

# **Sell More Books!**

**Book Marketing and Publishing for Low Profile and Debut Authors  
Rethinking Book Publicity after the Digital Revolutions**

**(This pdf contains sample sections, including the table of contents, the entire introduction, chapter three, and part of chapter fourteen.)**

**J. Steve Miller and Cherie K. Miller**

**With Blythe Daniel, Brian Jud, John Kremer, and Stephanie Richards**

**Wisdom Creek Press, LLC**



## *What People Are Saying About Sell More Books!*

"Whether you're traditionally published or self-published, the author must do the promotion. This book provides solid guidance and is full of valuable tips."

- Dan Poynter, best-selling author of over 125 books and revisions, recognized authority on book marketing, promoting and distributing, author of *The Self-Publishing Manual*

"While there are many books out there that will give you the old clichés about how to market your book, none of them has the up-to-date expertise of Steve and Cherie Miller's *Sell More Books!* They not only know how to sell books in these times, but give easy explanations to both novice and long-time professional alike. If you buy one book to improve and update your book marketing skills, buy this one."

- A. Louise Staman, Editor of Tiger Iron Press, winner of ten national literary awards

"This book will be my desk reference for helping my book marketing clients sell more of their books. I will use it as a textbook to help student writing interns working with the *Georgia Writers Association* and will recommend it to our members. It is a valuable tool for authors in this digital environment, whether they are traditionally or self-published."

- Lisa M. Russell – freelance book marketer, online content writer and curricula writer – serves as administrator for the *Georgia Writers Association*, working in English Education at Kennesaw State University

"This book is chock full of helpful information, delightfully communicated. It's very user-friendly, no matter what stage of the writing/publishing/marketing process the author is in. I've read quite a few books on marketing your books and this one is by far the best. I can't wait to pass it on to my author friends!"

- Catherine McCall, blogger for *Psychology Today*, marriage and family therapist, author of *When the Piano Stops*

"Highly recommended! The Millers took a wealth of experience, knowledge, and research and packed them into one place. *Sell More Books!* takes the mystery out of marketing, and provides resources that would normally have taken weeks or months to uncover. Yet, for a typically 'boring but necessary' topic, they held my interest until the end. The face of publishing has changed, and whether you are an independent author or traditionally published, marketing is now the responsibility of the author. Every writer should own a copy."

- Eddie Snipes, President of the Christian Authors Guild, author of *I Call Him Dancer*

"Far from a rehash of the same old stuff, *Sell More Books!* gives the up-to-date details of how authors are actually selling books in a digital age. While the extensive research and careful documentation give it authority, the easy-to-read style and refreshing candor (e.g., personal marketing initiatives that sold no books at all) made it a delight to read."

- Lorilyn Roberts, media professional, author of *Children of Dreams*

"Steve and Cherie Miller have put together a powerful and much-needed resource for the 21st century author. In this competitive, fast-changing publishing environment, you can't go wrong if you follow their practical, proven advice on getting your book out there and noticed. The Millers are the best friends and mentors that today's motivated authors could ever have."

- Peter Wallace, host of "Day1" radio program and author of eight books, including *Living Loved* and *Connected*

*Sell More Books!* is an honest guide for authors full of candor, useful tools, and a bit of humor. The Millers blended all of these to provide a useful and easy-to-read book that will walk you through the complex maze of publishing on your journey to realize your dreams.

- Debra J. Slover, author of the U.N.I.Q.U.E. series of leadership development books for kids and adults

"I wish I'd had this book when I started writing mine. It takes a practical and insightful look at the author's entire process – from improving your writing to getting published to marketing your book. As a low profile author, I'm intimately acquainted with the unique challenges of building a platform from scratch. Steve and Cherie understand those challenges and give clear guidance to overcoming them."

- Danny Kofke, elementary special education teacher, author of *How to Survive (and Sometimes Thrive) on a Teacher's Salary*

***Dedication***

*To every author who ever wrote a great book that nobody ever buys,  
and to those writing a book that they fear will fall stillborn from the press*

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## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	6
Introduction.....	8

### Part I

#### Rethink Book Marketing in Light of the Revolutions

Chapter 1: Four Digital Revolutions that Can Make Nobodies Awesome.....	14
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### Part II

#### From Nobody to Somebody

#### Build Platforms with a Marketable Book and a Cool Online Presence

Chapter 2 – Why Market Your Book?.....	30
Chapter 3 – Write a Marketable Book.....	
Chapter 4 – Write a Title and Subtitle That Attracts Audiences.....	
Chapter 5 – Attract People with your Cover.....	
Chapter 6 – Publish through the Most Marketable Channel.....	
Chapter 7 – Get Lots of Blurbs from All Kinds of People.....	
Chapter 8 – Optimize Your Amazon and Barnes & Noble Pages.....	
Chapter 9 – Build a Professional Online Presence.....	
Chapter 10 – Submit Your Book to Contests.....	

### Part III

#### Let the World Know About Your Book

Chapter 11 – Check Your Attitudes toward Marketing.....	
Chapter 12 – Use Guiding Principles to Prioritize Initiatives.....	
Chapter 13 – Seek Early Reviews from Respected Book Review Sources.....	
Chapter 14 – Seek Reviews and Endorsements from Busy Blogs.....	

<b>Chapter 15 – Seek Reviews and Endorsements from Other Publications.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 16 – Attract Attention through Social Media.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 17 – Optimize Digital Sales.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 18 – Sell Your Book in Brick and Mortar Stores (Not Just Bookstores!)....</b>	
<b>Chapter 19 – Help Reporters and Journalists with their Articles.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 20 – Consider Radio (Even if You’re Shy!).....</b>	
<b>Chapter 21 – Consider Speaking (Even if You’re Shy!).....</b>	
<b>Chapter 22 – John Kremer’s Twelve Tips for Low-Profile Authors.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 23 – Bulk Sales Beyond the Bookstore: An Interview with Brian Jud.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 24 – Consider Press (News) Releases.....</b>	
<b>Chapter 25 – Sell Even <i>More</i> Books!.....</b>	
<b>Appendix 1 – Never Stop Learning! (Further Reading and Resources).....</b>	
<b>Appendix 2 – 200+ Ways that Low-Profile Authors Can Market Their Books.....</b>	
<b>Endnotes.....</b>	
<b>Index.....</b>	

## **Introduction**

### **Low Profile Authors Can Win!**

Today's publishing world caters to celebrities and established authors with vast followings. Query a traditional publisher and she'll want to know who you are and why readers would buy your book. As one publisher recently said, "We...are looking for authors with a 'platform' (isn't everyone?!)." How discouraging. Apparently, they're not looking for me.

This book is for the rest of us, the non-celebrities who love to write and have a passion to get our ideas out there, but are frustrated by an industry and a buying public that worships platforms.

#### **Why Me?**

My platform to write this book is that I share (or have shared) your lack of platform. As far as the world's concerned, I'm a nobody. In my early career, when I wrote my first book, I served as a youth minister – the last staff person listed on the church website below the pastor, minister of education, and minister of music. I was "Minister of Youth" at Flat Creek Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Georgia. That's worse than a platform; it's a hole in the ground.

Yet a respected, successful publisher – Tyndale House – offered me a contract to publish my book on modern music and the church, which went through several printings and was published in Dutch, German, Spanish, Romanian, and Russian. It was also used as a college textbook and sells steadily today, eighteen years after its original publication.

Yet I wasn't a musician. I didn't teach music. I had no degree in music. I was previously unpublished and had no following. How did I get a contract and why did people buy a book written by a nobody?

For the past 15 years I've been a caregiver, first to my wife who was dying of cancer, then to my four boys, then to my dad, and today to my 105-year-old grand mom and my blended family of 7 boys. Forget the nationwide book tour; I do well to venture past the mailbox. Yet, during this period I published another book, this time on personal finance. I have neither a degree in finance nor professional experience in the world of finance. My literary agent submitted it to many publishers, who rejected it due to my lack of platform. "To sell books on personal finance," they all agreed, "you need a large platform, like a national radio show."

I politely disagreed, publishing it myself. I took seriously the warnings from professional publishers, assuming that this book might be a challenge to market. So I read 25 or so books on book marketing, participated in publishing forums and listservs, and networked with fellow authors. It garnered rave reviews, won several awards, and sold as many copies on the first day of publication as the average self-published book sells in total. Two years after publication, I'm happy with its continued, growing sales.

## Why This Book?

The more I studied book marketing and talked with frustrated authors, the more I sensed the need for a different kind of book – something to help authors narrow down which of the hundreds of marketing tactics might work best for *their* books and fit *their* unique personalities, talents, and interests. Most books laid out scores of ways to market books, but left me with an overwhelming feeling of “I suppose I should be doing all of this, but who has the time or money?!”

And then there’s all that confusing hype. Newsletters kept promising me the “secrets” of selling tons of books – typically involving expensive seminars, building high-priced websites, and using time-consuming social media tools. “Tweet seven times a day, blog every day, post videos on Youtube, and build your following!” So if I do all that, while working a day job, raising children, and caring for Granny, when do I find time to write my next book? It sounded exhausting.

When I’d talk to people who attended these seminars, participated avidly in social media, etc., I’d ask them about concrete results in book sales. Typically, they replied vaguely, mentioning a few sales here and there. Yet, I kept crossing paths with others who were selling a lot of books using one or two simple approaches – sometimes using new technologies and sometimes not. Different approaches seemed to work for different authors and different books. It occurred to me that someone needed to help authors narrow down approaches that might work for *their* books.

Another problem I’ve encountered is authors assuming that in order to sell books, they must be shameless self-promoters, constantly in people’s faces, with the audacity and resilience of cold-calling, cold-blooded telemarketers. Yet, especially using new media, I find those attitudes counterproductive. New technologies allow humble, caring, shy authors to get the word out about their books in unprecedented ways. This book helps authors discover and exploit those ways.

With my positive experiences in both traditional and nontraditional publishing, I have no ax to grind with either and will offer ideas that work in both arenas. And if you have yet to be published, or have another book on the horizon, you’ll receive the most benefit in that you can think marketing from the very start.

Here’s what I’m offering:

- **Hundreds of practical ideas** for writing, publishing, and marketing that you can implement immediately.
- **Motivational tips** that make marketing more fun. Our greatest obstacles are often our attitudes. I want authors to catch fire for marketing their books, so that they can experience the thrill of seeing their books purchased and read!
- **Outside-the-box thinking.** I question everything and offer some unique angles, often finding help outside of book marketing literature. Applying both well-established marketing principles and new insights from social media experts can save us from countless hours spent employing tactics that have little chance of selling books.



- **A “No B.S. Pledge.”** Sensationalist hype dominates much of the book marketing industry. “For \$350 we’ll send your press release to 10,000 media giants.” Cool. But will any of them actually read it? And of the past 1,000 authors who used this service, what percentage even broke even with resulting sales? I can’t promise to get you on Oprah. I can’t even promise that if you get on Oprah you’ll sell any books (some don’t). But I’ve kept meticulous records of my personal marketing efforts, talked to many authors about their successes and failures, and promise to tell you honestly when I put a lot of effort into something that sounded like a great idea but sold no books.
- **Help determining what marketing methods could work best for your book**, using your own unique personality, strengths, and interests. Radio isn’t for everybody. Contrary to popular opinion, neither is blogging or television. Some authors detest public appearances. With thousands of ways to market books, authors desperately need principles to help them determine which methods deserve their time.
- **A bias toward cheap stuff.** I heard one author share about how she sold 20,000 copies of her book. She’d traveled to New York to do a popular TV show and done other cool promotions. Yet, at one point she mentioned as an aside, “In the end, we probably just broke even.” Maybe she didn’t need the money. But I’ll assume you’d like to make a profit. That means controlling your publishing and promotion costs.
- **A guide to further study.** If I fail to inspire you to keep learning about selling books, I’ve failed. Throughout the book, I recommend other resources (books, blogs, forums, listservs, etc.) that can take you further. (Note: I’m not being paid to promote other people’s resources in this book.) I plan to be a lifelong learner in this field, and hope to inspire you to keep learning as well.

I tried to make the book all the more practical by writing sections as I experienced them. Thus, when I say “As I write...” I might be speaking of a couple of years prior to writing the final manuscript. I wrote about press releases as I sent out my first press releases, about getting reviews from top blogs as I pursued them. In this way, I could more accurately report those initial frustrations and fears and delights that are often forgotten over time. As an avid spelunker, I know that caverns look very different when you look back than when you’re looking forward. Since both views are valuable, I incorporate both.

### **Where Did I Get This Information?**

Various places. Besides reading widely in book marketing, I studied general marketing and consulted with academics in the field. In specialized areas, such as social networking, I had to do specialized reading and drew from various seminars I’ve attended over the past four years, such as the annual SoCon social media conference, which kept me abreast of social networking from back when MySpace reigned supreme and Facebook was the new kid on the block. On Web matters, I drew upon my experiences as a webmaster – writing and selling web-based content since the late 1990s. To get the most up-to-date information, I often found myself playing the journalist by interviewing

personnel at the most respected book review companies and press release companies, or calling bookstore managers to get critical information I wasn't finding elsewhere. But uppermost in my mind have been the experiences of multitudes of low-profile authors that I've gleaned from personal interviews, forums, listservs, books, articles, blogs, seminars, podcasts, webinars, etc. As authors share what's working and what's not working for them, I find that analyzing their experiences provides some of the most practical information.

### **Snoozer Alert!**

Some authors want motivational stories to renew their zeal to write and sell books. Others need to know in sufficient detail how to mail their galleys next week. I offer something for both.

The problem with providing essential details to those who need them is that those who don't need them will be bored to tears. Tip: When you find yourself slogging through a chapter that doesn't scratch where you itch, skim the main subheadings and move on to a more relevant chapter. Otherwise, you may stop reading altogether and miss the information you desperately need today.

### **What's with all the Authors?**

Although "I" refers to J. Steve Miller as the principal writer, my wife Cherie K. Miller is legitimately co-author in that the ideas presented here came out of a collaborative effort of researching and conversing endlessly about writing, publishing, and marketing. Brian Jud and John Kremer each contributed a chapter; but beyond that, their writings and teachings have been seminal in our thinking. Blythe Daniel has added to our understanding of the publishing industry through her strong background in traditional publishing, as well as being our literary agent and Colorado-based publicist. Stephanie Richards, our Georgia publicist, held our hands through our early publicity efforts and continues to advise us.

With this background in mind, let's plunge into the fascinating new world of book publishing and marketing!

## **Chapter 3**

### **Write a Marketable Book**

*Don't fix the marketing first; fix your product. Once you've got a good product to talk about, the marketing's going to flow from that.*

- Scott Monty, Ford Motor Company social media chief

Books don't magically fly off the press, landing in readers' laps. Somehow, people need to hear about your books. Then they'll hopefully buy them, read them, like them, and tell their friends. If we get them into enough hands, sales just might reach a tipping point where publicity takes on a life of its own as word of mouth spreads the news far and wide.

But this process assumes that, once people read your book, they'll like it enough to pass it on. Let's not assume anything. Let's begin by making sure that your book is marketable.

Marketing campaigns don't work for some books because they're simply not marketable. Sure, with slick advertising and ecstatic reviews from your mom and your best friends, you can fool a few people into buying a copy; but once general readers discover that you've misspelled five words in your first chapter, your characters aren't that likeable, your research is flawed, or you're just repeating what everybody else says about your subject, irate readers will show no mercy. They'll delightfully rip your book apart and make it their personal mission to warn other readers not to waste their time and money on a book that should have never been written. The same digital tools that so effectively spread *good* publicity are just as effective at spreading *bad* publicity. These days, any self-appointed critic can slam your book on Amazon, a popular forum, or a blog, urging potential readers to search elsewhere for a good book.

So write a great book. A great book is eminently marketable. Get out enough copies to your intended audience and some will tell their friends, others will give copies for presents, and still others will write raving reviews and blog about it, making it their mission to tell the world about this wonderful book.

So how can you ensure that your book is marketable?

### **1. Define Your Purpose, Audience, and Unique Selling Point**

Why are you writing this book? "To have something to sell after I speak" doesn't cut it. "So that I can call myself an author" isn't good enough. Readers have plenty of books to choose from. Why should they choose yours? Millions of books are available for purchase – many more than before the revolutions. Why are you writing another one? Define that clearly and you'll not only write a better book, but you'll be more successful in pitching it to publishers and readers.

I wrote *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate* in the early 1990s because music was dividing the church and the published books on the topic didn't give enough levelheaded, well-researched direction.

- Was a rock beat physically unhealthy, as one psychiatrist claimed to have demonstrated?
- Should the church's style of music always be distinct from popular music, or is popular music simply the "musical language" that communicates most easily to the average person?
- When I work with youth, should I use the musical styles they already appreciate, or train them to appreciate traditional church styles?

In other words,

- **I recognized a need.** A controversy needed to be addressed. This gave my writing purpose.
- **I had a unique selling point.** Other books didn't adequately (objectively, with sound research) address the controversy.

- **I saw potential audiences (niches).** **Parents** needed wisdom to help their children make wise musical choices. **Pastors** needed to know, “Are contemporary styles harmful in themselves and to be railed against, or are they morally neutral tools that can be used for good?” **Ministers of music** needed to know whether to use old hymns and organs exclusively, or to incorporate new styles.

In other words, this book had unique qualities that made it marketable. My query letter and proposal defined the need and how I planned to meet it. My sample chapters showed that I could deliver. The result? One publisher rejected it because they didn’t want to compete with another book they previously published on the topic. The acquisitions editor at another publisher loved the idea, but couldn’t convince marketing that it would sell. Tyndale House, the sixth publisher I queried, loved it and published it.

Stating the need and defining an audience not only helped me get a publisher, it told me what kind of book needed to be written. To distinguish it from other books on the topic, it would require some serious research into psychology, ethnomusicology, and church history. Since I lacked authority in myself (not a recognized scholar or thought leader in the field), I needed to appeal to documented, authoritative sources. Yet, since I was writing primarily to influence church staff and parents, and only secondarily to academics, I’d write in a popular, journalistic style.

Knowing my intended audience, I could also strategize (as I wrote the book) how to market to those audiences.

So what makes *your* book different? If it’s a novel, what’s unique about the location, the characters, the story, or your voice? If it’s nonfiction, what are you providing that’s unique? If my personal finance book offered the same insights as radio sensation Dave Ramsey’s books, readers would consistently choose the high profile author. The more precisely you can define your purpose, audience, and unique selling point, the more potential you have to write a great book and market it.

## 2. Do Your Best Writing

### What Constitutes Good Writing?

Is the following sentence “good writing”? If not, how would you fix it?

*I said “Who killed him?” and he said “I don’t know who killed him but he’s dead all right,” and it was dark and there was water standing in the street and no lights and windows broke and boats all up in the town and trees blown down and everything all blown and I got a skiff and went out and found my boat where I had her inside of Mango Key and she was all right only she was full of water.*

I venture that most writers would deem this a sentence in trouble – obviously written by a remedial English student. Actually, I pulled it from the short story, “After the Storm,” written by Ernest Hemingway, winner of a Pulitzer, and considered by many one of the greatest writers of the 1900s.

My point? Different styles work best for different purposes and different audiences. You may have to adjust your idea of “good writing” appropriately. If you’re not Ernest Hemingway, and aren’t writing for his audience, don’t assume that you should emulate him.

- A technical journal allows (and expects) insider language, understood only by those in that discipline.
- A literary audience tends to appreciate creative description and clever sentences.
- Academics are drawn to sound deductions from solid research in their nonfiction.
- Casual readers may be less interested in clever sentences than a great story.

As simplistic as this sounds, many aspiring authors don’t get it. They’re still writing the generic style they learned in high school English, rather than diligently refining what their audience expects and enjoys.

James Patterson has published more New York Times Bestsellers (51 and counting) than anyone. Here’s what he says about writing to his audience:

“I have a saying. If you want to write for yourself, get a diary. If you want to write for a few friends, get a blog. But if you want to write for a lot of people, think about them a little bit. What do they like? What are their needs? A lot of people in this country go through their days numb. They need to be entertained. They need to feel something.”<sup>1</sup>

So how does this attention to his audience impact his writing?

In Patterson’s early work, he obsessed over his sentences. Now he’s more interested in stories. Jonathan Mahler describes Patterson’s writing as “light on atmospheric and heavy on action, conveyed by simple, colloquial sentences.” Patterson says, “I don’t believe in showing off. Showing off can get in the way of a good story.” Thus, he writes short chapters and avoids “description, back story and scene setting whenever possible.” He prefers to “hurl readers into the action and establish his characters with a minimum of telegraphic details.”<sup>2</sup>

Am I saying that everyone should write like James Patterson? No. I’m encouraging you to find your own voice (distinct style) within the parameters of your purpose and the preferences of your intended audience. Patterson’s purpose is to entertain the general public, and he’s honed a writing style that succeeds in entertaining millions.

Not everyone likes Patterson’s style. A *Washington Post* reviewer called one of his works “subliterate,” to which Patterson responds, “Thousands of people don’t like what I do. Fortunately, millions do.”

So what’s your purpose in writing your present book? If it’s to please critics, then write for critics. But that’s a rather small audience. If your ultimate purpose is to please your English professor, then publish only one copy and give it to her. If your ultimate purpose is to reach a larger audience – to inspire or to

inform or to entertain – you’d do well to study writers who are popular with your intended audience and get regular input from that audience.

### **3. Imitate Successful Authors Who Share Your Purpose and Audience**

Study great musicians and you find them starting out by imitating the techniques of their heroes. I recall an early interview with guitarist Eddie Van Halen where he challenged the interviewer, “Name me any song by *Cream* and I’ll play it for you.” Who was the guitarist for Cream? Eric Clapton. Well, Eddie certainly developed his own style, but he began by imitating his heroes. Great writers tend to follow suit.

Before I acquired a publisher for my music book, I gave the manuscript to Josh McDowell, who had written scores of successful nonfiction books. He also had a huge platform, having spoken on more university campuses than probably any living person.

Now why would he be interested in the youth minister at Flat Creek Baptist? Because he was currently on the speakers’ circuit with the backing of the rock band, Petra, and was getting flack from traditional pastors. I knew he was into the subject and assumed he would be interested in my manuscript.

McDowell urged me to declare war on all academic language, editing it down for the common reader. “If you write for academics,” McDowell said, “only academics will read it. If you write for a broader audience and everyone begins to read it, then the academics will have to read it to be in the know.”

Wise advice.

Thus my self-editing mantra became “well-researched; simply written.” Is there a place for academic writing? Certainly. But it’s not the most effective style for the audiences I’m targeting and the subjects I’m tackling.

Dale Carnegie is a master of the nonfiction style I imitate. He wrote the perennial bestseller, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It’s not “great literature” as most would define it. Rather, he wrote very plainly and simply, similar to how he speaks. I prefer that style for the non-fiction that I read, although some would snub it as dumbed down or journalese. (Books by authors who snub his style, I might add, are generally not consistently ranked in the top 125 Amazon bestsellers 70 years after publication.)

Carnegie did extensive research, but presented his findings as fascinating stories. In his book on public speaking, Carnegie notes,

“The rules from *How to Win Friends and Influence People* can be listed on one and a half pages. The other two hundred and thirty pages of the book are filled with stories and illustrations to point up how others have used these rules with wholesome effect.”<sup>3</sup>

It’s not easy to do this style well. Breezy doesn’t imply easy. Carnegie was a master organizer, master storyteller, and a master at explaining complex subjects in language everyone could understand.

Your chosen style may differ from mine. That's fine. Whatever your style, study authors who have mastered it. As Brad Thor, author of thriller novels that have reached the New York Times Bestseller List, said,

“...it's impossible to be a great writer without being a great reader. I read everything. If someone is doing well anywhere near my genre, I want to read it, and I want to know why.”

#### **4. Get Lots of Honest Feedback**

It's one thing to know the principles of great writing in your genre, quite another to be able to objectively evaluate your own writing. I want to emphasize “lots of” in this subtitle. (I could have entitled it “a plethora of,” but I'm the simple writer.) Three thousand years ago, King Solomon wrote:

“In the abundance of counselors there is safety.”

The word for “abundance of” in the original Hebrew text means “lots of.” Why not get input from just a few? Simply because those few may not appreciate your style or might not share your passion for the subject matter. You need a larger sampling of readers to get broad input and understand the market.

Before I decided to write the music book, I sent a thirty-page manuscript on the issue to some people I respected: a college president and a couple of successful musicians. Not “lots of.” Just three. Since I never heard back, I assumed that I wasn't saying anything important and abandoned the project.

Then, a few years later, I received a letter from the college president. He wrote, “Our music department is in turmoil over the music issue and your manuscript was the best thing I've ever seen on the subject. But I've lost it. Could you send me another copy?”

Today I shudder to realize that I took the silence of three busy people as rejection. I wouldn't have written the book had this brilliant academic not lost my manuscript.

And when you get advice, don't totally rely on the opinions of a few “experts.”

Catherine Lanigan grew up dreaming of becoming a writer. But in her first year of college she took a creative writing seminar, led by a traveling Harvard professor. One of the assignments was to write a short story. But the day before she was to read hers to the class, the professor called her to his office, telling her that her writing stunk. Among other things, he said,

“You have absolutely no idea about plot structure or characterization. How you were ever recommended for this class is beyond me. You have no business being here. One thing's for sure, you'll never earn a dime as a writer.”

But this pompous twit of a pseudo-professor (my characterization) encouraged her that the good news was that he'd caught her at a crossroad of life so that she wouldn't waste her time and money studying something she wasn't suited for. So he worked a bargain with her: “I will get you through my class and give you a B if you promise never to write anything ever again.”

She didn't write for fourteen years.

Fortunately, after those wasted years she told her story to a journalist who replied, “Why, I’m ashamed of you. You never even tried. Here’s my card. If you ever write anything, give me a call.” She immediately went home, wrote her first novel, and sent it to the journalist. A month after receiving it he called her, asking if he could send a copy to his agent. The agent called her from New York, referred to her as “startlingly talented,” and asked whether she thought soft cover, hard cover or trade would work best. By Christmas, she had a publisher.

Lanigan went on to write 20 novels in twenty years, including *Romancing the Stone*, *Jewel of the Nile*, and *Wings of Destiny*. But it frustrates me that she might have written 37 novels had she not trusted in the counsel of one supposed authority who just happened to be an imbecile disguised as a scholar with his professional degrees and tweed jackets.<sup>4</sup>

So don’t base your opinion on one person’s input, even a supposed expert’s input, or a few people’s lack of enthusiasm. The fourth person may rave over it, or have several suggestions to fix the problem that turned off the first three. Your writers group is a good place to start, but expand further.

### **Become Idea-Driven**

Cherie and I often read stories of great businesses, searching for the characteristics that distinguish them from losers. One common characteristic we’ve discovered is that great businesses tend to be idea-driven, searching constantly for the best ideas for direction and improvement. Rather than listening exclusively to their formally trained MBAs, they listen to people at all levels of their organizations. They listen to their competition. They listen to their cashiers. They listen to their customers.

So we find Michael Dell (Dell Computers) listening intently to his computer customers<sup>5</sup>, Jack Welch (General Electric) creating ways to get everyone sharing ideas openly<sup>6</sup>, Sam Walton (Wal-Mart) waking up early on Saturday mornings to buy donuts for his truckers to get their insights on the stores they visit.<sup>7</sup>

This is radically different from the way most writers approach their writing. Typically, they self-edit to the best of their ability, then mail it off to a publisher “to see if it’s any good,” or send it to an editor to put in final form. I believe most writers could improve their manuscripts immeasurably if they’d take a hint from smart business leaders and become more idea-driven.

One reason we need input is that we aren’t very objective about our own writing. One day I’m overconfident, imagining that I’ve discovered a brilliant angle that’s never been explored in the entire history of ideas. The next day I wonder why anyone would ever buy this crappy manuscript from such a low profile amateur. This explains why Stephen King’s wife found the early pages of his manuscript crumpled in the trashcan. She shook off the cigarette ashes, read them, and encouraged him to complete it and seek publication. It became his first published novel, *Carrie*, which not only sold one million copies its first year in paperback, but was adapted as a feature film and Broadway musical.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, even though King was teaching English at the time, he couldn’t see his own manuscript objectively. We’re simply too close to our writing to perceive its worth.

For *Enjoy Your Money*, after relentlessly self-editing each chapter, I passed them on to Cherie (great at “big picture” issues) and mom (“the grammar queen”). After revising accordingly, I put my manuscript



into as many hands as possible--not just fellow writers, who may love cool sentences and smart analogies--but to the regular readers I'm targeting.

I gave relevant portions or entire manuscripts to about 30 people, including my children, experts in the field, and anyone who owes me one (e.g., my auto insurance agent) or might be remotely interested in the subject. I even got input on a couple of chapters from an eighth grade advanced writing class. They were honored to meet a real live author. Their input was unique, candid, and led to several important changes.

**Tip:** If one chapter deals with a topic on which you'd like to consult a professional or scholar, consider sending that chapter alone. I sent the psychology chapter of my music book to a psychology professor I respected, resulting in a more accurate chapter. A chapter is much more doable for a busy professional than a complete manuscript.

Getting lots of input is invaluable on several levels.

- **I discover, before publication, whether or not it has a market.** Don't despair if some (even family members) quickly tire of it and never get around to finishing it. Others won't like your subject matter or style. But if some of the readers get truly excited about it, you know that they probably represent hundreds of thousands of readers. When William P. Young wrote *The Shack*, he ran off 15 copies at Kinko's for his children and a few friends. When he saw that his friends were excited enough to want to send copies to their friends, Mr. Young realized that he should consider publishing for a wider audience. Good choice. It would go on to sell millions of copies.<sup>9</sup>
- **Readers give me new, interesting material to add.** One brilliant CPA sat down with me for two hours, discussing my money book and recounting stories of clients he's counseled and how he advises people.
- **I'm able to correct inaccuracies of fact, misspellings, etc.** I'm always amazed at how the 25<sup>th</sup> reader will find an "obvious" mistake that none of the first 24 noticed.
- **I discover what some people like, and others dislike, about the book.** I can't please everyone, but I prefer to know their opinions before publication than afterwards! Then I can make my final editorial decisions with full knowledge of how people might respond.
- **Besides improving my manuscript, these early readers are critical to providing me with blurbs and early reviews that will jump-start my Amazon presence and attract more readers.** More about that in later chapters.

**Tip:** Since it's critical to get early, positive reviews, consider these points as you recruit your critique crew:

**1) Don't recruit solely high-profile, busy people, with whom you have no strong, preexisting connection.** They may not have time to write a review. Many of my early readers were friends and acquaintances that were more than happy to write reviews.

**2) Consider recruiting from different parts of the country.** If all your reviewers are local (Amazon reviews often include where the review originated), or most share the same last name ("real names" are noted in Amazon), some savvy shoppers will suspect that your dice are loaded. (Amazon recently banned reviews by the author's family members.)

### What to Do with All that Advice

Take it seriously, because each opinion likely represents a group of people. But also take it with a grain of salt. You can't please everyone. I wrote *Enjoy Your Money* in story form – more specifically, a movie script format. Some tired of the story angle and just wanted me to tell them what to do with their money. Others loved the story angle, saying it was what kept them reading. The final decisions were mine, but it was valuable to know where both sides stood.

### 5. Do Some Research

Before I urge you to do great research, I want to back off a bit. Don't imagine that, in order to write a great book, you must do everything I recommend. I say this to keep you from getting discouraged. Writing a book is a massive project and I don't want to weigh you down by making it even more massive.

Last summer, Cherie and I attended a panel discussion by successful mystery writers at the *Decatur Book Festival*. Phillip DePoy, author of *The King James Conspiracy*, gave a big spiel on the importance of research and how heavily he researched certain fascinating historical events. The next panelist said, in essence, "I do hardly any research at all. It's fiction. I'm a magician who makes readers believe the illusion I've created. If someone points out to me that I misnamed a New York City street, I reply, 'Hey, it's fiction; I make things up! Don't use it for a road map!'"<sup>10</sup>

Authors can be rather independent souls who make wildly different choices about the way they write. But consider the value that research can add to a book.

#### **Idea! Put Your Leftover Research to Work**

Inevitably, I end up with much more fascinating, relevant research than I can squeeze into my books. In this digital age, I can blog it, turn it into white papers on specialized topics, offer it free of charge on my Website as "Additional Resources" or "Teacher Resources," use it in talks where audiences want more than a rehash of the book, etc.

As you can see in this book, I often refer readers to additional resources if they want to go deeper. This results in more people coming to my sites, more people linking to me, and more people finding my books.

- **The claim of research adds interest value.** When *The DaVinci Code* first came out, I occasionally heard people quoting it as if it were nonfiction. I thought they were confusing genres, sort of like saying that Bart Simpson is a great actor. But when I read the book and saw that Dan Brown claimed it was based on researched facts, I saw why people were intrigued. While many scholars argue that his sources were questionable at best, we can't deny that his research and claim to historical accuracy added allure to his story.
- **Accurate research makes reviewers and critics happy.** People delight in pointing out errors. Make enough errors and they'll write merciless reviews. Even if I'm writing for the general public, I'd like reviews from respected experts in my field. I couldn't have gotten a review for my music book from a respected college president had it not been thoroughly researched.
- **You appeal to a wider range of people.**
- **Libraries and schools take notice.** They love documentation and indexes.
- **Fresh research adds inherent value.** People will use it for their own research and quote from it in their books and articles.
- **Research makes marketing easier.** While it's difficult for new or mid-list fiction writers to get reviews from major book reviewers, they might get interviews and reviews from journalists and experts who write about their topic. Because of the research for his novel, Phillip DePoy should have many more opportunities for publicity than the writer who did no research. A California radio station interviewed me this week about my money book. Later, they asked me to return for another interview, not primarily about the book, but as an expert on a financial topic. Had my book not shown substantial research, I doubt they would have invited me back. Become known as an expert in your field and you may become the go-to person that the media seeks out for comments.

### **How Research Helped My Book**

For my music book, I used Georgia State University's library to study decades of research on the psychological and physiological impact of music. I used Emory University's religion library to study the history of church music, discovering that many of the hymns we consider traditional were often taken from tunes already popular in the secular world.

By presenting the results of solid research, I offered something of unique value.

For the chapters of *Enjoy Your Money* on investing, I read books by the most highly regarded experts on investing, quoting them and leveraging their authority, since I had no authority on my own (no degrees in finance or economics). If you have no authority in yourself, borrow authority from someone else. Quote the recognized experts. Then, people will recognize you as a source of authoritative information and an expert in your own right.

Successful actor Johnny Depp once said that when he takes a part, he not only learns the lines and does what's expected, but he tries to add "that little something extra." Can't you see that in his films? For writers, research can add "that little something extra" to make your book stand out from others.

I believe that my objective, dogged research motivated publishers in other countries to translate my music book into their languages. It's also why magazines in both the United States and Europe published excerpts and about 30 radio stations wanted to interview me in the months following its publication. Recognized as an expert, I was invited to speak in such great locations as Holland and Moscow.

I had no platform in music or personal finance before I wrote my books. In my case, a well-researched, well-written book *became* my platform to attract radio interviews and speaking engagements.

### **A Great Model for Self-Help**

Let's take another look at Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It's one of the all time international bestsellers, having been translated into most of today's written languages.

I recently attended a conference with about 250 techies. At one point, the keynote speaker asked how many of them had read Carnegie's book. From my vantage point, it looked like every hand went up. Reflect on this a bit – techies and entrepreneurs, not psychology majors and salesmen.

Doesn't that strike you as odd? Myriads of psychological and sociological studies of relationships have been done since 1937, when Carnegie originally published his book. And culture has changed significantly. Shouldn't people want to read something more current? What's the appeal?

First, it's simply a collection of well-told stories of the relational techniques of great and fascinating people. That makes it both readable and appealing. But many of today's self-help books imitate that style. A second observation is key. The author convinces me in his preface that this is no book of fluff. He did exhaustive research. Allow me to quote from Carnegie's preface, where the master influencer successfully influences me to take his book seriously:

"In preparation for this book, I read everything that I could find on the subject – everything from newspaper columns, magazine articles, records of the family courts, the writings of the old philosophers and the new psychologists. In addition, I hired a trained researcher to spend one and a half years in various libraries reading everything I had missed, plowing through erudite tomes on psychology, poring over hundreds of magazine articles, searching through countless biographies, trying to ascertain how the great leaders of all ages had dealt with people. We read their biographies. We read the life stories of all great leaders from Julius Caesar to Thomas Edison. I recall that we read over one hundred biographies of Theodore Roosevelt alone. We were determined to spare no time, no expense, to discover every practical idea that anyone had ever used through the ages for winning friends and influencing people."<sup>11</sup>

But there was more to his research. He interviewed people. He prepared a short talk on people skills and encouraged the attendees to try out the principles and report back, so that his book "grew and developed out of that laboratory, out of the experiences of thousands of adults."

That kind of research sells books. One informed book buyer told me that the first place he looks in a book is the acknowledgements. There he discovers whether the author did his homework or just recorded his own ideas.

### **Research beyond the Library**

Some authors will be inspired by that Carnegie paragraph. For others, it will have the effect of a newbie guitarist who saw a video of master shredder Yngwie Malmsteen and commented, "I never want to pick up a guitar, ever again."

But take heart, not all research has to be on such a massive, exhaustive scale.

Consider doing a survey, even if it's quite informal. So you're writing a book about pet care. Call 50 veterinarians and ask a simple question:

"You see the heart-rending results of poor pet care every day. If you had the opportunity to address a group of pet owners and warn them about the most important aspects of pet care, which would you say are the most important?"

Also ask them how many years they've been treating animals. Let's say they average 20 years. **That means you've just collected 1,000 years of veterinary experience!** Include these results in your book and mention in your preface that your wisdom comes, not just from your personal experience and reading, but also from your collection of over 1,000 years of veterinary experience. That speaks with authority. That's new information that pet columnists and news reporters would love to interview you about.

Even if your book's already published, it's not too late to do a similar research project, send out press releases about it, and solicit interviews, with the interviewers referring to you as "the author of..."

Now, are there books that exhibit no research at all, but simply relate personal experience, that sell well? Yes. But imagine that an acquisitions editor has five proposals on her desk for books much like yours, all of which seem equally compelling and well written. But only one is documented with top authorities or includes original research. Which does she choose? It's a no brainer. So do some research to separate your book from the stack. To make your odds even better, do fabulous research.

### **6. Choose a Marketable Setting**

When David Cady wrote his first novel, *The Handler*, about a detective attempting to rescue someone's daughter from a snake handling cult, he set it in Chattanooga, Tennessee, along the Tennessee River. That's also a popular tourist destination. Now he sells many copies in local shops that target tourists, who are interested in a book written about the region. This fall, a film crew is scheduled to begin filming the story on location.

Could a wise choice of setting make your next book more marketable?

### **7. Consider Involving Other Writers**

Benjamin Franklin met regularly with *Junto*, a varied group of people he described as “ingenious” and “lovers of reading.”<sup>12</sup> Members improved their writing by handing out their manuscripts for the open critique of the group. C.S Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien met regularly with *The Inklings*, who gave input on each other’s writing.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes writers can be private folks. But I can’t urge you enough: Force yourself out of your shell and spend time with other writers.

I think screenwriters are healthy models. Study them. They’re much more likely to say, “When we were writing this season of *Lost*...” than “When I wrote...”

This should be freeing to a many writers, especially those who fear that they don’t have the entire package of talents. You don’t have to be good at every aspect of writing. Even professional editors tend to excel in one area of writing.

In my opinion, few writers can:

- spot a grammatical error from across the room.
- discover inconsistencies.
- spell.
- “hear” the most pleasing “rhythm” of a series of sentences.
- include all the little, picky details.
- see the big picture.
- organize many details into an orderly structure that flows.
- recognize flaws in logic.
- recognize insufficient documentation.
- recognize factual errors.
- know how to develop a character that people care about.
- name characters.
- do thorough, accurate research.
- write catchy titles, including chapter titles and subtitles.

And I’m just scratching the surface.

George Lucas (*Star Wars*, etc.) can tell a great story, but sources say he’s an atrocious speller.<sup>14</sup> Yet, who cares, as long as he keeps great spellers around? James Patterson writes out a detailed outline of the

story, gives it to a co-author to flesh out, then takes the manuscript and puts it into final form.<sup>15</sup> If you can't or don't want to do it all, it's okay to seek help.

You may want to even consider officially co-writing, so that both names are on the book. That means two people will be eager to market the book. Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen created the *Chicken Soup* series, which became a publishing phenomenon. Acquiring a publisher and doing publicity were uphill battles, but Canfield said he was aided by Hansen being more outgoing than him. Teaming up with another can add enough synergy to the writing and marketing process to make things happen.<sup>16</sup>

I know an author who wanted to write an illustrated children's book about a famous American. But before he started writing, he thought about marketing. He studied the various tourist centers dedicated to famous Americans to discover which ones sold books and got the most visitors. Once he decided upon one, he found out who was in charge and who were the most respected scholars concerning this great American. He got input from both the manager and a scholar, which resulted in some changes in the illustrations to reflect the period more accurately. He credited both in his book. By taking this extra step, he not only produced a better book, but he secured a source of large, ongoing sales. If you worked at this tourist center re-ordering books, wouldn't you feel obligated to keep reordering the book that had your boss' name on it? And imagine, if he didn't already have a publisher, the impact of a query saying, "I've secured a huge source of sales."

## **8. Learn from Great "How to Write" Books and Writing Publications**

Some young writers avoid them, afraid that they'll destroy their "natural, conversational style." But remember, you don't *have* to do everything they say.

Others think they can learn all they need by imitating the great writers in their genre. Yet when I read books that I'd love to imitate (and virtually all authors agree that a steady diet of great books is essential to becoming a great writer), I find that some of their techniques are rather obvious and others aren't. I gain so much more by allowing my favorite writers to tell me about their writing process. They tell me in their "how to write" books and articles.

Although I did a lot of writing in college and graduate school, I never took a class specifically on writing. So when I began writing books, I did my own self-study. I read *The Elements of Style*--the sixty page modern classic. An acquisitions editor at InterVarsity Press suggested that anyone writing for publication should read William Zinsser's *On Writing Well* and do what he says. I read it and did what he said. I also listed some of his tips on a single page to guide me in self-editing, such as, "Am I overusing passive tense?"

Over the years, I've continued to read articles by or on great writers, read their "how I write" books, and thoroughly enjoy hearing writers talk about their craft at monthly meetings of the *Georgia Writers Association*. Cherie and I listened to the audio version of Stephen King's *On Writing* while traveling. Great tips and fun, fun, fun!

## 9. Take Professional Courses of Study

In her late 40s, Cherie completed an undergrad degree in Communications and a Masters in Professional Writing. I bugged her relentlessly to tell me what she was learning, so that I benefited from her experience as well. One of her texts, by Peter Rubie and Gary Provost, gave the most wonderful synopsis of a great story. They claim that it's the plot for 90 percent of the great stories in either film or ink. I pinned it up beside my desk:

*“Once upon a time, something happened to someone, and he decided that he would pursue a goal. So he devised a plan of action, and even though there were forces trying to stop him, he moved forward because there was a lot at stake. And just as things seemed as bad as they could get, he learned an important lesson, and when offered the prize he had sought so strenuously, he had to decide whether or not to take it, and in making that decision he satisfied a need that had been created by something in his past.”<sup>17</sup>*

That brilliant paragraph gave me a template for my stories. It's not that I always follow it to the letter, but typically I find that if I've missed an element, my story will improve by adding it.

This tip helped me with *Enjoy Your Money* in a way that none of my 30+ readers ever mentioned. Not enough was at stake for my characters. So these high school seniors wanted to do better than their parents with their finances. Let's all yawn. It's not exactly Luke Skywalker longing to leave the farming planet so that he could save the universe from the evil emperor with the beautiful Princess Leia.

“How can I make the stakes higher for my characters?” I wondered. So I made Akashi, my Asian character, the intellectual black sheep of her high achieving family. Her older siblings excel at Georgia Tech and MIT, while she struggles to eke out Cs. Her nonchalant, counter-cultural attitude towards school belies a relentless fear that her C average will result in a C career and a C life. She desperately needs someone to convince her that she can succeed at something.

By adding a couple of sentences here and there, I ramped up the stakes. Now readers are pulling for Akashi. Now they're emotionally invested in her future.

### Learning the Craft as Platform

Earlier in my career, when I was seeking a literary agent, one snooted me soundly. She asked me what writer's conferences I had attended. I responded, “none.” I think she sized me up quickly as a small time hick from Georgia who'd never make it as a writer and rudely brushed me off, moving on to talk to more important people.

Agents and publishers want to know that you're a serious writer. Prove to them that you're serious about learning your craft, and you'll be more impressive than I was.

Reading books on your craft, subscribing to writing magazines, taking classes, attending writers' conferences, and joining your local writers' association sets you apart from hordes of casual writers.



Agents and publishers will take notice. They want writers who are serious about their craft and understand the industry.

### **Concluding Remarks**

I'll let Frank Peretti, New York Times best-selling novelist with more than 12 million copies of his works in print, sum up this section:

“Never stop learning. Learn all you can about the craft. Know what you're doing. Read books about it, take classes, read other authors, do all you can to develop your skill. Did you notice that I didn't say, 'Never give up?' Persistence comes second to learning. If you don't know what you're doing, you can persist until you're dead and never be a writer. I still consider myself a student of writing; I'm still learning.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Do Something!**

**To make my next book more marketable, I will...**

1 –

2 –

3 –

### **Keep Learning!**

- **See my free updates** to each chapter at [www.sellmorebooks.org](http://www.sellmorebooks.org).
- **To sharpen your nonfiction, read William K. Zinsser's classic, *On Writing Well*.** Make a checklist of ideas from his book to help your self-editing.
- **To sharpen your fiction, read Stephen King's writing memoir, *On Writing*.** Make a checklist of ideas to help your self-editing.
- **Subscribe to a writing magazine in your genre to learn from contemporary writers.**

## Chapter 14

### Seek Reviews and Endorsements from Busy Blogs

(Only part of this chapter included here)

A year after publishing *Enjoy Your Money*, I experienced a couple of slack sales months. I was discouraged. My book needed a push, so I pushed with a new campaign. By the next month, my daily sales had doubled; by June, they had tripled. More importantly, I believe that this campaign will continue to show results over the life of the book. What did I do to achieve these results?

\* \* \* \*

I found the top personal finance bloggers and offered them a free copy of my book for review.

\* \* \* \*

#### Bloggers as Influencers

Blogs have come a long way from their humble beginnings, when one pundit observed that they were largely written by “computer geeks who’d never French-kissed a girl.” Today about 150 million blogs exist. Bloggers provide respected sources of cutting edge information in a dizzying array of fields. Many have enough followers to make a decent living off their ads, exclusive members’ content, and related products and services. Some have followings the size of entire countries.<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, top bloggers wield vast influence. In *The Tipping Point*, Malcomb Gladwell wrote of the importance “Connectors” (people who have lots of acquaintances), “Mavens” (“people we rely upon to connect us with new information”) and “Salesmen” (people who easily persuade others to adopt their opinions). In their own unique ways, these three personality types are effective in spreading new ideas.<sup>2</sup>

Popular bloggers seem to possess all of these characteristics to some extent, making them extremely valuable allies for authors. For example, Gladwell states that, “Mavens are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know.” Although Gladwell wrote years before blogs became popular, doesn’t this describe serious bloggers?

#### The Benefits of Blog Exposure

When successful bloggers rave about a product, people listen – not only their regular followers, who often receive posts through RSS feeds and e-mail, but people searching the web for information. Search engines love to direct people to popular blogs, since significant sites link to them (giving them authority) and they provide more up-to-date information than most traditional websites.

With traditional newspapers struggling, bloggers are becoming the new journalists. (And, we should say, many great journalists are becoming bloggers.) Mix in the fact that top newspapers and magazines now have blogs of their own, and we’ve simply got to take them seriously.

Get mentioned in a top blog, and you get more than a day of fame. The post stays there permanently and may be found years later by people searching on your topic. Also, you get a permanent link back to your press page, author site, blog, Amazon page, or whatever page is important to you. Incoming links from popular blogs make search engines rank you higher, giving you more traffic.

### Just How Much Exposure Can You Get?

Imagine that you're promoting a personal finance book that gets reviewed by "Wise Bread," ([www.wisebread.com](http://www.wisebread.com)) one of the top personal finance blogs. How many people are likely to hear about your book? Here are some indicators:

- On average, 400,000 people visit *Wise Bread* each month ("unique visitors").
- Additionally, over 29,000 people will get your review delivered to their computers via RSS feed.
- If *Wise Bread* "tweets" about your book, their 12,000 Twitter followers can read about it.
- Many readers might "re-tweet" to their lists or repost the information to their blogs and networks, giving further exposure.
- Many others may find your review years later when they search your topic in Google. With over 150,000 incoming links, *Wise Bread* posts are considered priority content by Google.

### Is This an Extreme Example?


Writers love to use the most dramatic illustrations, which, unfortunately, don't often apply broadly. Thus, I should point out that *Wise Bread* isn't atypical among popular personal finance blogs. It's actually ranked second in the category, with an Alexa Rank of 8768. The number one personal finance blog ranks 3,855 (lower is better). The third blog ranks neck and neck with *Wise Bread* at 8,777.

Neither did I choose an unusually popular playing field. Personal finance blogs are not the most popular blogs. If you write about technology, consider <http://www.boingboing.net>, which has millions of unique monthly visitors and over 600,000 RSS subscribers.<sup>3</sup>

### "RSS Feed" Definition

RSS stands for "really simple syndication." In the present context, I'm speaking of people who use RSS to receive blog posts from their favorite blogs, automatically, when they're posted. This is easier than having to go to each blog to find recent posts.

People subscribe by clicking on a link from the blog that might appear something like this:

 Subscribe to the RSS Feed

### How Many "Visitors" Actually Read Your Review?

To be more realistic with these stats, let's admit that not all of those "unique visitors" will see your post. Many visit the blog to see other specific pages. And many who receive RSS feeds don't read them regularly. As with baseball stats, it's easier to track how many attended than how many actually saw a given play. Some were buying hotdogs when the winning home run sailed by their seats.

Obviously, blogs have wonderful potential for getting the word out about our books. How can we harness their vast influence?

### Blog Priority #1: Solicit Reviews

#### Why I Prioritized Reviews

There are several ways to get noticed on blogs. You can start your own blog, comment on other's posts, do guest posts, or solicit reviews from established blogs. I prioritize getting reviews because the blogger – the one who already has the readers' ears and respect – will be recommending my book. This wields much more influence than anything I'd say about my own book.

#### When *Not* to Use this Tactic

If your book doesn't tend to get good reviews, consider a different tactic. You can always do radio interviews or something else that doesn't require reviews.

#### Revisiting our "Priority Principles"

Here's how I applied our "Priority Principles" to decide the most effective way to use blogs in publicizing my books. Let's use the analogy of a speaking event at a packed football stadium, the largest of which hold around 100,000 fans, far less than the millions of monthly visitors to the *Boing Boing* blog.<sup>4</sup>

- **"Let others praise you, rather than praising yourself."**

Recommendations by trusted authorities are typically more effective than authors pushing their own books. The popular blogger writing a post about your books is analogous to a respected thought leader recommending your book to the stadium crowd.

- **"Go where people are already gathered, rather than gathering a crowd around you."**

It takes a lot of time and effort to gather your own crowd via a blog or Twitter following. So why not go where people already gather?

- **"Address the interested, rather than interrupting the disinterested."**

The stadium is packed with people who came to hear about your topic. You don't have to interrupt them with an annoying advertisement.

#### The Overview: What I Did

So I found the top 200 personal finance blogs and offered each of them a copy of my book for review and another copy for a giveaway. Their response:

- Forty-five bloggers requested a copy. That's almost one out of four. Not bad.

- Eighteen wrote a review so far and/or did the giveaway. Although eighteen doesn't seem like a lot, you've got to remember that these are popular bloggers. A review by one of them might be more influential than 100 reviews on blogs with small followings.
- Nobody acted like I was bothering them. In fact, they seemed truly appreciative and some expressed a lot of excitement about getting the book. After all, they are passionate about the subject, love fresh ideas, and understand the appeal of giveaways to their audiences.

### The Boring Details: How I Did It

This campaign is as easy as finding busy, relevant blogs and asking them to review your book. If you're the type who likes to wing it, don't let the following details discourage you and lead you to think it's more complicated than it really is. But if you can endure details, some of these tips can set you way ahead and help you to be much more effective.

#### 1. Find the Most Influential Blogs in your Subject Area.

**a. Search for previously compiled lists.** Why compile your own list if someone else has compiled it for you? Search your subject area in Google in various ways. I searched: "Top Financial Blogs," "Popular Money Blogs," "Top Personal Finance Blogs." Eventually, I found an invaluable list of over 500 personal finance blogs, listed in order of Alexa popularity, updated daily.

(<http://www.wisebread.com/top-100-most-popular-personal-finance-blogs>).

Obviously, this made my campaign much easier.

**Note:** The University of California at Berkeley recommends searching with more than one search engine, since each searches different materials from different perspectives. They recommend Google, Yahoo, and Exalead.<sup>5</sup>

**b. Search [www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com).** Beside the search box, click "blogs," instead of the default "posts." Search your subject and its synonyms to find top blogs according to Technorati "authority."

**c. If you're searching a large, popular subject area, click "Blog Directory" on Technorati's home page to see what they've compiled for subjects such as "pets," "home," "religion," etc.**

**d. Once you've found some popular blogs in your subject area, note which blogs each of them recommend and link to.** They typically link to the most helpful, popular, authoritative blogs in their field. Add them to your list.

#### Caveat

Compilations of top blogs in a specific subject area aren't typically comprehensive. Often, bloggers must submit their blogs to be included.

#### Technorati "Authority"

This number tells the number of sites that have linked to a given blog in the past six months. The higher the number, the better.

Find the rest of this chapter and the rest of the book in either e-book or print by purchasing it from places like Amazon.com. Again, the title is *Sell More Books!*, by J. Steve Miller, Cherie K. Miller, et.al. Thanks for your interest!