

The Publishing Journey

Want to be a published author? Here's everything you wish you'd known before you got started.

"Anybody who's never been published before, who's not already famous and comes into a publishing firm and says, 'I want you people to make me famous,' has not got the point," says Adrian Zackheim, executive editor and vice-president of William Morrow & Co.

Zackheim is responsible for such best-selling titles as John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene's *Megatrends 2000* and Harvey Mackay's *Beware the Naked Man Who Offers You His Shirt*.

"We cannot make people famous," he continues. "That's not our game."

It's a modern fact of life. Gone are the glorious days of the past when publishing houses believed in authors

By Kathryn Hall

so vigorously that they spent their days building glamorous images that resulted in fame and fortune. Authors of a declining, elite generation understandably lament such losses. Worse, many of them still belabor the question of whether they should have to "stoop" to the crassness of regarding their beloved projects as commercial products and deign to having to sell them as such.

Writing a book and assuming a publisher will sell it is akin to giving birth to a child and expecting the obstetrician will act as parent.

It has been frustrating to watch the disillusioned, beleaguered authors who show up in my office and who have not understood that shift in thinking. I think of them as the New York Publishing House Refugees.

It is rare that a new author with high expectations understands that his or her book, painstakingly written over several months or years—possibly involving sacrifices in work and family life—is only one of the more than 55,000 books published in the United

States each year. That's roughly 1,000 books each week. A brief projection of where one's book statistically might fit into the scheme of things brings home a sobering realization.

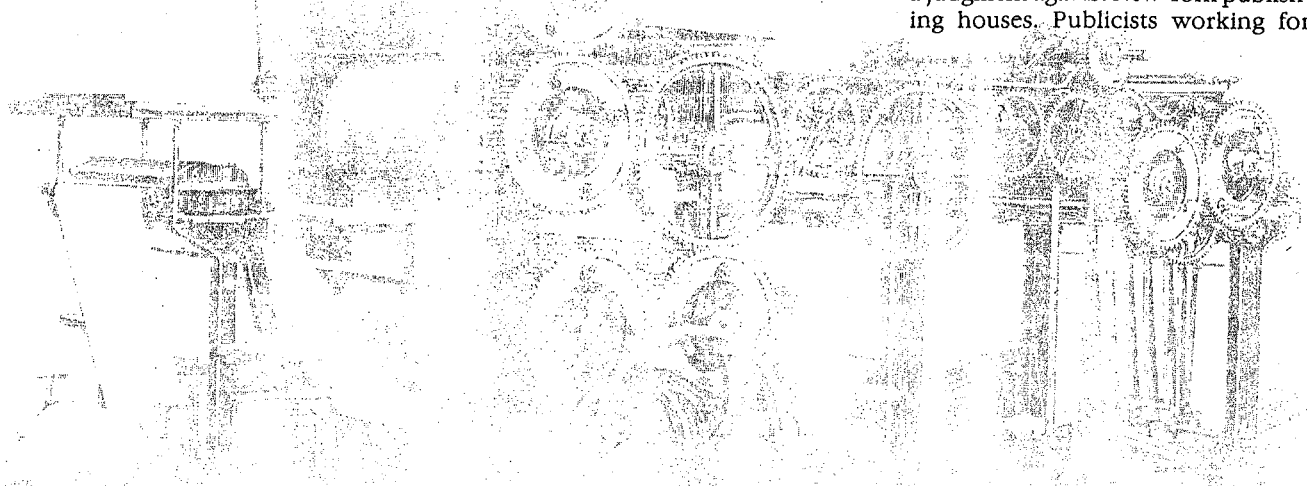
Author Harvey Mackay agrees. New authors "have to be realistic and know what the odds are. There are 750,000 manuscripts . . . written every year and only 55,000 get published. And of the ones that get published only a handful make it to the *New York Times* best-sellers list.

"A first printing for a business book is around 10,000 copies. Well, there are 5,000 bookstores in the United States. That's two per bookstore," he chuckles. "They have to understand the distribution and how hard it is to get a book in demand."

New York's formula for successful books involves looking at the sales figures of advance sales and of the first three months of the life of a book. If by then a significant number has not been sold, the publisher will probably look only to recover costs, or at least to minimizing its losses. Then it is on to the next book, the next gamble—all to the dismay of the author.

This information is not intended as a judgment against New York publishing houses. Publicists working for

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New York houses are doing the best they can within the constraints they are given by editors, marketing people, and direct publicity directors who are telling them what to do.

The scenario is not exclusively an East Coast phenomenon, and there are many exceptions to it. But generally speaking, the publishing world is still based largely in New York City and this is how business is done in New York. West Coast publishers tend to be smaller houses that publish fewer books each year and consequently are more invested in staying with an author and her or his goals over the long haul. Again, many exceptions exist.

How much responsibility must an author be willing to assume for the success of his or her book?

"One hundred percent!" answers Zackheim emphatically. "And Harvey Mackay is such a wonderful case in point. He took full responsibility for his success. And by golly, we all benefitted."

This responsibility entails enormous research and a deep commitment of time, energy, and resources, both hard and soft, if the author is invested in reaching the audience for whom the book was written. You have to make it happen.

Making it happen

It's wise to get an overview of the publishing process before engaging on the path. The bare-bones version of the publishing process is four-fold: write the book, publish it, distribute it, and market it. There are many crossroads along the way.

One might begin by asking several critical questions:

■ Do I write the book or do I hire someone to collaborate? What about co-authoring?

■ Can I find a publisher with my own contacts or should I find an agent? How do I find the right agent?

■ What about self-publishing?

■ What's the difference between a publisher and a book producer?

■ If I have a publisher do I necessarily have distribution? And what about marketing?

■ Will my book be assigned to a publicist or should I hire one on my own?

What's a book publicist?

Publishing can be an arduous, complicated process. Without a guide it's easy to fall prey to costly lessons learned the hard way. A book publicist can serve as one such guide.

A book publicist's job is to solicit and secure interviews, reviews, and articles about his or her client authors and their books. These may appear in magazines and newspapers, or on radio and television stations around the country.

As a book publicist, my role is to ensure that my clients and their messages reach the public eye and ear. As a midpoint between authors and the media, I try to be a friend to both. My writers trust me to represent their work creatively and with integrity.

I've chosen to work with writers whose messages are in alignment with my personal vision for enhancing the quality of life on this planet. Toward that goal, as a publicist I provide my editors and producers with information I fully believe in. I think of myself as a socially responsible public relations specialist.

About the publishing process

Creating a book from inception to finished product is similar to the birth process. The writing of a book is the gestation time and the labor. It is the time one gives to creating new forms that will eventually have their own

destinies, their own lives. After the birth of a book, as with a child, the process has just begun. Both the book and the child need a lot of hand-holding and nurturing before they belong to the world.

No one writes a book by him- or herself. The list of acknowledgements at the beginning of every book points to a host of people, almost always too numerous to thank in person, for all the help they gave: colleagues, editors, friends, typists, publishers, family, and usually one special person without whose help the project would have been impossible. If one really looks at the entire publishing process, the number of people whose daily lives are professionally devoted to this endeavor from start to finish is astounding.

Writing and publishing a book is almost never about cloistering oneself in the woods, writing a manuscript, and miraculously finding a publisher who makes you famous while you sit back and count the royalties. I know authors (and so do you) who wrote their books on planes between cities. Their agents may work months to find publishers.

There are no formulas. Every publishing story is different. There are no ironclad contracts, no guaranteed advances, and no standard royalties. Not all publishers have good distribution.

Repeat. Not all publishers have good distribution. Distributors are the ones who get your book in the stores. Not all publishers are even interested in getting your book in the stores—maybe they specialize in direct mail.

And now the kicker: you have to be willing to take responsibility for the success of your book. You have to write it and you have to sell it.

It is neither fair nor realistic to rely on your publisher to sell and promote your book. And contrary to the big hoopla about New York publishers, the bigger the publisher, the more you will probably have to take responsibility for the promotion of your book. You are one person on the company's immense publishing agenda. Here's where good agents and publicists as team players can make an immense difference in the success of your book.

Getting started

Books in Print lists more than one million titles. Imagine the stories behind all those books! We could easily surmise that some of the reasons you write a book are as follows:

- The spirit moves you.
- You wanted to add value.
- It will establish you as an expert in your field.
- You have an important story to tell.
- You're looking forward to royalties.

To entertain other motivations for writing a book we might look at some of the qualities Zackheim of William Morrow considers when choosing books to publish:

"I'm interested in creating best-sellers. That's a narrow focus. I might choose a book because it's fun to work on, or literature I admire. I might want to publish a book because it contains information I want to make available to people. I might want to encourage a writer who's partway to a goal—an emerging artist. I might choose a book because it's going to create a sensation and controversy that's exciting to be part of. We're also interested in making money. This is a business."

At the beginning, in the sanctity of one's own quiet thoughts, is the time to ask the initial questions:

- Do I really want to write a book?
- Why do I want to write this book?
- Who, within me, wants to write this book? Which voice?

Having come to reasonable clarity about those questions, you're ready to look at the facts. This might call for an all-out business plan or at the very least a good mindmapping session. Whether it's complex or simple, have your plan in order before you embark on your publishing journey.

You need to explore writing and publishing options, decide who's going to publish your book, who's going to get it in the stores, and how you will reach your market. You need to know who your market is and what the competition is. You need to consider whether your book has a regional market or could go mainstream. Does it involve special sales? Is it a textbook? What preliminary work needs to be done? Do you need to plan now

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to write articles or make conference presentations?

Harvey Mackay offers advice to authors: "They should talk with a lot of other authors," he says. "They should talk to more than one publisher, obviously. They should talk to agents, without question. They should subscribe to *Publishers Weekly* right away, to get a feel and touch and pulse of the industry. . . .

"I knew nothing about book sales. But all the things I'm writing about in my books mean that it's incumbent upon me, or any person, to go out there and seek superior information. Do your homework; prepare to win. Little things mean a lot. Not true—little things mean everything. Focus. Concentrate. All these things make for a successful human being" in any endeavor, Mackay says.

"So all the things I'm writing about,

[I applied] to the book industry."

Granted, not all publishing ventures begin so coherently. My first introduction to the publishing industry came when I was hired as publicity director at what is now New World Library.

One of my first assignments was Shakti Gawain's book *Creative Visualization*, which originated as a stapled pamphlet in response to workshop participants' requests for further information. No one could have anticipated that the pamphlet would blossom into a full-fledged publishing company and that sales of Gawain's book would pass the two-million mark. No one guessed that it would appear in 12 foreign languages by the end of the decade.

Our guiding light was the Goethe quote taped to our telephones: "Whatever you can do or think you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." It worked.

About co-authoring

When you're clear about why you're writing the book, you might want to explore writing options. Perhaps you have a writing partner in mind but you're not sure how it would work.

John D. Adams co-authored *Life Changes: Growing Through Personal Transition* (Impact Publishers, 1990) with his partner Sabina A. Spencer. Adams feels strongly that co-authors must share a common vision. He and Spencer agreed on a vision of their book, outlined chapters, and mind-mapped the ideas in each chapter. Each then chose the chapters he or she wanted to write and they shared the balance.

"We discovered very early on there was no way we could write prose together, looking over each other's shoulders," laughs Adams. "So I wrote my half and she wrote her half and then we edited each other's work." After their publisher reviewed the work they went through two rewrites, working in the same way.

"We found it was very useful that we set time aside when we didn't do anything else but write," he says. "Now whenever we have to write we create writing retreats at which we spend four or five days in a bed-and-breakfast place with our laptop computers and do nothing else from sunup to sundown. We find this way we can make huge progress in a very

The Publicist's Challenge

In promoting a book, I ask myself how I can get it into the mainstream. How can I get it not only into the obvious places, but also into places where no one has imagined it? How can I broaden its audience? Who should know about the book? Where will the book add value?

My first job is to integrate the information I'm going to be presenting—a kind of creative gestation period I have to go through. It's actually a period of translation. What parts of the book will editors and producers find the most appealing? How do I best verbalize that? What's the dynamic 30-second version? If I can't generate interest in a book in the first minute on the phone, I've probably lost my case, or at least weakened it profoundly.

Once I feel satisfied with my intentions, I put together a press kit for the book and author and decide which editors and producers are most appropriate. I send each one a press kit along with a copy of the book. I follow up with a personal call to each contact to be certain the materials arrive.

We then begin a dialogue. It could take only one phone call, but—especially in the case of print media—it could take as many as 12. Bear in mind that editors of publications are working with very long lead times; it usually takes months to get something into print.

Publicity is tangible sales. It is brainstorming on formats. It is looking for the opening, the right approach for that publication, that show. I want reviews. I want interviews. I want feature articles about my authors. I want them included in stories as experts in their fields. I want their books to be excerpted. I want space for my authors to write articles if that's what my authors want.

Most authors lead very busy lives. They call from airports. They frequently are on the road and need to be reached at hotels. Working with print media usually

means a publicist will not make heavy demands on their time. But when they are called upon, it is critical that they reply and follow through promptly. Often, a producer or editor is waiting for an immediate response, and may even be holding open a date. If an author does not respond quickly, the efforts and credibility of the publicist and author are jeopardized.

As a publicist secures interviews or reviews, he or she should communicate with all the team players in the publishing process. Often, I advise an author's publisher or marketing person—and perhaps even the publisher's publicist, for his or her files.

Sometimes I photocopy my letters confirming interviews or reviews and send them to the sales reps of the book's distributor. This keeps the book fresh in the minds of the sales reps as they visit stores to make sales. It also helps them by giving them a boost to make the sale. If an author is going to appear on a local talk show, it will behoove the stores to know about it and to carry the book.

Often an author can find a specific store to carry his or her book and promise to mention in an interview that the book is available at that bookstore. This is great for everyone concerned. The more people who have these successes in mind, the more likely it is that the book will not get lost in the shuffle and will receive the attention it so rightly deserves.

Authors can also run news of their upcoming tours in *ABA Newswire*. This is a weekly publication the American Booksellers Association mails to subscribing bookstores around the country. Book buyers frequently use it as a guide to determine what books to buy.

If a bookstore's buyer sees that an author has a whole string of local interviews coming up, you can bet that the buyer will pick up the phone and order the book.

short period of time."

Labor and business journalist Robert Levering, well known for co-authoring *The 100 Best Companies To Work For in America* (NAL-Dutton, 1987) offers insights based on his co-authoring experiences. Top on his list of requirements for co-authors are mutual respect and the willingness to listen to one another.

Levering says he and his co-authors Milton Moskowitz and Michael Katz "spent hours and hours and hours just talking. We didn't write it down first on paper. What works is the human contact, that willingness to sit down and talk."

Those diligent discussions are at the root of a fundamental belief Levering has that if you're going to write a book, you must have something to say. "There are too many damn trees being cut down every year for books that don't need to be written. And they certainly don't need to be cut down just for someone. . . trying to establish [his or her] credibility."

About ghostwriting

What if you have a wonderful idea for a book, but don't have the skill to write it? Would you consider a ghostwriter? Apple computer executive John Sculley hired one for his book, *Odyssey: Pepsi to Apple* (Harper-Collins, 1988).

John Byrne, of *BusinessWeek*, served Sculley in this capacity. "Ghostwriters used to be anonymous," says Byrne. "Novak paved the way for ghostwriters to have their names on the front of books and to be acknowledged. Now they're called collaborators." William Novak was Lee Iacocca's collaborator on *Iacocca: An Autobiography* (Bantam, 1984).

An editor at Harper & Row who knew Byrne's work recommended him to Sculley. They met a couple of times to check out the chemistry, which Byrne says is critical to the success of any collaboration. They both decided it would work.

Byrne took a year off to write the book. To start the project, Byrne flew out to California and moved into Sculley's house for two weeks. "We got up at 4:30 or 5:00 a.m., ran a couple of miles at Stanford University, went back to shower and change, and were at Apple at 7:30 in the morning." There he interviewed Sculley in the Apple library until 5 p.m. each day.

"We interviewed for five days straight. We took his whole life chronologically. And he paid to have a court reporter there so that every word that was uttered there was taken down."

The second week, Byrne interviewed key people around the company who were important in Sculley's life and in the life of Apple. In the evenings he and Sculley reviewed the materials.

Byrne returned to New York with four books worth of transcripts from that first intensive set of interviews. He wrote a chapter-by-chapter outline in the first week. By the second week he had written the first chapter.

"What you want to do is to gain a sense of the person's voice," advises Byrne. "You have to sublimate your own personality. And you try as much as you can to adopt the tone, the style, and the feel of the person you're supposed to be writing for. You need to make sure you're on the same wavelength as the person, or you . . . waste a lot of time and effort for nothing."

For the rest of the year, Byrne fed his writings to Sculley through his editor. He lived in Sculley's house a total of two months over the year. They also met in various parts of the country when circumstances allowed. They talked on the phone frequently.

On one of Sculley's trips to New York, they took a walk through Central Park together. "There's a key part in the book where he and Steve Jobs first got together to get to know each other and they're walking through Central Park and Steve finally asks him to join him. So what we did was, he carried a tape recorder with him. And he and I walked through Central Park and retraced all the steps of that walk, trying to rekindle his memories—exactly what happened and what kind of dialogue occurred—which was pretty interesting."

On publishers and agents

Now that you've decided on a writing option, you will want to find a publisher. You may have connections or feel you want to find a publisher directly, or you may prefer to work with an agent. If you decide to go your own route you can refer to *Literary Marketplace*, the Bible of the publishing industry, compiled annually by R.R. Bowker Co. in New York.

See the box for tips from Jossey-

Bass's Stephen Piersanti on what to look for in a publisher.

In negotiating your contract with your publisher, you should seek the legal advice of a lawyer familiar with author law. *The Writer's Legal Companion* (Addison-Wesley, 1988) by Brad Bunnin and Peter Beren is an excellent reference.

Perhaps you'd rather find an agent. You might ask authors you know who write in the same genre to recommend appropriate agents. Or go to the library and ask a reference librarian for *Literary Agents of North America*. Here you will find agents from all around the country, listed with their

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”**

interests and priorities. Perhaps you can find one that meets your needs.

Some agents say that major publishers simply do not accept unsolicited manuscripts from authors, so authors need agents if they want to get published. According to publisher Marc Allen at New World Library, some publishers still maintain what is known as a "slush pile" of unsolicited manuscripts that entry-level editors are asked to go through periodically. But only a small percentage of all published manuscripts come from the slush pile.

An agent evaluates an author's materials and lets the author know if it's what publishers are looking for. Most editors looking for non-fiction buy book proposals rather than entire manuscripts. A good agent helps the writer to find the right publisher for a book and lends expertise in negotiating a contract.

Sandra Dijkstra of Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency in Del Mar, California,

elaborates. "I don't think the blind rule should be that every author should have an agent," she says. "I think there's a time in an author's career when it really becomes sensible to have an agent. A writer has to do a lot of homework to know when that time is.

"It's not a question of having an agent, any agent. It has to be the right agent for you, the right agent for the specific book and for the kind of publishing career that you want to have."

Agents are "very important in helping to shape that career and helping authors fulfill their dreams," says Dijkstra. "It's our job to figure out what it is we've been given by this gifted person. What is the best solution? Should this book be published? Where should it be published? Should I be the agent, or would some other agent do it better? Would I rather not be representing this material? And then we determine what would be the fair market value for such a piece of work, and making that price be realized by going forth and saying, 'This is what I must get for this book.'

"Not every author deserves an agent. Some people should self-publish. Some people should just type it up and hand it to their children."

Dijkstra says that although agents are deluged with materials, they are always looking for good manuscript ideas. She spotted Max Depree's *Leadership Is an Art*, originally published by Michigan State University Press, in the *Wall Street Journal*. She was the catalyst who said the book should not be at a university press, that it should be started over from square one. Her vision was insightful. The book was republished in 1990 by Dell Trade and has now sold more than 200,000 copies.

Distribution and self-publishing

Book packagers work with authors who have not found publishers or who want a lot of control over the outcome. I would not recommend this option unless you have really done your homework. You have to be prepared to invest enormous amounts of your own time and money into your project. A lot depends on how supportive the book packager is.

If you haven't found a publisher, you might consider publishing your book through a book producer and

using the run as a test-marketing procedure, suggests Ray Bard. Bard is a former New York publisher who now runs Bard Productions in Austin, Texas. If you can manage to distribute and sell the book successfully, he says, you may have a stronger case for finding a publisher.

Self-published author Ron Glick says he found Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publisher's Manual* (Para Publishing, 1984) to be a solid "nuts and bolts" kind of resource. For inspiration as well as practical guidance, he recommends *How To Get Happily Published*, by Judith Applebaum of New York publishing consultants Sensible Solutions.

"I was impatient and thought it was going to happen a lot faster than it did," says Glick. "After several rejections a year later, I found it very supportive to have someone in my corner." Applebaum and her book, published most recently by Harper Collins (1988), provided that.

Another good resource for marketing is John Kremer of Ad-Lib Productions, based in Iowa and dedicated to providing authors with marketing information. He has published several books, including *101 Ways To Market Your Books: For Publishers and Authors* (1986).

"A self-publisher is a publisher," warns New World's Allen. "You need to be aware that you are in essence adding a whole new business to your lives, an entire company. I've talked a lot of people out of self-publishing."

If you are a professional, your best option is probably to find a professional publisher; otherwise you can expect distribution problems. Most distributors do not want to do business with a single title. It makes their bookkeepers go crazy; it's too much work to keep securing separate accounts. They want publishers and authors who supply ongoing products. Just like publishers. And agents.

It is important not to confuse distributors with wholesalers. Distributors have sales reps who go around the country and sell your book from their catalogs to booksellers in their stores. Wholesalers have catalogs but no reps. They sell and supply products. This can be tricky, as many wholesalers have the word "distributor" as part of their company names. Be sure you are clear what's actually being offered if you employ such services.

Promotion: the home stretch

Once having secured a contract that ensures publication and distribution, you are ready to bring your message to the world.

Before you receive actual, finished copies of your book, you will see galleys, which you will use in the first phase of your promotion. The people

"It's Risky Not To Take a Risk"

I am interviewing Harvey Mackay on his car phone as he heads to the airport to fly to Denver. This trip is part of his 25-city tour for the paperback version of his book, *Beware the Naked Man Who Offers You His Shirt*. Is there anything he would like me to say, particularly to aspiring authors?

"It's an electrifying business," he offers, in a matter-of-fact tone, "and very rewarding. Sometimes it's risky not to take a risk. If you know anybody who's thinking of writing a book, I would encourage him or her. It would be one of the neatest experiences of their lives. And, as I thought when I sat down to write mine, at least my wife and three kids would buy a copy. I knew I had four sales to begin with."

Mackay's book *Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive* (Morrow, 1988) has sold 2.8 million copies to date, is distributed in 80 countries, and has been translated into 20 languages. The author has just returned from the Soviet Union, where that translation will become the twenty-first.

For Harvey Mackay, taking risks has paid off.

who need to see the galleys of your book are the editors of the trade journals of the publishing industry.

New York publishers are pretty good about this, but are not always thorough. Small publishers sometimes let it slip through the cracks; the authors almost always find out too late, if at all. The journals include *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Library Journal*, *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and, when you have

final copy, *Choice*.

All those journals are listed in *Literary Marketplace*. All of them absolutely must see galleys three months before the publication date of your book. If you are late they will simply reject any discussion of your book. Period. All journals look for reasons to get any of the hundreds of books off their desks and shelves.

The publication date of your book is technically the date publishers can guarantee that your book will be in the stores. Do not confuse the publication date with the shipping date, when books are shipped from the printer to the distributor's warehouse. All publicity and advertising should be coordinated with the actual publication date. Securing reviews when the book is not available in the stores doesn't help anyone.

The stuff good press kits are made of

Use production time to begin assembling the materials your publicist will need in order to represent you at your best. This period is when you will want to go through your list of contacts and to ask colleagues, friends, and those in high places for third-party testimonials. They will prove invaluable to your publisher for jacket or ad copy, to the publicist in putting together your press kit, and to the prospective reader who needs more than your opinion that this is a great book.

If this is hard for you to do, delegate it to someone you trust, someone who will respect your contacts and who will follow through effectively. Most people you will contact are undoubtedly as busy as you are, but they probably have a good understanding of the value of their feedback and support and will be sympathetic to the process.

You may also want to go through your files now and pull all newspaper articles in which your name has appeared—either because you were included in a story or interview, or because you wrote the article.

The more information you can gather that directly relates to the subject matter of your book, the better. But leave the final selection up to your publicist. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* that is not subject-specific may not look applicable to you, but someone trying to establish your cred-

ibility with a newspaper editor or television producer might view that choice differently.

While your book is being produced, take time to update your curriculum vitae. Type up a succinct bio to use as a simple alternative. Reread your book. Begin distilling the essential messages you will need for radio and television interviews. Start collecting stories and examples that illustrate these important points. Develop a wide repertoire. What plays in Philadelphia may not work in Los Angeles. Keep imagining who your audience is and how you can best reach it.

When Ken Blanchard first published *The One Minute Manager*, he and his staff bought the *New York Times*, cut out the best-sellers list, and hung it up in their office. Then they began visualizing their book on the list. It was on the best-sellers list from October 1982 to May 1984.

Don't be afraid to use your creative imagination and basic instincts. Such exercises contribute to creating a focused, concise vision of your intentions for the book. They will undoubtedly come back to you in some form or other, though perhaps not as you expected. It all helps.

Becoming a best-seller

Nearly everyone who writes a book would like to see it be well received, perhaps even a best-seller. But making a book into a best-seller requires the same perseverance it takes to write it in the first place.

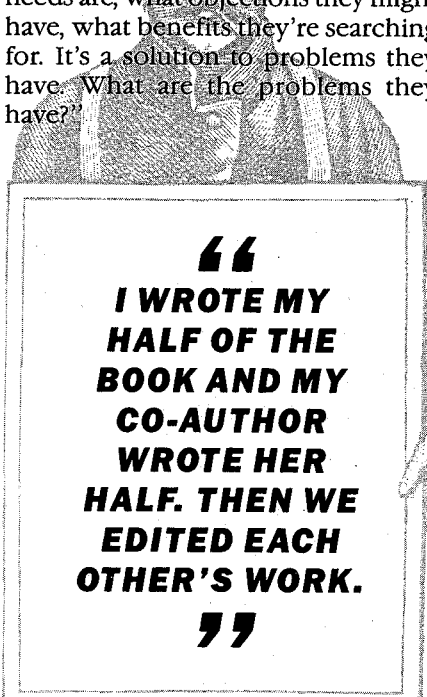
"You sell your book. The publisher does not," says James Kouzes of TPG/Learning Systems, of the Tom Peters Group. Kouzes co-authored his book, *The Leadership Challenge: How To Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*, (Jossey-Bass, 1987), with Barry Z. Posner. The book sold more than 200,000 copies.

"If you assume that the publisher is going to put zillions of marketing dollars behind your book because you know this is the best book ever written on this topic, and your heart and soul are really into this, and everybody ought to read this book, and that your publisher is going to make this happen—you are sadly mistaken.

"If you want people to read your book then you need to be the missionary; you need to be the publicist. You need to be the salesperson. And just

like any salesperson, selling any product, you're going to knock on doors, make speeches, make presentations, and do what it takes to sell a product.

"I had a tough time looking at my book this way because I know it's more than a product. I know it's a set of ideas. It's research. It's heart and soul. It's a lot of intangibles. And yet if you were a salesperson whose job it was to sell that book, what would you do? You'd want to know who [is in] your target market... what their needs are, what objections they might have, what benefits they're searching for. It's a solution to problems they have. What are the problems they have?"



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Says Zackheim, "The basic problems in business don't change that dramatically and will need addressing next year. We have cycles, and we have profits and losses, and we have products that succeed and products that fail. And we have hirings and we have firings. And if someone can come at them from a fresh direction and see them with a new eye."

Enter the publicist

Deciding whether to hire a personal publicist is really a question of your skills and resources. If you are great on the phone, are persistent, are good with details and follow-through, have extra time, and are comfortable promoting yourself, then you probably do not need to hire a professional. In that case, clear your intentions with your publisher's publicity department and get to work.

But most professional authors

simply do not have the time. If you fall into that category, then you may want to get a publicist working for you and your book. *Literary Marketplace* again would be a good reference.

Publicists' services can include setting up regional and national tours and blitzing all appropriate electronic and print media. A few are willing to focus exclusively on print media, either sending books to generalized computer lists or researching and targeting where to send each book.

Touring

Now you're scheduled on a ten-day, ten-city tour. How do you prepare?

Nancy Herr, a former correspondent, anchor, and talk-show host for national and regional TV and radio networks, is co-founder of Barbary Coast Broadcast Group, a company offering media training and consulting. She offers this advice to authors on tour:

"Authors have to ask themselves, 'Why should people care?' That's what we're asked in newsrooms all the time. . . . If we can't explain to the producer why our audiences would be interested in this story, it won't air. It has to have relevance to everyday life.

"The author has the same challenge. Once you're on the air, a simple formula for getting your message across is to make a statement, to give an example, preferably from your own personal experience, and to summarize what you've just said. You can't answer every question like this, but this provides you with a template. Also, you've just created three good possibilities for sound bites."

NBC radio producer Mary Finn subscribes to the KISS method: "Keep it simple, stupid." I tell my clients that their challenge is going to be to distill their messages down to the kindergarten versions. Mary and her host call it "dumbing it down." Those terms are not as patronizing as they sound.

Finn says she recognizes that some authors feel they have to oversimplify in a way that does not do justice to their subjects. She calls the simplification "a way of making media approachable so people can use the mass media as a stepping stone to get to those other levels."

Some authors simply cannot fit into mass media formats. They should try for placements on National Public Radio, PBS, or other media that allow

for more serious treatments.

Jerry Johnson, now a vice-president with Drake Beam and Morin, hosted and produced San Francisco's popular KCBS radio show, "Man to Man" for four years.

"What serves the program and what serves the on-air host's needs is really going to serve you, too," offers Johnson. "Sometimes authors come in with hidden agendas. . . . They don't seem to be aware that if they put themselves into the context of the program and get some rapport going with the host, they're going to come off better, too.

"I'm talking about a basic needs analysis. If that author said as [he or she] walked into the studio, 'What do you need from me today? How can I help you make this a good hour?' radio people would fall over backwards and would really appreciate that kind of sensitivity; that they have a colleague there who wants them to look good today.

"And, boy, that doesn't happen very often. Authors are so busy being stars themselves. . . . that they often shoot themselves in the foot by not enlisting on their side the person who can assist them in becoming a star. Ask, 'How can we have a great show?' and then everybody wins!"

About big shows

What about getting on the major television talk shows? Three important issues come up:

- the unrealistic I-Want-To-Get-on-Donahue syndrome
- the question, "do the big shows really sell books?"
- the condescending attitudes of many of the very people who want to be on the big talk shows toward the shows and their hosts.

It's appropriate to be on Donahue's show (or Oprah's or Carson's) if your material and you are appropriate for the show. That decision is totally beyond your control, as it should be. It's appalling how many authors who want to be on such shows never watch them, have no understanding of them, and don't even own televisions.

As an author, you should have been paying attention when you asked yourself why you were writing the book and for whom. This is no time for finagling; it's too late. You made your decisions. It's time to leave it to the producers of the show and your

publicist to make decisions about what is best for the show.

For example, last year a sophisticated, well-known dream analyst appeared on "Geraldo Rivera." It was hard to watch the show. Rivera spent the hour trying to translate down for his audience. He was in a panic. The guest was a wreck and bumbled through. This author deserved a more appropriate format for his message.

What To Look For in a Publisher

Looking for a publisher? Here are some excellent tips offered by Stephen Piersanti of Jossey-Bass Publishers in San Francisco.

- Find the right publisher. Many authors don't understand the difference between a trade publisher, a textbook publisher, a scholarly publisher, and a professional publisher. Each is interested in very different kinds of books and has a very different market.
- Clarify your audience.
- Find a publisher that has a strong and active publishing agenda for the audience at which your book is aimed. The company should know the market and have the mechanisms in place to reach that market.
- Approach a prospective publisher with something focused and distinctive, or you don't have a prayer. A single editor at Jossey-Bass receives as many as five or six proposals per day!

Many authors don't have the objectivity to know what shows they are appropriate for. Most of them don't even watch the shows. That's why you find a publicist you trust, who makes it part of the job to watch these shows, who takes risks, and who is creative—but not at anybody's expense.

Jim Kouzes has a practical consideration. "There are a lot of people who make the mistake of trying to get on the 'Oprah Winfrey Show' or 'Donahue,' but is that the audience that will buy your book? Most likely not, in our fields of training and development, human resource development, and management. Our buyers

are not listening to daytime talk shows because they are working."

Do the shows sell books? I've heard every answer. I've heard that being on Donahue does and being on Oprah doesn't. I've heard that being on Oprah sells zillions of books overnight. I've heard that being on these shows doesn't sell books at all because their audiences watch television; they don't read books. Maybe the Neuro-linguistic Programming people would see (hear? feel?) something in that.

I believe that being on all shows sells some books and that the more exposure you get the better, because you never know who is watching and what can happen.

I once booked an interview for a client on a San Francisco radio show. The governor of California happened to hear him. He called my client and asked him to speak to a group of high-powered businesspeople. How can you predict such outcomes?

You cannot and should not count the results strictly in book sales. The emphasis should be on getting the message out in appropriate formats, going for maximum exposure at a healthy pace, and trying a variety of media to see what works.

In closing

Throughout the writing of this article there has been a recurring theme from most of the representative players on the publishing journey—that of a genuine search for materials and connections that are meaningful and appropriate.

What fits? It seems so logical; yet, too many authors get caught up in a kind of scarcity thinking. Perhaps out of the fear that they won't get published or sold, they aren't able to hold their own vision and they abandon themselves. They rationalize, get discouraged and impatient, and publish with the wrong people, or get the wrong agent, or hire the wrong publicist. Part of it is just being so unfamiliar with the process that one's understanding is too simplistic, not realistic.

It's a blessing to work with authors, to participate in the realization of their dreams and the broadening of their careers. I was deeply moved when Robert Levering shared with me, "I look at my books there on the shelf that I've published and I'm just so proud."

You can be too. ■