

Emma Draude

Interview by Danuta Kean

If you read lifestyle magazines or newspapers or watch chat shows on TV you will have come across the work of Emma Draude – but you won't know who she is. And that is how the ebullient deputy managing director of Midas Public Relations likes it.

Draude is one of the most respected publicists in the business, responsible for campaigns that haven't just sold books but have changed images: her work on Peter Kay's *The Sound of Laughter* helped the comic break sales records for Christmas bestsellers; 'Queen of Clean' Kim Woodburn revealed she was more than a battleaxe with a loo brush; and Alan Titchmarsh was turned from gardening expert into 'Sexy Alan,' the romantic novelist, thanks to a campaign that included a nude shoot with only ferns to hide his modesty. Beyond celebrities, she has raised the profile – and sales – of some of the most admired fiction writers in the UK, including Penny Vincenzi, Lesley Pearce and Joan Brady.

Draude was marked as a high flyer from the day she started her first job as publicity assistant at Headline (she was offered the job a month before she finished her post-graduate publishing course). 'I was attracted to publicity because I liked the idea of creating a story for the author that forms the heart of their campaign. I also liked the social aspect of the job, organising dinners, parties and pitching,' she recalls. 'I still get a real buzz from seeing something I've pitched appear on TV or in a newspaper.'

Draude works predominantly with fiction, though she has carved out an enviable rep for winning column inches for celebrities with a memoir to push. 'With nonfiction your story is there and that is what you are pitching,' she explains. 'With fiction it is not necessarily the book that you are selling, it is the author. That is why I love working with fiction, selling the author's real life story to the reader.'

The role of publicist has changed substantially in the 16 years since Draude joined Headline – she moved to Midas in 1995 – though creating maximum awareness of a book and its author remains at the centre of the job. 'Even in the



DRAUDE: publicist/deputy managing director

The three musts:

- 1. Research both the market you are writing for and media you are pitching to. Don't just do a blanket release to everyone out there as it won't get picked up. And don't be afraid to follow up that first contact.**
- 2. Think about the quality of coverage you want. It's not about being everywhere. It is about being in the right outlets.**
- 3. If you have an in-house publicist make sure that you have a positive relationship with them. Give them material to work on and help them with any contacts you may have.**

last year it has changed massively.' For instance, Draude says, 'We are developing more online-only campaigns.'

Midas is on Twitter as well as other social networking websites, but she warns that authors should think strategically about the profile they want to build. 'I think that because Twitter is of the now, it can be overused. But, used appropriately, it can be a really powerful tool. It's a good way to create a community around you.'

One thing that has not changed is the amount of work book publicists do. In any other media industry, the budgets allocated to publicity are far higher and publicists are assigned to specific media outlets: online, television, radio or print. Book publicists work on minuscule budgets and deal with all media. As well as organising events, they also write press releases and handle media queries.

As soon as she knows she is working with a client, Draude analyses the needs of their campaign. 'You look at who their readers are and where they are, what they watch, read and listen to,' she explains. 'Then you create your plan. What you are trying to do is reach that market as quickly and effectively as possible.'

Though the recession means fewer launches, publishers *are* spending money on dinners and teas to promote authors. 'You are trying to create awareness of someone those invited will not have heard of,' Draude says. 'So you invite along literary and features editors, people who will have an opportunity to talk to your author and maybe write about them.'

As part of an agency, Draude's work with authors differs significantly to that of an in-house publicist. 'In-house you have such a huge roster of books being published all the time; it makes it hard to maintain focus on one author and build their profile constantly,' she says. Clients range from publishing houses looking for fresh input into an author's career, to authors unhappy with their publishing house's work, to self-published authors.

But there are no rivalries between Draude and her in-house contemporaries. 'It's a different role,' she says. And adds, finally: 'I do think that book publicists are the best publicists in the world.' ■