show a general downward trend despite the press’s previous progress.

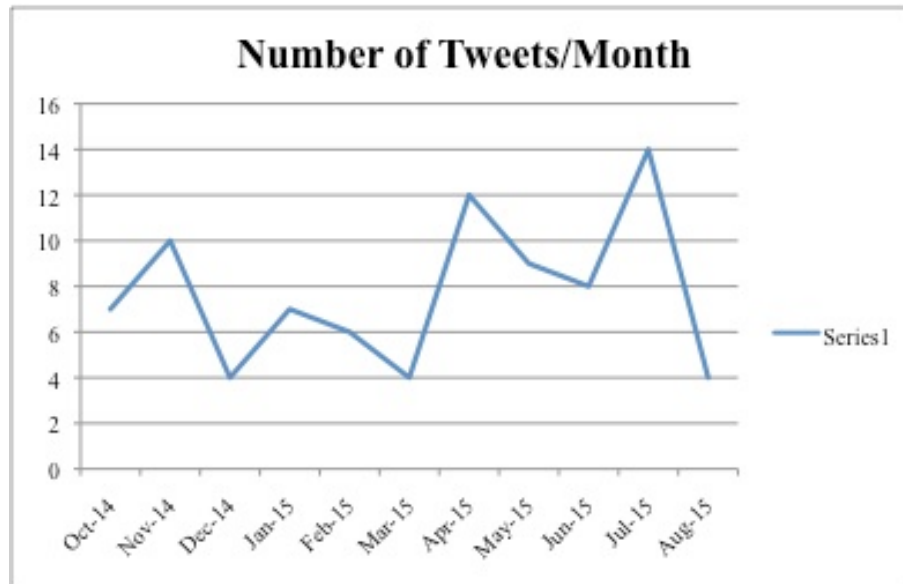


Figure 5: @NONPublishing Tweets per Month, Oct 2014 – Aug 2015⁴⁵

While the Peters report recorded an average of ten to twenty tweets a month during the given time span, the succeeding ten months show a much lower average of approximately seven tweets per month. At the completion of this report, however, this number dropped even further, with the feed showing zero activity since mid October. While the feed had been used to promote several author events and reviews before this date, the overall decline of this channel suggests a general failure to capitalize on the ease of connectivity and outreach that Twitter provides for its users. Since this drop occurred

⁴⁵ Now Or Never Publishing Twitter Feed, Accessed September 20, 2015.

around the same time as in the previous year, the sudden neglect of social media can likely be attributed to the time of year as well. With book creation and sales being finalized in September and October for the Fall season, the small press sacrifices its marketing in favor of more pressing editorial and production concerns. Seen through this view, the company's failure to post frequently can thus be seen as yet another consequence of its limited staff and boutique status.

This trend is further echoed in the feed's fairly low increase of followers as well. Though 888 represents a decent following, the press has only gained 35 followers in the last ten and a half months, hard evidence that Now Or Never is not effectively expanding its digital outreach audience, let alone its consumer market. Engagement on the company's tweets has remained low as well, with the majority of postings receiving little more than a couple of retweets or the odd favourite. Limited in both reach and impact, the company's Twitter account is thus not living up to its potential as a marketing tool. To rectify this, Now Or Never Publishing needs to set a minimum number of tweets per month, and similarly devote themselves to figuring out what types of content will better attract and engage new followers. The publisher may also wish to consider switching the profile pictures of his personal and corporate accounts as well. While his personal account boasts the company's logo, the corporate feed shows a family photo that while speaking to the intimate, home-grown nature of the company, does not help promote the press's professional branding. By making these changes, Now Or Never stands to become more visible in this channel and across social media, thus helping to build a strong and stable consumer base.

EXTERNAL DATA DISTRIBUTION

As a secondary component to the above recommendations, the Peters report advocated strongly for the improvement of communication networks outside of, and within, Now Or Never Publishing. With such a small staff working remotely, the publishing house placed total responsibility for organization, communication, and the enforcement of deadlines on the publisher's shoulders. Such a system greatly improves the chances of miscommunication and uncertainty across a team, and as such, the report went on to suggest a total reworking of the press's "methods of data distribution"⁴⁶ in regards to internal communications and social media posting.

Hootsuite

As previously established, Now Or Never Publishing's greatest struggle when it comes to social media promotion is the consistency of the act. With limited staff and even more limited time, the press is often unable to give these platforms the attention needed to ensure success. As a result, the company is faced with low engagement and limited visibility, both of which hamper the press's ability to actively compete in the general market. In consideration of this fact, the Peters report recommended "streamlining the process of updating Now Or Never's Facebook and Twitter feeds [...] in order to cut down on the amount of time required to disseminate the necessary updates."⁴⁷

According to the report, this would best be done through the use of Hootsuite, an affordable time saving service. Since the staff is so small, the company needs to put a greater emphasis on delivering their content efficiently and effectively, a task for which

⁴⁶ Coleman, Alison, "Small Publishers are benefiting," 2014.

⁴⁷ Peters, Amanda. "The Porthole View," 36.

Hootsuite, a social media manager, is perfect. Designed to handle up to one hundred social media networks, Hootsuite is able to launch and update campaigns, collect analytics, and queue up to three hundred and fifty posts for automatic dissemination. With a free basic package that includes three networks, basic analytics, two RSS feeds, basic message scheduling, and an available business upgrade for \$9.99 a month,⁴⁸ the service is a great match for an independent press with a restrictive budget and an inconsistent posting habit.

Unfortunately, as of September 2015, Now Or Never Publishing has no specific plans to implement this system. Despite the program's obvious benefits, the press's concerns reside around budget and necessity. Given the low engagement and activity across the company's social media, Now Or Never likely feels that such a management system is unwarranted, and best reserved for a time when the press has amassed a greater following. Despite these reservations, it cannot be denied that Hootsuite would help the company maintain greater consistency across its Twitter and Facebook channels, while simultaneously providing analytics data vital to market research. Because of this, Now Or Never should not rush to reject the program, but rather take advantage and experiment with Hootsuite's free services. Since this system would ultimately help Now Or Never more effectively invest its time in digital marketing, it is highly recommended that the small press implement Hootsuite for the betterment of its social media platforms.

MailChimp

Beyond testing Hootsuite, the Peters report suggested that Now Or Never Publishing look into MailChimp. MailChimp is an online service that allows users to

⁴⁸ Hootsuite 'Plans' Page. <http://Hootsuite.com/plans/free>.

“send marketing emails, automated messages, and targeted campaigns,”⁴⁹ while also capturing analytics data to support improvement. The system allows for up to ten authorized posters per account, and is an excellent means of both streamlining and delegating data distribution. MailChimp comes with a variety of packages as well, allowing company’s to find the services and associated prices that best suit their needs. In 2014, the Peters report recommended that Now Or Never sign up for the most basic MailChimp account, which offers the “ability to send up to twelve thousand emails per month to a subscriber list of up to two thousand unique individuals at no cost.”⁵⁰ With this package, businesses are able to design email campaigns from flexible templates, build up their subscriber list, and gain comparative insights from free reports. It also provides users with automatic sign-up and unsubscribe forms, ensuring that all email campaigns done through the program meet the requirements of Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation.

Given Now Or Never’s penchant for mail-out marketing, the benefits and convenience of MailChimp were especially convincing. In July 2015, the company joined the management site, and on September 17 2015, Now Or Never Publishing released its first quarterly email newsletter.⁵¹ Simple and to the point, the company’s Enewsletter is designed to promote upcoming releases and events, backlisted titles, and persuasive reviews. To keep consistency across all outreach platforms, the campaign has a black and white color scheme that echoes the design of the press’s website, and a wide banner that clearly features the brand’s name. With links to buying channels, social media accounts,

⁴⁹ MailChimp ‘About’ Page. <http://mailchimp.com/about/>.

⁵⁰ Peters, Amanda. “*The Porthole View: Marketing to the Masses Through the Little Window*,” (Master’s Project Report, Simon Fraser University, 2014), 44.

⁵¹ See Appendix.

reviews, and the website, the Enewsletter is much more dimensional as well, exemplifying the ways in which the small press is working to improve the functionality of its digital outreach platforms.

Originally building off an imported email list of nearly two thousand contacts from the publisher's personal Gmail, the opt-in forms and permission renewals inherent within MailChimp have helped the publisher parse down his mailing list to approximately six hundred.⁵² Though a significant decrease, this list cleansing allows the publisher to better tailor his message to his audience by preventing the press from wasting time appealing to uninterested audiences. This also provides Now Or Never with a more accurate depiction of its current networks; clarifications that will help the company develop realistic action plans and goals for future expansion. If the press knows the limits of its current outreach strategies in more detail, it has a much higher chance of strengthening areas of weakness and improving its strategy across all channels.

INTERNAL DATA DISTRIBUTION

One of the greatest concerns voiced in the Peters report centered on the internal distribution practices in place at Now Or Never Publishing. Since purchasing the small press over ten years ago, publisher Chris Needham had taken on the majority of responsibility in nearly every aspect of the company. At the time of the Peters report he was noted as being the sole source of communication between his isolated staff and the only enforcer of submission and project deadlines. Beyond the everyday managerial and financial responsibilities of a publisher, he also participated heavily in many of the steps

⁵² Email correspondence with Chris Needham. September 24, 2015.

required to bring a book from manuscript acceptance to publication. This, coupled with his role as gatekeeper of all information dissemination for marketing and sales, consequently led to an extremely unbalanced workload and a very publisher-centric, and dependant, means of functioning.

To combat this dependence, and the vulnerability it posed if the publisher were to temporarily be out of commission, the Peters report strongly recommended the introduction of internal networks of communication existing independently from the head of the company. In broader terms, this meant a total restructuring of staff engagement via the creation of greater channels of communication and a more detailed “division of labour.”⁵³ The creation of a company wide, well-defined schedule, for example, would help relieve the publisher of a significant amount of administrative stress, while simultaneously ensuring that the each member of the team was of one mind. At the same time, offering staff members a more comprehensive list of duties and expectations would allow the company to shift its workload from the publisher’s shoulders, to a more even and thus efficient allocation of tasks. According to the Peters Report, these internal data networks “lay the groundwork for future expansion and success,”⁵³ and must be in place if the company hopes to successfully manage a larger market demand.

Despite the validity of these recommendations in the face of Now Or Never’s intended expansion into the general market, the press has not at this time implemented any new organizational or communication based structures within the company. In a brief interview with the publisher in May 2015, he revealed that at present, there was not enough going on internally to warrant the introduction of a weekly company wide memo

⁵³ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 40.

or other additional form of communication. The publisher prefers handling communications and deadlines himself, and given the press's current three to four books a season, posits that he is more than capable of managing the press's deadlines and projects. A similar reaction was had to the suggestion of an overarching schedule for each season as well, with the implication being that at present, such an endeavor would waste time rather than save it. The truth in these statements can be seen in the publishing house's continued ability to coordinate and meet industry deadlines, but the company should look towards being proactive. When Now Or Never captures a larger market, the company will be able to sign more authors and potentially increase their booklist per season. To prepare for such an advent, the press should look towards these recommendations and put the processes of streamlining data distribution in place, before it becomes a necessity.

Author Resource Package

Despite limited internal communication, Now Or Never's greatest strength is the genuine, personal interaction that it has with its authors. With the publisher communicating directly with each individual author, the press is better able to meet its clients' needs and absolve concerns that may arise during the publishing process. Noting the value of such relationships, the press recently took steps to further improve in this area. In the summer of 2015 the company developed the previously mentioned Author Resource Package, a document and questionnaire meant to clarify and articulate author-publisher exchanges. Designed in-house, the document is meant to act as an introduction to Now Or Never Publishing as a business and to the industry as a whole. Given Now Or

Never's dedication to nurturing new talent, the package works to clarify and reassure, outlining what the writer can reasonably expect from the press in terms of support, editing, and promotion. These services vary slightly book to book, but always include "full editorial services and support throughout the publication process [,][...] professional covers"⁵⁴ and extensive online and physical marketing. Despite its small size, the company is extremely committed to making each of its titles a success, and this promise can be found in the various guarantees of launch parties, digital promotion, print publicity, and never ending support.

Beyond outlining Now Or Never's professional guarantees, the document also spends considerable time explaining the author's responsibilities both to the press and to their own title. To simplify the cycle, the package divides the publishing process into three distinct periods of time: pre publication, publication, and post publication. Each of these sections then lists a number of expectations for author time and commitment, such as continual self-promotion and networking. Due to Now Or Never's limited resources, the press is dependent upon author participation to support its marketing tactics, making the Author Resource Package a key means of ensuring a working partnership. As such, the document also includes a comprehensive questionnaire meant to subsidize all author and book promotion. Beginning with basic author information, the questionnaire covers everything from title themes and inspirations to marketing logistics like popular bookstores and potential tour and launch locations. This survey is vital as it garners Now Or Never "an enormous amount of information for the marketing staff"⁵⁵ and helps boost the company's publicity efforts. The details of this document allow Now Or Never to

⁵⁴ Now Or Never: Author Resource Package, 2015

⁵⁵ Woll, Thomas. *Publishing For Profit*, 224.

clearly and efficiently communicate with its authors, and can consequently be seen as streamlining one form of the company's data distribution. Since the press has just recently implemented this communication structure, however, the benefits of such a system cannot yet be confirmed.

ANALYSIS: PHYSICAL OUTREACH STRATEGIES

*“In publishing, which is both a highly competitive and a “sensitive” industry in most countries, publishers, printers, distributors, and sellers of intellectual property have to take into account special and sometimes onerous considerations. Publishing can be both global and personal in its impact.”*⁵⁶

While digital outreach and online marketing strategies have come a long way in helping the small press compete, the independent publishing house’s greatest tool is still often the local community that surrounds it. With the identity of a small publisher almost always intrinsically linked to its geographical and cultural location, such presses tend to be vital components of their local artistic communities. Based in Vancouver with a secondary audience in Toronto, Now Or Never Publishing resides in twin hubs of local, creative support, helping to complete and promote the Canadian voice. This, coupled with the press’s boutique sizing and laid back attitude, allows the small press to be relatable and accessible in ways unavailable to corporate houses. With such vibrant and engaged local communities surrounding it, Now Or Never has an ideal means of physical outreach at its disposal. Yet, in an oversight similar to the company’s treatment of its digital outreach, certain elements of the press’s physical marketing strategies have been consistently under utilized.

In 2014, the Peters report conducted a top down analysis of Now Or Never Publishing’s physical outreach strategies before ultimately urging the publishing house to “consider using its own local community [...] to promote itself and gain a greater

⁵⁶ Hancox, Ralph. *Managing the Publishing Process*. (Vancouver: CCSP Press, 2007), 185.

reputation.”⁵⁷ At the time, the press was only partially engaged with this channel, often focusing on the relatively more convenient and cost efficient digital strategies instead. Given the small size and limited reach of the company, however, the report reiterated the importance of Now Or Never’s ability to capitalize off its local audience. Since Now Or Never doesn’t have the means to reach audiences globally, its local community represents the most likely source of support and expansion for the company, if it can figure out how to effectively reach them.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

Although the Peters report saw Now Or Never’s marketing as highly location-based and consequently limited, it simultaneously recognized the importance of regional support and urged the small press to increase its local visibility through a variety of means. One of the simplest methods of physical outreach for a small publisher is local distribution and book placement. Vancouver is filled with a number of independent bookstores that tend to develop loyal consumer followings. These small businesses are often struggling against conglomerate counterparts as well, making them ideal business partners for small publishers. With this in mind, the Peters report subsequently urged Now Or Never to build partnerships with “local, privately owned book stores to secure better product placement”⁵⁸ and increase company visibility in these areas.

Unfortunately, while the idea of forming partnerships with local bookstores sounds reasonable in theory, Now Or Never is not at this time in a position to barter for terms. With no budget available to compete in bids for co-op or placement, the small

⁵⁷ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 41.

⁵⁸ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 37.

press does not currently have the guaranteed sales necessary to make a partnership viable or realistic. The rejection of this recommendation does not, however, imply a total dismissal of this channel. Rather, Now Or Never has devoted the last several years to fostering relationships with local businesses in other, less binding ways. With a stated spotlight on local authors, the publisher of Now Or Never recognizes the value of his regional community and subsequently strives to place the press's titles in as many local bookstores as possible. The books listed on the company's website appear in brick and mortar stores across Canada, and appear with heavier placement in the hometowns and surrounding locations of their respective authors. The press often does its best to contact local independent stores when certain titles match the genre or subject matter of the other's business model as well, further helping to expand a book's expected reach. Despite the lack of a specific placement contract, Now Or Never has had visible success in reaching out to establishments such as Little Sisters Bookstore in Vancouver, and Book City in Toronto. Since the company is able to place books through a multitude of local platforms without binding itself long term, it is not necessarily fitting for Now Or Never to enter into partnerships at this time.

Instead, what the press may want to focus on is an increased effort to expand the number of storefronts in its repertoire. Although Now Or Never has managed to get its titles into numerous bookstores across Canada, the company could stand to improve these numbers through the creation of a sales catalogue. As of 2015, Now Or Never Publishing does not have its own catalogue to distribute to prospective businesses, relying instead on the Literary Press Group of Canada's (LPG) seasonal catalogue to extend its sales parameters. While the publisher praises his membership in the LPG with providing the

company vital “access to sales teams and distribution,”⁵⁹ the average BNC CATALIST hosts over two hundred titles per issue. This places the three or four books produced by Now Or Never in a vast pool of competition and severely reduces the booklist’s visibility in the eyes of potential retailers. Having an independent catalogue distributed to local bookstores, as well as the LPG catalogue, would therefore increase Now Or Never’s discoverability, and potentially, its physical distribution as well.

Post-Secondary Institutions

Given Now Or Never’s stated mission to produce quality Canadian content and alternative perspectives, many of the press’s titles would make excellent contributions to literary studies. The Peters report thus identified a potential tertiary market for the company in the form of Canadian or “contemporary literature courses in post-secondary institutions.”⁶⁰ Although some transactions did take place on university campuses, analysis of the numbers ultimately indicated that the sales were due to titles being stocked in the general fiction section of campus bookstores, rather than in the required reading section.

At present, Now Or Never Publishing has not been able to expand into this market; meaning that an important academically based audience has yet to be reached in any impactful way. With such large populations residing at university campuses in both Vancouver and Toronto, Now Or Never should attempt to devote more effort into this physical channel and make use of all available networks. A prime example of currently untapped connections available to the company is Brett Josef Grubisic. Published by

⁵⁹ Email Correspondence with Chris Needham, September 10, 2015.

⁶⁰ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 21.

Now Or Never in 2014, Grubisic teaches English at the University of British Columbia, and could potentially recommend appropriate titles from the company's booklist for department classes, if not teach them himself. Though certainly not a requirement for publication, it would be prudent for Now Or Never to broach the subject with its authors if such possible networks exist. At a minimum, such discussions would help promote awareness of the press's titles beyond the strictly trade audience it currently entertains.

PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL EVENTS

In a strategy similar to its digital outreach program, Now Or Never Publishing has historically relied on participation in local events and on local platforms to increase its physical consumer following. Just as participation in online platforms has helped Now Or Never build a virtual following, so too has the company worked to build its local audience through public activity in community events. In the 2014 report, the company's dedication to this channel was almost wholly summarized by its participation in local workshops and literary fairs. As an active member of the Canadian literary community, Now Or Never regularly took part in the services and "professional development and networking seminars"⁶¹ offered by the Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia (ABPBC) and the Association of Canadian Publishers. The press strove to be a secondary presence at local writers' festivals and literary shows as well, often promoting its authors and seeking entry into every plausible venue and event.

Despite these efforts, however, the Peters report ultimately determined that such steps were having limited success in increasing the company's audience and sales. As

⁶¹ Peters, Amanda. "The Porthole View," 17.

such, the report recommended a change towards less traditional marketing opportunities in the form of a writing contest meant to “expand [the company’s] client base far beyond what it currently captures while also spreading its name.”⁶² Although not specifically outlined, the report suggested several ways of executing this contest, including partnering with a local creative writing program and charging entrants for the chance to be published in a winning anthology. Such a contest, it argued, would propel Now Or Never into the eye of the general public and allow the press to grow its audiences and reputation in much the same fashion as Anvil Press and the Vancouver-based 3 Day Novel Contest. Hosting “an annual young writers competition”⁶³ in partnership with a secondary institution or writing program could thus be a valuable tool for the company’s expansion. If carried out correctly, the contest would ensure strong bonds with the artistic community and a consistent talent pool, while simultaneously increasing the company’s visibility in the general market through a localized publicity stunt.

As of Fall 2015, however, Now Or Never Publishing has not implemented this marketing tactic, nor made any plans to do so in the near future. At present, the scope and time-consuming nature of such an endeavor acts as a deterrent for the small press. Given the minimal staffing and breadth of its current projects, the company has chosen to invest its efforts in the convenience and proven effectiveness of more traditional methods. Instead of taking a risk in this crucial stage of development, Now Or Never relies on the previously mentioned tactics of physical outreach to connect with its communities. Still an active member of the ABPBC, the press makes an effort to participate in as many relevant seminars as possible, and attends the AGMs somewhat consistently. Beyond

⁶² See Appendix.

⁶³ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 42.

helping the company strengthen its bonds with industry peers, attending conferences with subjects like ebook processing and marketing initiatives provides Now Or Never with the tools and insights necessary to better reach the general public.

Writers Festivals

In efforts to connect more directly with the general market, the company continues to participate in regional writers festivals as well, though often in a supporting role behind a given author or text. Since a large element of Now Or Never's publicity strategy focuses on providing authors with a spotlight at local festivals, the company does its best to arrange entry into all major events. This strategy has generally been a success for the press, and authors signed with the company have appeared and performed at highly regarded events across Canada, including The Canadian Festival of the Spoken Word, Word on the Street, and the Vancouver Writers Festival. In the last season, for example, Mark Sampson performed at the popular Kingston *Writersfest*. While these appearances tend to focus on the author over the publishing house, increased attention to one automatically increases the visibility of the other, and as a consequence, the likelihood of sales. As a result, promoting titles at these literary venues has become a vital platform for Now Or Never's physical outreach, and should continue to be developed looking forward.

Local Book Launches

The company also strives to place its authors in local locations for book tours and launches. While the press's limited resources restrict its ability to fund cross country

campaigns, Now Or Never Publishing works with its authors to find venues for book readings and launch parties that are easily accessible and affordable. These locations are often within driving distance of an author's hometown, and work in partnership with local businesses to reduce the costs associated with hosting an event. For this season, Now Or Never helped organize events for all three of its featured authors in or around their hometowns. Christian McPherson had a launch party at Pressed Books this September, and participated in the Factory Reading Series, while a launch at Fromagerie Elgin in Sudbury was organized for Mitchell Gauvin. For Jessica Wallace, this meant a book launch at McNally Robinson in October, and a second upcoming appearance in Edmonton at Audrey's Books in December. By choosing location specific venues for individual titles, the company is able to interact with its local communities and use those connections to gain greater publicity and visibility, without breaking its budget.

Related to this tactic, Now Or Never also works hard to place its authors on the platforms of other local content producers, such as small time TV or radio programs. Though this is much less likely to occur than a feature in a local newspaper or magazine, the press has had some minor success in this area, as can be seen by Christian McPherson's 2015 interview on CKCUFM radio.

MERCHANDISING

In almost every other consumer-based industry, certain brand names exist that have effectively marketed themselves and consequently dominated the market. The success of such companies has led some publishers to put a greater emphasis on developing instantaneous recognition of their press's name or logo. By becoming a

recognizable brand name, publishing houses theoretically stand to gain a consumer following that is loyal to the company, rather than to a given author or series.

With this in mind, the Peters report recommended that Now Or Never work to promote its own brand through the creation of “customized merchandise”⁶⁴ including tote bags, mugs, and badges. Known for its alternative, counter culture style, Now Or Never Publishing’s simple design and bold slogan make merchandising a logical and reasonable means of physical outreach. In order to utilize this channel and limit costs, the Peters report suggested the use of the outsourced service CafePress. Based online, CafePress allows its users to affordably customize pieces of merchandise with personalized logos or designs for physical and online sale. With low upfront costs and a maximum ten percent royalty deduction if sold through CafePress’s online storefront, the strengths of such a strategy are fairly obvious. Having recognizable products for sale or giveaway at local events, and as part of author contracts, would give Now Or Never an easy way to “cement the company’s name in the minds of the consumer.”⁶⁵ As a form of physical marketing, each purchase and distribution of the merchandise would increase the visibility of the brand, while simultaneously redirecting interest to the Now Or Never website or social media accounts.

Regardless of these potential benefits, Now Or Never Publishing has not directed any resources to the development of this physical outreach strategy. With the costs of product creation and warehousing to consider, the press does not feel that the positives of such a strategy would outweigh the negatives at this time. Given the press’s limited visibility and restricted consumer base, this is a wise move by the publisher, and is likely

⁶⁴ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 49.

⁶⁵ Email correspondence with Chris Needham. September 24, 2015.

saving the small press from wasting resources. Using merchandise to brand publishing houses is incredibly difficult and has generally only worked for larger publishers like Penguin Random House, who already have a wide following from which to profit. Even then, success in book publishing is most often determined by author reputation and genre, not publisher visibility. This, combined with Now Or Never's limited reach, means that the use of merchandise to promote the publishing house is unlikely to garner additional sales or readers at this time. As such, merchandizing should be treated as a supplementary form of profit and promotion to be undertaken only once the press has captured a large enough audience to make it financially viable.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

“By making use of all of the available resources listed in the above report, it should be possible for any publishing company with limited resources in the way of employee time and manpower to practically and efficiently use social media platforms, low-to no-cost online services, and low cost physical marketing techniques to make themselves more visible to their target consumers.”⁶⁶

Facing a lack of growth caused by an inability to effectively reach out and capture a larger audience, Now Or Never Publishing stands at what one of its authors might call a crossroads. It is evident, as highlighted in this report, that the last year has been a challenge for Now Or Never. With sales dropping, the small press has struggled to follow the given action plan outlined in the Peters report or otherwise successfully expand its potential market. While some crucial steps have been taken, in the form of increased analysis and digital outreach, most have not. The press has continued to develop strong, personal relationships with its authors throughout the editorial and production process. It has continued to release quality literary fiction and espouse a unique Canadian identity. It has taken the first steps into utilizing analytics information and updating its digital web platform, and it has successfully launched a recurring outreach strategy in the form of its newsletter.

And yet, despite these successes, Now Or Never Publishing has not reached the level of progress recommended by the Peters report. Since its conclusion, the press has failed to effectively capitalize off its local community through the implementation of unique or plentiful local events. Having declined the suggestion to host its own writing contest, and with an average of two physical events per title including the launch party,

⁶⁶ Peters, Amanda. “The Porthole View,” 53.

the press's physical outreach strategies are unlikely to garner wide spread attention or draw in a larger audience. Over the last year, Now Or Never has also had limited success when it comes to improving the content and consistency of its social media channels. With the number of posts at a stand on both Facebook and Twitter, it is clear that at present, social media marketing is not a top priority. The press is not devoting enough time or effort into these digital platforms, and is not utilizing these tools to their full potential.

And yet, these failures do not necessarily imply that the company itself has failed. Rather, the inability of Now Or Never Publishing to transform its marketing platform in accordance with the Peters report can mean one of two things. First, this may mean that it is simply unrealistic for a press of Now Or Never's stature to make the changes necessary to success in the given time frame. Consisting of only four employees, the press faces extreme limitations in time, and must often devote the majority of their available hours to editing, production, sales, and building author relationships. This, coupled with the press's grant funded budget, means that improving and testing new marketing tactics can only occur periodically, when employee time and funding are accessible. With such limited manpower and monetary resources, a boutique press like Now Or Never must make changes gradually, in which case the company's outreach tactics will only progress over time. At its core, this could also reflect an inherent marketing disadvantage unique to the small press that is unavoidable, and perhaps insurmountable. The company's restrictive twenty hour allotment for marketing outreach and task overlap between employees means that the press has very little to work with in regards to time, money, or person power. When you consider that 60% of that time is spent on chasing down

interviews and reviews that leaves only eight hours a title for Now Or Never to perfect its physical and digital strategies. When viewed under these circumstances, a total overhaul of marketing strategy like the one recommended in the Peters report becomes almost impossible, as can be seen in Now Or Never Publishing's current struggle.

This does not mean, however, that Now Or Never should disregard the entirety of Peters' message. Rather, the press should take the shortcomings acknowledged in this report and reevaluate her action plan to outline more realistic, and achievable, goals for the company. For example, it is evident that the press could still benefit from Peters' recommendation to improve the consistency and content of posts across all social media through the implementation of Hootsuite. With the ability to write posts in advance, set a posting schedule, and handle all accounts from one source, this social media manager would be a positive and effective change for the press. The findings of this report also agree with Amanda Peters' recommendation to continue developing the company website until it can function as the central hub of the digital marketing platform. By increasing the interactivity of the site and adding a blog and news section, Now Or Never stands to draw in more potential readers and achieve greater connectivity across its digital channels. The utilization of analytics data to improve marketing accuracy is also supported by this report, and is a resource that the press cannot afford to squander any longer.

Though the Peters report offers a multitude of additional recommendations for improvement, this report advises Now Or Never to focus on the three achievable and vital suggestions above, namely increasing social media consistency, developing the interactive nature of the website, and utilizing all available analytics data. Given the aforementioned difficulties and obstacles facing the small press, Now Or Never has a

greater chance of mastering its website and social media marketing than some of the more ambitious action plans, and is likely to see a measurable improvement in these areas in the shortest amount of time. These recommendations also provide the company with the most impact for the least amount of effort, something which the press's constraints demand. If Now Or Never limits its scope and focuses on these propositions, another year may yet see progress and growth.

With a four person outsourced team handling acquisitions, editing, production, and design on a less than full-time schedule, marketing has come to be a secondary priority for Now Or Never Publishing. Restricted by shoestring budgets and secondary jobs, the press is unable to devote the time or effort that its outreach platforms need, and as such, has been unable to fulfill the expectations of the Peters report at this time.

Although it remains to be seen if Now Or Never's challenges are a result of a too narrow time frame or are inherent to its boutique nature, the answer is likely somewhere in between. Until this small press actively prioritizes its marketing, its outreach will continue to suffer, as will its growth as a company. With a little spare time and the continued dedication of its talented staff, however, Now Or Never Publishing is guaranteed to surprise. As an edgy, in your face press built out of the sweat and passion of a like-minded group, only time will tell how this small publishing house makes the most of its big market.

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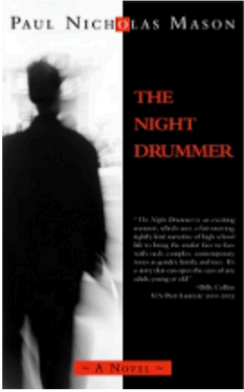
APPENDIX: newsletter samples

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New Releases



Featured Titles

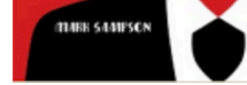




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depressing job, marking the beginning of a drift from one life to another.

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News and Reviews

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"By turns funny, sweet, raw and sad, *Meet You There* is a compelling portrait of a life in transition. Jessica Wallace's prose is strong and clear, and her crisply rendered characters vibrate with beautiful

Join author Christian McPherson for the launch of his novel *Saving Her* Saturday, September 26th at 7 pm at [Pressed](#) in Ottawa.

Author Spotlight



Christian McPherson

Mr. McPherson is the author of the poetry