

Tips on Authoring and Publishing

Introduction

- Hello, everyone. Thanks to ISIC for inviting me to participate in this Literary Happy Hour. I'm very happy to be here and to share the experiences I've had with you.
- So, what am I going to cover today? Basically, the journey to becoming a published author is a three-step process.
 - First, you have to write the book—so you have to become a writer;
 - Second, you have to sell your book to a publisher—so now you have to become a very good salesman; and
 - Third if no one knows your book exists, no one will buy it. So you also have to become a publicist.

As we don't have so much time, I'm just going to share my top tips with you for each of these three steps. So let's get started!

Step 1 - Writing the book

Tip #1

ORMA – every writing activity should begin with ORMA

O – Objective - Why are you writing your book?

R – Readership (Who are you talking to? You need to speak to your audience in a language that is appropriate to them, so it needs to be clear to you who your readers are).

M – Message (What are the key messages you want to convey? I recommend choosing 3 – 4 key messages and reinforce them over and over throughout the book).

A – Action (what is it that you want your readers to do, think or feel as a result of having read your book)?

So you really need to go through this process of ORMA and have these points clear in your mind before you start.

Tip #2

Have a plan / roadmap

To write your book, the place to start is with a plan. There are different ways of writing a plan.

A fairly common approach is to start by organising your ideas into 3 or 4 broad, overarching themes. Each of these will form a Part of your book. Give some thought to the logic of how these Parts are ordered.

Then, break each part further down into 3 or 4 specific topics. Each of these will be a chapter. For each chapter, make detailed bullet points of the ideas you want to cover, and of how you are going to transition from one idea to the next.

Next, sketch out your introduction and conclusion – make detailed bullet points here too. And your plan is complete. This is your road map. The more time you invest in this preparation, in really organizing your thoughts, the easier it will be to write the book.

Aside from the parts and chapters, most non-fiction books will include some of the following:

- Front of the book: Endorsements, Foreword and Acknowledgements
- Back of the book: Glossary, Bibliography, About the Author, Index (which the publisher should pay to have done professionally) and perhaps some appendices.

Tip #3

Establish your writing routine

It sounds so obvious but once your plan is in place you have to start writing. The ideal is to develop a routine around your writing, in terms of when and where you will write. Once this is decided, regardless of how you feel, you need to show up. Half of the success in writing, in my view, is just showing up. Having this routine in place will also help you to identify the mindset, the zone you need to be in, in order for the words to flow. So think about:

- What time of day or night are you most alert?
- What other commitments do you have? When will you be able to write uninterrupted for a significant block of time?
- Can anyone support you by taking over some of your commitments for this period that you are writing the book?

My other tip is to set yourself a goal of a number of pages to write each day, e.g. 5 pages. And once you've written the 5 pages, even if it only takes you an hour, you're done for the day.

Tip #4

Hire a publishing consultant

If you've never written a book before, I recommend that you write your introduction and one or two chapters only, and then invest in some time with a publishing consultant who either is or has been an editor in a reputable publishing house in our field. You will receive invaluable feedback that will ensure you are on the right track with your writing before the bulk of the work has been done, obviating the need for lengthy rewrites.

Tip #5

Writing for excellence

Don't underestimate the high standards of excellence and professionalism in the publishing world. You need to stand out for the right reasons. Publishers want to see a minimum need for editing. They're really looking for the whole package from authors. So don't settle for mediocrity. If something niggles, fix it. But by the same token don't overwork the manuscript. At a certain point you need to be able to move on and it's important to do that in order to instil the book with a sense of energy and momentum.

Have something fresh and unique. This is what publishers want to see. Take a risk. Gamble. Put your stamp on your work. Be original. This is a good way to get noticed.

Your own voice as the author is a really important feature. Readers need to be able to engage with you. They will want to know about your experiences, your journey. But if you go too far the other way, and write a pure narrative, in other words, a life story, you also alienate readers and therefore, publishers. So it's important to get this balance right in terms of allowing your voice to shine through.

Tip #6

Work with energies before you start writing every time and connect to the helpers. Be the mini-cog in the maxi-mechanism of your writing project. The helpers will be as

invested as you are, they will bring you ideas and support you through the inevitable challenges and counter flow that will arise.

Step 2 - Selling the book – top tips!

Tip #1 - What publishers are looking for

The second step to becoming published and perhaps the most difficult, is to find a publisher for your book. So now you have to be a salesman. A comprehensive list of publishers and agents is available in an excellent book called *the Writer's Handbook* – this is the Bible for writers. It's updated every year. You can get it on Amazon.

The key thing all publishers want to see is that the book is commercially viable. So you need to be able to demonstrate how your book is going to be profitable for them. Publishers will expect this information to be compiled in what is known as a publishing proposal.

Tip #2 – the Publishing Proposal

So let's go through the steps now of a publishing proposal.

Covering letter

The covering letter needs to explain what your book is about in one sentence, then in one page. It has to get the publisher's attention. If they're not hooked here, if you don't grab their interest, they may not read any further. Here is the one sentence summary that I put in my publishing proposal.

'This is the first book in English for the general reader interested in parapsychology, personal development and contemporary spirituality to summarise the exceptional work of renowned Brazilian consciousness researcher Dr. Waldo Vieira.'

So what do you need to include after the covering letter?

Front page

Book title, a strong endorsement, your name and contact details.
Either the title itself or the sub-title needs to explain exactly what the book is about.

Summary of content

Taken from covering letter. So this is your one-pager explaining what the book is about.

Chapter outlines

Here you need to briefly describe what's in the Introduction, each chapter, and the conclusion, and note what appendices you intend to include. You should also provide 2 – 3 completed chapters.

Author details

One page biography. Publishers like a promotable author. They want authors who are already involved in publicity so what they want to know from you is, what is your platform for writing your book, are you an expert and why, and are you already visible in the media? Include a good professional head and shoulders photo. A good professional photo makes you more promotable in the publishers' eyes. You should also mention any publicity you've already had here.

Sales, marketing and promotion

There are several points to be included in this section

Category – have a look in book stores to see what categories any similar books are placed in. Know the category and the genre. If your book can't be categorized, it can't be sold.

Unique Selling Points – what is different about your book? Is it a first in any way? You need to come up with something here.

Foreword and endorsements – you need to get one person to endorse the book before you have finished writing it; someone from your field who knows you. The higher their profile the better. It's never too early to start networking and making these kinds of contacts. You can also make a 'cold call' as writing a foreword can provide good publicity for them as well so it's not all a one-way street.

Target readership – Here you need to qualify and quantify your audience. Who is going to buy your book? Do your research. E.g. Are any member organisations prepared to order the book in bulk? This is a big advantage that we potentially have.

Competition – very few books have no competition. Look on Amazon, go to bookstores. Identify your competition.

Media contacts – list your contacts here and try to get agreement from some media to publicize your book once it's published and include this here. Mention their circulation / number of listeners, subscribers etc.

Social media presence – Detail how many contacts/followers you have on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter. Start building this. This is an area where Rodrigo Medeiros has been extremely successful, and he sold a lot of books. He will be better placed to give tips on this than me.

Planned conferences, seminars, talks, forthcoming events

List any relevant events here and also see if already you can get an invitation to speak at of them, and if so, state this here.

Length and specifications

Word count, images, appendices etc. The publishers need this information order to cost the book. How much is it going to cost them to produce?

A guide on how to put a proposal together can be found in an excellent book called *The Writer's Journey: From Inspiration to Publication* by Julia McCutcheon

Tip #3 - Resources

Publishers and Agents

Where to find them? There are a number of excellent resources, I suggest:

The Writers Yearbook

The Writers and Artists Yearbook

Check out who's publishing your competitors on Amazon, and approach them. I sold my foreign rights in Brazil and France by doing this.

Note that in the UK, most publishers still accept a direct approach from the author but it can take a long time to get a reply, sometimes six months or more. In the US however, publishers don't accept direct approaches from unpublished authors so you have to get an agent first. This can take as long as finding a publisher.

Classic mistakes writers make when selling their book

- They get lost in the detail when writing or talking about it. We've discussed this.
- They don't do enough research for the publishing proposal.
- They rush into sending out the material.

An excellent book for understanding the complete process of how to go about getting published is called *An author's guide to publishing* by Michael Legat.

Step 3 – Publicizing the book

Authors have to be ready to spend a lot of time selling and promoting their book. Because major publishing houses generally only invest in publicity for a new writer who has a buzz, or for a book they have paid a big advance for.

Top Tip #1

How readers find your book

- Either the title or the sub-title needs to say what the book is about as people will search Amazon with key words.
- Have something eye-catching on the cover/jacket.
- The back cover blurb – write this yourself. Your publisher doesn't know your book as well as you do. And what the reader wants to know from the blurb on the back cover is, *what's in it for me?* So be sure to answer this question. Let them know what they will get out of reading the book, the benefits.
- Reader reviews, super important – ask people you know to do reviews for you as soon as your book is posted on Amazon, this will be well in advance of the publishing date. This is something I think we are really poor at here in Scientology. We are so many of us in this community. This brings us a huge advantage over our competitors and we should be leveraging this. We have the potential to have a massive impact in terms of promoting scientology books on Amazon, but few people take the time to write reviews and I understand that we're all very busy with so many things to do. But I really urge you to do this for others and encourage them to do it for you when you publish your book.

Top Tip #2

Promoting your book

There is fierce competition among authors for media attention. Publishers concentrate their resources on their 'star titles. If you are not a star author, the publisher will provide basic publicity leading up to publication and for a few months afterwards. Then they move onto other projects. After that, you can consider the marketing to be your responsibility.

Some of the concrete actions you can take:

- Obviously, promote yourself on social media.
- Write articles and try to get them published on some big online sites. E.g. Finerminds, has 615,000 fans on FB. Read the guidelines for what kind of articles they want to publish and follow them.
- Seek speaking opportunities at conferences, exhibitions and other events.
- When you're at these events, network, network, network. Through the contacts you make, you'll receive other invitations and it becomes a snowball effect.
- Radio and TV are great channels obviously for promoting your book but there is a lot of competition to get slots. So you need to know how to pitch yourself to the media.

Top Tip #3

The Elevator Pitch

- Example: Coast-to-Coast, 2 million listeners, got the producer's phone number.
- When I mentioned Dr. Vieira, the producer said 'No one knows who he is in the US.' Then I mentioned that Pim van Lommel had written the foreword and the book was endorsed by Peter Fenwick. Both names instantly recognizable. This is where the power of your endorsements come in.

- When making the pitch, you need to be able to say what your book is about in one sentence.
- Once you've got the person's attention with your one-sentence explanation, there are five key words that drive the producer's decision about the best story to have on a programme. Remember the acronym TRUTH.
 - T - Topical; now/next
 - R - Relevant to the audience
 - U - Unusual or unique
 - T - Trouble - e.g. a near-death experience; a difficult relationship you were able to contextualize with a retrocognition.
 - H - Human interest Here you want to give some real-life examples and anecdotes. They will lend authenticity. So be sure to talk about your own personal experiences of paranormal phenomena.
- Final tip about making a pitch is, communicate with passion and self-belief. Enthusiasm counts for a lot. Especially if you're pitching to a US media, this is not the time to be modest. You have to bang your own drum.

Classic mistakes writers make when publicizing/marketing their book.

- They are not proactive enough - they leave it all to their publisher. So remember, your profile and your platform is your responsibility.

Wrap up

My parting tip is very simple. Believe in yourself. You can do it.