

Publisher's Blog

CALLING ALL AUTHORS --- How to publish with your eyes wide open!

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[HOW DO I MAKE A LIVING AS AN AUTHOR?](#)

Posted by: [Valerie Connelly](#) in *Untagged* on Feb 14, 2010



Every day I hear this question. Every day I reply with the same answer: discover your niche and focus all your attention on developing it.

Both fiction and non-fiction are niche worthy. Take Dan Brown, for one outstanding example of niche creation in fiction. His books are designed as mystery-driven thrillers, complete with symbol-ridden secrets to be discovered in historically significant places by interestingly flawed characters. Add to that the controversial religious themes that chip away at the underpinnings of Christianity, and the recipe is rich for argument, lawsuits, and money in the bank account of the author and the publisher. Patricia Cornwell does much the same thing using her expertise in crime forensics to create a long list of chilling murder tales, all gruesome and compelling, with a crime team of brilliant yet tarnished detectives in search of themselves as much as they are in search of the criminals. Need I mention John Grisholm, or Michael Chriton or James Patterson or Ian Fleming, Agatha Christy or P.D. James or Danielle Steele or Mary Higgins Clark as fiction masters of the same niche-creating thinking?

In the non-fiction realm are the Chicken Soup for the Whatever, and the Something or Other for Dummies series which rake in oodles of bucks for the creators, the licensed authors and the publishers. Of course, there are religious gurus, doctors, and spiritual guides galore to go along with all the fitness experts, drug-abuse experts and gossip experts who sell every sort of solution to every kind of problem.

Nichedom is the realm of those who plan ahead as they write taking into account the marketplace they want to create or develop to its fullest. The reward is fame, fortune and a place in the literary or pop culture lineup.

There are four "givens" you must have to be able to search for success.

The first given is that you actually can write. This assumes you understand all the mechanics of

good writing, the spelling, punctuation, syntax and grammar of the craft. If you write fiction, you must have a solid grasp on character development, plot and subplot, the ability to write natural-sounding dialog, and a flair for the genre in which you write. If you write non-fiction, you must be an expert in the subject, with a passion for the subject and the goal of sharing the subject in a way that will draw the readers out of the woodwork. And in either case, it assumes you have a great editor who guides you and keeps you in tune with your niche-Muse.

The second given is that you like to talk about your work and yourself. You must give up the notion that you won't have to get out of the house to promote your books. You must develop the skill of speaking in public and not being embarrassed to talk about yourself in front of others. You need to create a personable author image along with the niche for your books. People will want to meet you. Be an author who likes meeting readers. You'll sell more books.

The third given is that you never stop promoting your books. Every signing venue, every TV or radio interview, every talk or speech, every article online or in print, every time you seek to promote your books, you have a purpose and a goal in mind. You are willing to start locally, expand to regional, national and global audiences. You have a well-designed, functional website that draws people. You blog. You build a database of customers. You build a database of venues any and everywhere but in a bookstore. You come up with contests, polls, giveaways, and games to bring readers to your cyber-door. If one thing doesn't work, you come up with another that might. You ignore the "no" and search for the "yes" in everything you do to promote your books. You learn to write press releases so you can spread the word about your events fast and often.

The fourth given is that you make and follow a plan. Your books are designed to revolve around your niche. You design your writing schedule and your promotional schedule so that you are continually creating more stories for the niche and more opportunities for the promotion of the stories. Your calendar is planned a year in advance, so you know when you'll be writing, when you'll be planning the promotional calendar and when you'll be actually out the door implementing the plan itself. You define the work as a job, not as a hobby or an emotional outlet. You have a budget with clear goals, and you spend that budget wisely. You love your work, and if you have to have a day job, you spend the nights working on your books and their promotion. You work overtime, on weekends, and take few holidays. You make your passion truly your life's work.

If you do all these things, you have a chance. But one thing to remember: no one can replace the author in the process. The author is the engine that pulls the train, the power behind the writing, the face in front of the audience, the goal-oriented person who motivates everyone around him to do their part. No one else will do this for you, so the sooner you take on the job and the responsibility of creating your niche and promoting your books, the sooner you'll see results.

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[WHY PAY TO PUBLISH?](#)

Posted by: [Valerie Connelly](#) in [myblog](#) on Oct 30, 2009



All right, pay-to-publish is a touchy subject, and we all know it.

Many authors think there is something inherently bad about paying to publish a book. Publishers who are looking to pay advances for new talent are non-existent. over 500,000 books are published every year in the USA. So, when an unknown author tries the old query-and-hope-for-the-best technique of submitting books for consideration, the rejection notices pile up like the recent blizzard in Denver, Colorado, two feet deep and cold as ice.

Most authors do not know professional editors. Most do not know layout and design specialists, printers, distributors, shippers, marketing experts and web gurus. And most authors lack these skills as well. So, what is an author to do?

Look for the publisher who:

- 1) involves you in the process of creating your book from beginning to end
- 2) pays you 100% royalties until you earn all your costs back and 50-70% royalties thereafter
- 3) educates you to the business of marketing your book, and who stands with you throughout that process and afterward
- 4) whose books win awards and
- 5) whose authors come back again and again to publish second, third, fourth and fifth titles

Oh, did I mention these are the qualities we believe in at Nightengale Press, and we are the only publisher in the industry who meets all these standards? Oh, that's right, we developed these standards and we live up to them every day. We are publishing our 90th title by the end of 2009. We limit our production to 15 to 20 titles per year to make sure every author gets the one-on-one support we value so highly.

Go to www.nightengalepublishing.com for all the service details.

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[Summer Tips for Marketing Your Books](#)

Posted by: [Valerie Connelly](#) in *Untagged* on Jun 14, 2009



June is the month of love and a popular month for weddings. But, in the world of books, June is the month when everyone wants a quick-read novel for the beach, or something plain old entertaining for the trip to some well-deserved vacation spot. Perhaps some are still wishing to learn something new, but most are looking for light fare.

BEA2009 is over , but the buzz is still vibrating! Read [BEA Book Publisher's Discussion](#) led by Tina Brown, CEO and Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Beast for inside info on where the evolution of the book industry may be going.

Show Floor Buzz and related articles:

[Thursday Morning Panel: When to Give It Away](#) - Wiley and Harlequin reps shed light on how their companies have given away content as a way of generating revenue and increasing visibility for their brands:

[Stay Ahead of the Shift: What Publishers Can Do to Flourish in a Community-Centric Web World](#) - Mike Shatzkin presentation:

[Los Angeles Times article](#) - BookExpo America reveals an industry in transition:

Looking ahead to the Fall, publishers are ramping up PR for the new titles they have almost ready to launch. Authors are lining up events and interviews on radio talk shows. Or, at least,

they should be! Sometimes we all take that mental vacation the stress of balancing work, family and our passion for writing requires of us.

Here are a few tips for getting through the Summer with something to show for it!

- Plan your Fall events and contact the venues where you'd like to do signings, give talks and the like
- Book yourself on at least one radio show per week for the months of September, October and November
- Plan your website updates and implement them by the end of July
- Clean house in your database, and remove any email addresses that come back with those Mailer-Daemon tags!
- Plan your writing schedule within your own reality. Make sure you give at least an hour a day to the task at hand, whether you are working on a new book or writing press releases and articles about the ones you've already written.
- Get out and play when the weather is good. Go hiking, play tennis, walk your dog, lay in the sun! Whatever changes your pace and gives you some new brain cells.

And go to [CALLING ALL AUTHORS RADIO SHOW](#) to listen to the streaming archives. This is where you can learn some great information about how to sell your books. Just read the blurbs to see what's on each week's show. We go back to November 2005! That's a LOT of information just waiting for you to listen again.

ALERT! ALERT! On Thursday, June 18th we're recording the June SPECIAL EDITION with

pm terrell

(also known as Trish Terrell) about how she makes a great living from her fiction titles, how she keeps the sales growing for ALL her books ALL the time. It should go live on the 19th. **DON'T MISS THIS ONE!** It is packed with how-to information for building a real business from your writing.

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[PR SAVVY for Authors](#)

Posted by: [Valerie Connelly](#) in [myblog](#) on May 13, 2009



To the first-time author, sending Press Releases may seem confusing and time-consuming. How does one decide which press release service to use? Should you send press releases via several services at one time? Why is learning to do this for yourself the best thing to do, to save money and expand your audience.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

The typical PR firm charges a retainer of \$3500 per month under a 12-month minimum contract. This means the author or business pays \$42,000 for a year's worth of effort. There are no guarantees that the work will produce results, though firms charging prices like these do have success with some clients. It is a long way from \$42,000 in expense to sales of 42,000 books which could cover the expense, if an author's royalty is \$1 or more per book. To make a modest profit above and beyond the 12 month costs, an author would need to sell 50,000 books or more.

Some firms offer news-release packages to fit the anticipated use of the wire and the budget of their clients. The larger the release package, the lower the cost per release.

5 releases for \$425 = \$105 per release
10 releases for \$750 = \$75 per release
20 releases for \$1300 = \$65 per release
30 releases for \$1800 = \$60 per release
50 releases for \$2750 = \$55 per release
100 releases for \$5000 = \$50 per release

Again, an author buying just press releases and who gets \$1 per book royalty would have to sell as many books as each release cost to just break even. In the example above, the author would need to sell between 425 and 5,000 books just to break even on this part of the cost of his book. If he earns \$10 per book through direct sales, he'll need to sell 43 to 500 books to pay for these

releases at these rates.

The old rules still apply

Before sending your press release you'll want to research your target journalists and bloggers and ensure that your audience frequents the media you are about to pitch. From there you can begin to weave in some tried-and-true best practices to help make your announcement more effective.

- 1. Define your media focus** - try to limit your pitches to only those outlets that directly serve your target audience. Do your research and then focus on those outlets that are most likely to provide opportunity. Resist the urge to send untargeted emails.
- 2. Review your outreach tactics** - pitch journalists and bloggers in a format that will resonate. (Believe it or not, some journalists still prefer fax over email.) There's no use wasting your efforts on a great pitch that never makes it into the hands of the journalist or blogger.
- 3. Send a release whenever there is something to announce** - you'll want to keep your audience aware of what's going on with your organization. But beware: Sending too many "irrelevant" releases can potentially cause your audience to take you less seriously.

Use these best practices for reaching today's audience

The rise of online media requires that many public relations professionals consider how they distribute their news. Here are some new rules for sending releases to an increasingly tech-savvy audience.

Tailor your release so that it directly relates to your target audience or constituents, rather than the journalist or blogger who may pick up the story. The Internet is rich with consumer-driven media. As such, your audience is more likely to receive the information directly rather than

through a third party, such as a journalist.

Create announcements according to specific segments such as: blogger, journalist, target audience. Sure it might be a little more work, but at least you'll appeal to each group based on their preferences.

Optimize your press release for SEO. With more content online, you'll want your press release top of mind and at the top of the search stack.

Craft a multi-media release. Including pictures, video, and text can make your release more appealing to an online audience and give the journalist or blogger a more compelling reason to write about you or your company.

Design a separate social media release. You may even want to take it up a notch by using a unique template, reminiscent of a web page or blog. Whatever you decide, be sure to include "share this" buttons. This will help encourage redistribution.

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[You Have the Power](#)

Posted by: [Valerie Connelly](#) in [myblog](#) on Apr 26, 2009



When I think about how to inspire the people I work for, meaning my authors, I realize the barriers they see ahead can seem over whelming. The progression of motivation goes from optimistic and motivated to befuddled and fatigued. The period of time it takes for the

first description to morph into the second description really depends on many factors, but most of all it depends on an author's understanding of the daily job required to breathe life into a book.

Most often, I see the joy go out the the eyes of authors who thought that somehow the book would sell itself. I see some decide to stop the process of bringing the book to the public because the work is unforgiving and demanding. But, most of all I see the disappointment, and feel it with my authors, when they do not see a way to reinvigorate themselves and their books.

Why? Well, there are three reasons why an author and ultimately the book both lose the energy to go forward.

1) The demands of making a living by other means shortens the time an author can devote to promoting his book and blurs the focus needed to promote a book.

2) The money it takes to keep reaching out, getting the interest of the reading public, even if the author does all the publicity work for himself, eventually runs out. Gas prices, food prices, clothing prices, the cost of living keep rising, and we all cut away things we think are luxuries. Promoting a book can fall easily into the category of luxury item.

3) But, most importantly, the author didn't work out a plan as to how the book would maintain a life. The author didn't start out with an idea of how to keep the book in front of buyers.

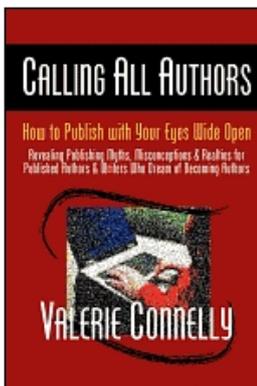
"What's the solution?" you ask.

1) Recognize that you must spend a certain amount of time every day working at the promotion of your book. Doing some portion of your marketing plan takes time and energy. Contacting newspapers, websites and sending informational emails is a constant task. Connecting with venues where you can talk about your book, such as libraries, schools, businesses, and organizations is essential as you release your book and afterward to keep it alive. These take time. Just an hour a day helps a lot! Carve it out of your busy schedule, set the time to be the same every day, and keep a log of what you do in that hour. Track your contacts, mailings, etc... this will show you what you're doing and give you a clear idea of what works and what doesn't work.

2) Develop and nurture a customer list. Every person who bought your book potentially will buy another one if you keep them in the know. The successful authors, the ones who actually make their living by selling their books, have extensive contact lists they have built over years. Your publisher has that information if they sell your books from a website store. Ask for a list. Sadly, you can't get a list of buyers from mainstream online stores. But, if people review your book, you can contact them.

3) Invent and re-invent your marketing approach. A simple mailer of one piece of paper with review blurbs, reader comments, your book cover image and a cheery note from the author inviting the recipient to buy the book is a tried and true technique. I respond to these myself when an author I know sends me an alert by mail (not email). I think that's because it's not a bill and it's not really junk mail. If I know the author's work, I am thrilled to get something personally from him or her.

4) WRITE ANOTHER BOOK! Once you have one book, you should write another. Every time you bring out a new book the former titles get a boost. When you make a habit of building your contact list and keeping in touch, people who loved the first book will want to read the second book...and so on.



So, it is time to begin --- or begin again --- to make your book's life long and fruitful.

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[**Welcome to the Publisher's Corner**](#)

Posted by: [Valerie Connelly](#) in [myblog](#) on Apr 26, 2009



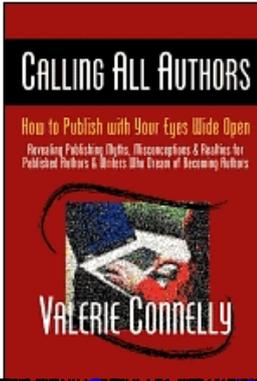
Welcome to the Calling All Authors blog which will replace our Calling All Author's website. Why? Primarily, because the website was less effective than we had hoped. Simple as that!

The purpose of this blog is to bring perspective, information and motivational content to writers and authors who are trying to write, publish and market their books in the rapidly changing publishing world.

Myths abound. Misinformation abounds. There are confusing contradictions everywhere. Facts are lost in the constant flow of hype and hyperbole. Where an author's success is most relevant, at his own bottom line, few are truly interested in helping him achieve the best possible financial results for his efforts.

I believe that if you look at the reality, success \square **comes down to answering one question:** Where is most of the book's income staying --- in the author's bank account or everyone else's? The distributor, the printer, the bookstore, the publisher come first and last in line is the author. This blog is going to provide you to tools to change that. Everyone in the food chain will take his portion. That is reality. The goal is to see to it that the author gets his fair share.

FAIR share. What is that? Enough to cover publishing costs, marketing costs, and still take some home. The author must become a business person if he is going to get his fair share. So, this blog will address the business of publishing and marketing a book.



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