

ON GOOD AUTHORITY

7 STEPS TO PREPARING, PROMOTING
AND PROFITING FROM THE BOOK
THAT WILL SHOW THE WORLD
THAT YOU'RE AN EXPERT

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR



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To all the future authorities out there

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A book is the royal path to any kind of success you want in life. People who post on Instagram or do TikTok videos might make money, but they don't really have respect. People respect writers and thank God they do; otherwise, I'd be poor and out on the streets.

—Robert Greene, *New York Times* bestselling author of
The 48 Laws of Power and *The Art of Seduction*

FOREWORD BY MICHAEL GERBER

I'll never forget that time in the early 80s when a guy walked up to me at the end of one of my seminars and asked me if I'd like to write a book.

“About what?” I asked him.

“About your seminar,” he said.

That was the beginning of my astonishingly adventurous life as an entrepreneurial author of 30 books.

Now, eight million or so readers later—yes, eight million!—I'm reading Anna David's book with the realization that if I had met the remarkable Anna David those many years ago, I would have done infinitely more, made a hell of a lot more money and had a whole hell of a lot more fun in the process!

Yes, take it from me, a *New York Times* bestselling author many times over, that there's much more to producing a book than writing it and getting it published.

It's finding your audience.

And that's what this extraordinary book is all about: your audience. Who they are. What they do. What's not working in their lives. And what your book is going to do about it!

If you don't have the specific answers to those questions—

about who *you* are, what *you* do and what you're *about* to do for your prospective reader—both you and your book are screwed.

On Good Authority is the only book of its kind and the only book you will ever need if your intent is to create a book that transforms your life, your business, your work and your day so you can produce the stunning results you so long for.

—Michael Gerber, multiple *New York Times* bestselling author of *The E-Myth*, among 20 other books, as well as “The World’s #1 Small Business Guru” (*Inc* magazine)

INTRODUCTION

When I published a humorous novel about addiction and recovery in 2007, I had no idea it was going to make people think of me as an authority.

I was five years sober and had wanted to write a book that could show people how fun and funny recovery could be—to make struggling addicts see that recovery wasn't the end of life but the beginning.

I put a threesome in the opening scene because, hey, I wanted to attract readers.

The authority-building happened accidentally, when a *Today* show producer heard about the book and asked me to come on the show to talk about a celebrity who had gone to rehab. When I was leaving, he asked me to come back a few days later for another story. Then CNN called. Then Fox News. Pretty soon, I was on TV regularly, with the label “addiction expert” below my name.

At first, this made me panic. “I need to go back to school, get a master's, do something to deserve to be called an authority!” I wailed to my TV agent. “My only addiction expertise was in chopping up lines of cocaine and ingesting them into my nose!”

I'll never forget his response.

"You don't need a degree," he said. "You have a book."

And I realized he was right. No one cared where—or that—I'd gone to college. But everyone cared that I had a book.

Even if it opened with a threesome.



Every year since then, the path to gaining authority through a book has become even better paved. And yet most people who release books these days find that their businesses don't improve, and their lives don't change at all.

If you've published a book and experienced that, good news: it never has to happen again.

The reason most authors fail is that what we read about publishing is woefully irrelevant since we only hear about the successful authors. And we think, despite knowing that our chances of fame and riches are small, that we'll be the exception—the Glennon Doyle, the James Clear. And it makes sense in a way. Who would do something as audacious as write a book and plan to NOT be successful at it?

(Losers, that's who. And we're not losers!)

But there's a reason we're not successful in the conventional sense—that is, by selling millions of copies and becoming famous. *We've been playing by rules set up to make us fail.*

What I'm showing you how to do will save you from that. It will teach you the secret to making your book wildly successful in a way that impacts your entire career—all without you having to be chosen by a major publisher, an inexplicably popular teenager on TikTok, Reese Witherspoon or fate (though if you are chosen by Reese Witherspoon, will you please let her know that *Legally Blonde* is still one of my favorite movies of all time?)

Still, let's get clear about what I mean by "wildly success-

ful.” I know authors whose books were wildly successful in the traditional sense—released by major publishers, on the *New York Times* list, featured on *Oprah*, made into movies—and those authors are now struggling to make a living since those “wildly successful” books weren’t designed to support their careers over the long haul.

Book success, to me, is about not needing any of the bright, shiny, external, one-in-a-million things to happen and instead having something that attracts clients to you for the rest of your life.

Why has no one told you this before now?

It’s not because people have been trying to keep the secret from you; it’s because most of them don’t know it. It took me six books and 12 years before I understood the situation. And once I did, I realized it’s actually not that complicated if you break it down.

Hence, my 7-step system.

The key element for you to remember with this system is that it’s not about your book. Yes, the book is crucial—without a book, none of this works—but it’s the combination of the book and the authority building my system walks you through that’s so effective.

This is perhaps best summarized by author and entrepreneur Nicolas Cole, who’s a bit of a legend in the online writing space (more about him in chapter two). He says, “It wasn’t until I actually put my first book out that I realized the way I had built myself ended up being more valuable than the book itself,” he says. “That’s what’s opened up so many doors for me.”

The process Cole and I follow is simple but not easy: it’s about first having the *right* book topic and then consistently working to build your authority before, during and after its launch.

That’s right; it means regularly taking action, whether

that's attending events along with your ideal clients, scheduling posts on social media, gathering subscribers, writing newsletters, supporting leaders in your field, contacting people who can bulk order your book, reaching out to podcasters, appearing on podcasts, connecting with journalists, finding people who can hire you to speak, handing out copies of your book to strangers on planes or any of the other methods I'll get into in this book.

If that sounds like a lot of work, remember that sometimes—maybe even a lot of the time—this is fun. I happen to love going to events, speaking and writing newsletters. I know other people who love going on podcasts and posting on social media. Also, you can get a team or even a virtual assistant to help you with a lot of this.

Also, studies show that it takes 30 days to build a new habit and with every event, every post, every email and every call, you're building that muscle. And, as any cross-fit enthusiast can surely attest, building muscle only makes you want to go to the gym more often.

But also know that I'm here to support you at every step. In fact, I created a calendar for you to download so you—or someone on your team—can track what you do. You can grab it (and other book bonuses) at www.ongoodgifts.com. If you start slacking, that's okay. Just jump back into it as soon as you can. Eventually, it will become part of what you do.

Still, this isn't about willy-nilly promo. This is about identifying *the* book topic that will build your authority and then training an audience to always think of you as that topic's authority.

If you're not interested in that, or if you still think you want to try to sell your book to a traditional publisher so you can get rich from your book sales, this book isn't for you.

Otherwise, we're in great shape. The information in here will show you how to conceive and publish a book that gives

you the authority you need to grow a career around your passion for the rest of your life.

I've been in the publishing world since the mid-90s, and I believe we're now living in the Golden Age since the gatekeepers have left the building. It's like showing up at Studio 54 in 1979, seeing Bianca Jagger ride in on a horse being led by Andy Warhol and walking right past the velvet rope.

We don't need agents or publishers or people to tell us we're good enough. We can declare ourselves good enough—even excellent—and either write and publish ourselves or hire professionals to help us. And if we do it right, and do the work to support it, our books can make us into authorities.

While this book focuses a bit on the sort of businesses a book can help, and how to sell your services from your book, the emphasis is primarily on how to create a book that will make you an authority in your field—and then how to keep building your authority from there.

The great news about the process I'm going to describe is that it means becoming a part of the public discussion about your topic and therefore always getting clearer about what your reader wants. You're seeing what they respond to and what they ignore. You're discovering their interests and blind spots.

Although people will want to hire you after reading your book, it shouldn't be a 100- to 200-page ad for your services. In order for your book to be successful—not to mention deeply meaningful for you—it has to be so detailed and transparent that a reader could finish reading it and do whatever it is you're describing. But the book also has to display your knowledge so impressively that a reader looking to hire someone to do it would only want to hire you.

That's why you need to get very clear both about what problem you're solving and what you want your readers to do when they finish your book. Do you want them to hire your company? Employ you as a consultant? Take your course or

sign up for your coaching program? Pay you to speak? Ask you out on a date? (If it's the last one, there are easier ways to make that happen.) Whatever it is, figure it out before—or as—you write.

I wrote and published six books without realizing this, concluding that there was no point in writing any more books since they left me broke and with no options beyond ghost-writing books for other people. It was only when a sports agent named Darren Prince reached out to me that I wised up. He wanted to get involved in the addiction and recovery advocacy space, and he saw that I'd written a *New York Times* bestseller about addiction.

He asked me if I'd be open to writing his book.

It was around the same time I'd received an email from a writer I knew asking if I could give her writing work. So I asked Darren if I could hire her to write the book.

He told me that as long as I edited it, that was fine.

So, she wrote the book, and I edited it. When I presented it back to Darren, he explained that he next wanted it published. So I learned about layouts and cover designs, ISBNs and uploading—all the things publishers had done for me up to that point.

We launched Darren's book and honestly, I was shocked when he landed a six-figure spokesperson deal almost immediately after the book came out.

I was surprised again a few months later when he got his first paid speaking gig. I stopped being surprised once he got himself on some of the biggest TV shows and podcasts in order to promote his book and firmly established himself as a recovery advocate and expert.

But what astounded me even more was that the book made

his sports agency even more successful. Once people knew his personal story, he told me, business negotiations started to feel like conversations with friends, which only resulted in more and better deals.

To be clear, Darren is a hustler bar none. When the book came out, he called in favors, worked the phone and always carried his book with him.

After Darren's success, other entrepreneurs came to me, and the more they did, the more I saw their books transform them into authorities. As I built a team and grew the business—we've now published over 50 books, several of which have become *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* bestsellers—our clients' accomplishments also grew. It's become standard for me to see clients featured on shows like *Today* and *The Doctors* and be quoted in the *New York Times*.

And if it can happen for them, it can happen for you.

Publishing your own book can mean many things. It can mean writing every word yourself and publishing it under your name. It can mean hiring a ghostwriter but handling the publishing on your own. It can mean working with a hybrid publisher that takes a percentage of your sales or hiring a custom publisher that gives you all the profits. It can mean a gorgeous layout and cover that's indistinguishable from a traditionally published *New York Times* bestselling book.

It really depends on your goal and how you want to spend your time.

If you're an entrepreneur running a profitable business and you want a book to help you grow your expertise, look at it like this: how much, roughly, do you make an hour?

If it's, say, \$300, calculate that by how long you think it would take you to write and publish a book. (The rough esti-

mate I've heard is that it takes a first-time author roughly 300 hours.)

If you're doing the math, you've spent \$90,000 and haven't even gotten into the editing or publishing yet.

But if the lifetime value of a client is, say, \$25,000, you only need to attract four clients from the book and you've earned that back.

(As a non-math person, those calculations took me way longer than they should have, so I do hope you'll take them in.)

Of course, just because you published your book doesn't mean people will immediately flock to you. But if you already have a business, it can have an immediate impact on that business.

Within a month of launching my book *Make Your Mess Your Memoir*, my company brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars in terms of new clients. And a consultant I know who advises people on how to sell to the government told me that a few months after his book release, he'd brought in half a million dollars in new contracts. "I can't say for sure it's the book that did it," he said, "but I do know that every new client had read the book."

Entrepreneur and *New York Times* bestselling author JJ Virgin put it like this when I interviewed her for *Entrepreneur* magazine: "If people read my books, they'll buy my products. We have a relationship. They just took you into their bedroom or bathroom. They feel like they know you."

Of course, to help them get to know you in a way that makes them want to hire you requires a very specific type of book—and presence.



What's in this book isn't just based on my own experiences and those of my clients. It's also culled from hundreds of interviews

I've done with other *New York Times* bestselling authors and top entrepreneurs on my podcast.

There's nothing in this book about how to outline, write or publish your book. There's enough out there on those topics.

Instead, this book breaks down exactly what you should do before and after your book is written and published if you want to be considered an authority.

Its specific focus is on the three parts that make up my 7-step process:

- Preparing (which you should do before and while your book is being written)
- Promoting (which you should be thinking about and doing while your book is being written so you're set up for success once you're launching)
- Profiting (which happens after publication)

Broken down further, it is:

Prepare

- Conceptualize
- Nurture

Promote

- Show Your Face
- Share Your Voice
- Get Creative

Profit

- Get On Stage
- Get Clients

If you're the visual type who's into cute icons, here's what it looks like:



While I share advice from authors like *48 Laws of Power* author Robert Greene and *Never Split the Difference* author Chris Voss, I also include suggestions from experts and authors who aren't #1 *New York Times* bestsellers.

That's because they know a secret you're about to learn: if you plan and promote a book correctly, you don't need to sell tens of thousands of copies for it to have a major impact on your business—and life. As multiple *New York Times* bestselling author Robert Greene told me, “Your book could have sold 11 copies over the course of 10 years, but you can show it to people, and they're impressed.”

Echoes Chris Voss, “Even if the only people that actually pay for copies are your parents, there's no better marketing tool or calling card than a book. It becomes the most viable business card you've ever had.”

Still, it's even better if the *right* people read it—people who can become your clients, hire you to speak, buy your products or work with you in some other way.

Many people try to do this and very few are successful. But with the help of Greene, Voss and the others, I'm going to show you how to become one of them.

SECTION 1: PREPARING

(BEFORE AND WHILE YOUR BOOK IS
BEING WRITTEN)

STEP 1: CONCEPTUALIZE

FIGURE OUT THE WHY, WHAT AND WHO SO
YOU WRITE A BOOK READERS WANT

I wrote my second book, a novel called *Bought*, because I had a resentment.

The book was a fictionalized account of a story I'd written for (the now long gone) *Details* magazine about high-class hookers. The assignment had started off swimmingly: my editor told me to spend months finding out everything I could about the underworld of escorts. I'd never done an investigative story before and I dove in, managing to uncover pimps in Beverly Hills and snitches in the Valley. I found out about actresses who were earning hundreds of thousands of dollars moonlighting as prostitutes and political figures who were funding their campaigns with money from the sex world.

Then my editor left *Details* and I was saddled with an editor who took out everything that made my story interesting, telling me he wanted a story about how "rich men get their rocks off." When, the month after my story was published, the magazine printed a letter to the editor that asked how "Anna David managed to take such a scintillating topic and make it so dull," I couldn't help but wonder the same thing.

I was pissed. *F that editor*, I thought. *I'm going to show the world that I uncovered the story of the century!*

And so, during a meeting with my HarperCollins editor shortly after she'd acquired my first book, *Party Girl*, I pitched a book about the world of high-class prostitution in LA and said I could fictionalize it. I figured sex sells and this book could be a crazy hit. HarperCollins drew up a contract, and I set about writing my second novel.

There was a problem: I'm thoroughly bored by the world of hookers. I have no judgment about prostitution; I simply don't care about it. And so, for months, I tried to imagine and create a story around a world I didn't care about.

After turning in the final draft to my book editor, I re-read it and realized I hated it. So I asked for it back and rewrote the entire thing. I still hated it. A year later, the book was released. I knew I had a job to do and went out and promoted a book I hated that I also happened to have written. It felt awful.

To make it all slightly worse, many people who read *Bought* asked me if it was based on my own experience. I was completely broke at the time, so if I had been a hooker, I would have surely been one of the least successful ones of all time.

But in a way, I *was* prostituting myself. I was writing a book about a topic I didn't care about because I had this vague idea that sex would sell. I never bothered to find out if anyone would actually be interested in this book. But most significantly, I never thought about my *why*.

If I had, I would have discovered that I didn't have one.

You Need to Find Your Why If You're Going to Succeed

When I ask first-time authors why they want to write their book and they tell me they're doing it to help people, I always say the same thing: helping people is awesome. I hope my books help

everyone they can. But if your main goal is to help people, there are far easier ways—why not volunteer?

This is partially the put-your-own-oxygen-mask-on-first philosophy and partially just advice from a realist. If you write and launch a book at the highest level—and there’s no point in doing it if you’re not going to do it at the highest level—it’s going to take you a lot of time or cost you a significant amount of money. Shouldn’t you have something to show for it aside from some people you don’t know who may never tell you that you helped them? Why not do it in a way that it can help both you and a lot of other people?

Mike Koenigs, a 13-time author who’s worked with Tony Robbins among other entrepreneurs, says that most authors don’t have this sort of vision. Koenigs says, “When someone tells me they’ve been working on a book for five years, I’ll ask, ‘Who’s your audience? What is your outcome, goal or big dream that you want to accomplish as a result of this book? What’s the promise?’ People usually don’t have an answer.”

Here’s why this is important: unlike a TV show, your book isn’t going away. You can promote it forever, which means it can continue to help you establish your authority long after its launch. A decade after *Party Girl* was released, a famous musician who was struggling with his drinking reached out to me and asked if I could coach him. I explained I wasn’t a recovery coach. He said he didn’t care—that he wanted to hire the person who wrote *Party Girl* because he knew she would understand him. He asked if he could pay me \$1,000 a session, and I actually had to talk him down.

I have potential clients who reach out to me every week because they read *Make Your Mess Your Memoir*. I have no doubt the same will be true for the book I’m writing—and you’re reading—now.

And the same thing can happen for you if you drill down on your topic.

How to Drill Down on Your Topic

Let's say your book is about how you started your business. First, ask yourself an easy question: What is your business?

Let's say you're a coach. So then the book could be about whatever it is you struggled with that made you want to become a coach.

Next ask yourself who your readers are. Let's assume it's people who want help with whatever you struggled with.

But let's drill down more. Ask yourself: Why do they want help? Is it because they believe that overcoming this issue will help them find love? Is it because they think it will help them become more successful? Is it both?

If you can't answer these questions yet, you haven't drilled down enough. So think about what you would have wanted to know five years ago or before you became a coach.

Keep drilling down until you have what feels like the perfect combination of what you want to share and what people want to know. This is my company's "Discover Your Book in a Sentence" formula.

Don't panic about committing to it; it can evolve as you go. But for now, you want to be able to fill in the blanks in the following sentence:

My book is for _____ who want _____ so they can _____.

Here are some "discovery sentences" for books my company has published:

"My book is for health enthusiasts who want to follow a keto diet so they can be in the best shape possible."

"My book is for women who want to invest in real estate so they can be financially independent."

"My book is for doctors who want to avoid burnout so they can continue to practice medicine and have balance in their lives."

Drilling down is what's going to lead you to your niche. But you need to make sure that niche is one you want.

Are You Attracting the Right Reader?

If you're writing a book in order to attract clients, you need to make sure they're the sort of people in the market for your services.

Entrepreneur Scott Duffy only realized this when he'd finished writing his book on launching a company, showed it to his mentor and his mentor said, "If you're talking to people that are launching companies, they probably don't have a lot of free cash because they're investing everything they can into this business. So this could be the best book in the world but your reader won't be able to afford to pay you."

Because of that conversation, Duffy was able to tweak his content to position it for the customers he wanted to attract. But you can save yourself a lot of time if you determine this up front.

That's why you have to determine your tribe. Not to get too meta but I discovered after working on this book and getting beta reader feedback that I was attracting the wrong readers; a few of the people who expressed interest in the book were triggered by my telling them that they probably wouldn't be able to sell their books to traditional publishers and get rich from book sales. So I tweaked the concept to make it clear that the book wasn't for people hoping a book would make them successful; it was for people who were *already* successful and wanted a book to build authority around that success.

My point is this: find the people who are going to be the most receptive to your message, even if it makes your readership smaller.

The Importance of a Niche

“The riches are in the niches” is a common saying in the marketing world, and it’s just as true for books.

When your book is for everyone, as the saying goes, it’s for no one.

The rationale behind this is that if your book is specifically geared toward a certain group of people, they’re going to have an intrinsic and passionate reaction to finding something that feels like it was written just for them.

When that happens, they will begin recommending your book—in short becoming your publicist or salesperson. What makes you want to read a book more—when the author recommends it or when someone else does?

If you’re worried that the tribe you’re writing for isn’t big enough, just know that there’s a Facebook group called “A group where we all pretend to be ants in an ant colony” that has, of this writing, 1.8 million members.

While that fact may cause you, like me, to wonder if you should have started a pretend ant colony instead of the business you’re currently running, the point is that there are a hell of a lot of people with random interests in the world.

“There’s a strange reality that when you get more specific, you typically reach more people with a more universal message that is more impactful,” says author and Author Accelerator founder Jennie Nash, who has helped clients land top agents, six-figure book deals and make both the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists. “By going small, you go bigger.”

“Don’t ever think your niche is too small,” echoes Zara Barrie, the critically acclaimed author of the memoir *Girl, Stop Passing Out in Your Makeup* who garnered a massive social media following when her *Elite Daily* stories on topics like mental illness, sex and drugs consistently went viral. “People

used to say to me ‘Your being gay is going to alienate a straight audience,’” she recalls. “But most of my followers are straight girls. And look, we watch shows about obscure cults. People are interested in new concepts as long as the writing is human and relatable.”

So how do you find new concepts, not to mention show that you’re human and relatable?

Start by thinking about your own experiences. Consider the biggest mistakes you made and how you could help readers avoid making them. The more personal you get, the fresher your concepts are going to be.

Or maybe you have a controversial viewpoint. Rather than being scared to put that out there and piss people off, lean into it. Mark Manson, the author of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck*, sold 12 million copies by telling people they shouldn’t give a f*ck.

In other words, just be you. While this sounds easy, many of us had our creativity and uniqueness stomped out of us by English classes that taught us rote ways to write papers. Your book is not a book report on *The Red Badge of Courage* or *Madame Bovary*. In other words, forget the formalities and just be authentic.

The added benefit of being you is that the more you share your actual self, as opposed to the professional self you think you need to put out there, the more people you’re going to attract. The best compliment I get about my writing is when someone tells me that reading one of my books made them feel like they were hanging out with me.

Let readers hang out with you. Be the you that you are with your closest friends. I promise we’ll love you for it.

And start doing it before you launch.

Find Your Audience Now

One of the biggest mistakes authors make is that they assume that *Field of Dreams* was right and that an audience will show up just because we've created something.

"A lot of writers start without thinking about their ideal reader," says publishing veteran Jane Friedman. "They haven't asked, 'Whose life am I trying to change? Who am I speaking to that really needs to hear this message or story or benefit from this information?'"

New York Times bestselling author Jennifer Keishan Armstrong learned this firsthand when her first book, *Why? Because We Still Like You: An Oral History of the Mickey Mouse Club*, came out.

She joined some boomer websites on Facebook but couldn't drum up any interest in her book. Then she went home to visit her family in the suburbs of Chicago and her dad asked her to bring a bunch of copies to one of his veteran organizations.

"This was the target audience, the right age group, and they were ecstatic," Armstrong recalls. "They were asking me, 'Did you talk to this person? Did you talk to Tommy? Did you talk to that person? I love Darlene.' I'd finally found my readers."

For her next book, Armstrong was far savvier. She says, "First I asked myself, 'What if I wrote a book that actually interested me specifically?' That was key because I knew better how to find the target audience." This resulted in her *Mary Tyler Moore Show* focused book, *Mary and Lou and Rhoda and Ted*.

After that success, she thought, "What has a bigger audience, and do they read books?" That led to her third book, *Seinfeldia*, which became a *New York Times* bestseller in its first week of release.

So How Do You Know if Your Audience Reads?

Take it from someone who created an anthology about reality TV shows but failed to understand that reality TV fans want to watch reality TV and not read books about it, and non-reality TV fans don't want to read a book about reality TV: either have a built-in audience you know or determine ahead of time that your audience reads.

How did Armstrong and her publisher know that *Seinfeld* fans were readers? In some ways, it was a lucky guess. In other ways, it was an educated one. After all, if you were trying to figure out which show, between *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Seinfeld*, had more of a reading audience, which would you pick?

I'm guessing we'd all select the latter. But *Seinfeld* also has a built-in annual event the fans celebrate: Festivus, a wacky holiday the show made up as a secular alternative to Christmas commercialism. This means that Armstrong is able to get media attention and book sales every year (or at least for as long as people care about Festivus).

If you're an entrepreneur who attends conferences that are filled with potential clients you can give your book to, this is less important than if you're writing a book for an audience that you don't already know.

Still, it's not as hard as you may think to find out what your readers want.

Use Amazon as the Search Engine It Is

It's been established for some time that Google, YouTube and Amazon are the three largest search engines in the world. But authors seem to forget that when they're preparing to write their books.

Dave Chesson, an author as well as the creator of Publisher Rocket and Atticus software (key products when it comes to launching a book), suggests simply going to the Amazon search box, starting to type in your topic and seeing how Amazon auto-populates the search so you can learn what words your potential reader uses when looking for your kind of book.

By way of example, Chesson reveals that when he was working with an author who was writing a book about how to sell art, their keyword research revealed that more people were typing in the phrase “how to sell art online” than “how to sell art.”

At the time, the author hadn’t even considered covering the online component of selling art; so she immediately added an extra section to her book about online sales. She also created a lead magnet about how to set up accounts on the three top online art sales platforms.

“When she got into the reader’s mind,” Chesson says, “she made a better book and was able to connect more with her market.”

And if you look in the right places, the market is quite vocal.

The Importance of Other People’s One-Star Reviews

Super consultant Jay Abraham, the author of multiple books, including the iconic *Getting Everything You Can Out of All That You’ve Got*, believes that your best research comes from combing through the zero- and five-star reviews of the top 20 bestsellers in your category.

“When people are passionately happy or unhappy, their subconscious overrides their consciousness and allows them to express their joy or disappointment in outrageously articulate words,” Abraham says. “So you can learn how to express in words, phrases and language patterns that penetrates right past

the conscious mind. You can express what they want and what they don't want and why.”

That being said, some of the one-star writers just enjoy spewing negativity. So if a review seems particularly harsh, click on the reviewer's name. If they just trash everything, write them off as a basement-dweller who could use a dose of therapy and serotonin enhancement.

But one of the benefits to reading reviews is seeing what readers felt previous books like yours lacked and yours can contain. Or, conversely, you can see what readers felt previous books had too much of and what they want more of.

When you know what they want, you can determine how you can help them get it.

Focus Obsessively on Your Readers

It doesn't matter if we're on our first book or our 200th: the audience always comes first.

“When I'm writing a book, every step of the way, I'm thinking of the audience that I'm writing to,” says multiple *New York Times* bestselling author Robert Greene. “Writing a book is communicating to an audience. You're not just mouthing off your own brilliant ideas.”

Echoes *USA Today* bestselling author Derek Murphy, “You need to always be asking, ‘Who is this for? What problem is this going to solve?’”

In order to figure out who your book is for, take your elevator pitch and see if you can drill down further. If we're going to continue with the example of the book by the coach, let's first figure out who the reader is.

Is it a married mom of two whose last child just left for college and she's now looking for a new challenge? Or is it the

CEO of a multi-million-dollar company who's achieved everything but finds something missing?

If the answer is the second, always think of that avatar—the archetypal person you're writing your book for so that you stay on track. It will help you determine what to include and what not to include.

Does she want to read about the experiences of the empty-nester moms? Probably not. Is she pressed for time? Probably. That means that even if you built your coaching business by coaching empty-nester moms, you shouldn't include that information in your book if that's not the sort of client you want to attract. It's about the reader and not you.

“People are often tempted to cram all their years of expertise into book,” says author and entrepreneur Jennie Nash. “But writing a good book starts with defining who your reader is and what transformation you're promising them. And often, the smaller the transformation, the more impactful it is.”

Sometimes “expert blindness” is our worst enemy—in other words, the sheer amount of knowledge you have about your topic is actually a detriment because you're too inside the fishbowl to fully understand what your reader wants to know.

But there's something that's just as important as breaking down your topic. In fact, it separates authors whose books change their lives forever from those who just have a nice decoration to put on their shelves.

STEP 2: NURTURE

KEEP AN AUDIENCE ENGAGED WHILE
YOU'RE WRITING SO YOU DON'T RELEASE
YOUR BOOK TO CRICKETS

Jesse J. Anderson had pretty much no platform when he found out, at the age of 35, that he had ADHD. Immediately passionate about helping other ADHD-ers, he took to Twitter to share what he was learning.

Before he started writing about ADHD in February of 2021, Anderson had 1,200 followers. His count rose to just under 3,000 within a few months and grew steadily over the rest of 2021 to around 12,000 by December 2021. Then, in the first few months of 2022, his followers mushroomed to around 37,000. At the time of this writing, his count sits at around 113,000. By the time you read this, there's no telling where it will be.

How did he grow so fast? One word: virality. When one of Anderson's tweets really hits, it might gather 50,000 likes. "I tweet about random ADHD things," says Anderson, who's in the process of writing a book titled *Refocus: How to Thrive with Adult ADHD*. "I talk about stuff that for most of my life, I was embarrassed of. And I think other people that have been hiding those feelings connect with it."

To be clear, Anderson's Twitter feed isn't just the Jesse J. Anderson Show. "I think a lot of the reason for the growth I've

had is that it really does feel more like a community than an audience,” he says. “It almost becomes this conversation or forum within Twitter.”

The fact that Anderson doesn’t see himself as an expert but just as a guy muddling through is part of the secret of his success.

“I’m not a therapist, I’m not a doctor, I don’t have some education or background in ADHD,” he says. “But I know a little bit more than a lot of other people. And it’s a lot easier to teach somebody when you’re at that level. You don’t have to become this high lofty expert teaching down to the masses. You’re just trying to teach what you didn’t know six months ago.”

Still, there’s a difference between “owning” and “renting” an audience. In the simplest terms, renting is what we do on social media; we’re “paying” landlords like Zuckerberg and Musk by continuing to post but really they can sell the property at any time and have no qualms about leaving us homeless.

Owning an audience is the equivalent of buying a house. In the virtual world that means bringing your audience to your website and then getting their email address.

Step One: The Newsletter

Ugh, I know. Starting a newsletter sounds like a daunting task. That’s because it is.

(A word about the word “newsletter”: it’s icky. People will say, “The word ‘newsletter’ is a turn off.” But we’re all adults here so I’m going to call it what it is: a newsletter.)

However nasty a word it is, there’s also no better marketing tool. If you’re posting on social media, you have no way of reaching your followers directly or even knowing who they are. But a newsletter list is all yours. No algorithm change, shadow

ban or sudden belief that a platform is uncool can take those people away from you.

In other words, knowing who your readers are and having a way to reach them is becoming more and more important.

“If you hear people inside publishing talking today, even at traditional publishers, they’re trying to beef up what they call their first party data,” Jane Friedman says. “And of course, Amazon’s not sharing any data. So it’s really incumbent on either the author or publisher to figure out who those readers are and reach them without depending on a third party.”

Skyhorse Publishing CEO Tony Lyons has seen astounding results from newsletters. While the authors he publishes have email lists much larger than most of ours, the conversion rates he’s witnessed have nevertheless been mind-blowing. “If you write a certain kind of letter, and there’s a strong enough nexus between your mailing list and the topic of the book...we’ve had cases where a mailing list of 500,000 people has sold 30 or 40,000 books,” he says. (To put that into perspective, a book that sells only 4,000 copies can become a *New York Times* bestseller.)

While gathering hundreds of thousands of email addresses is impossible for most of us to imagine, we all have to start somewhere.

How to Set Up Your Newsletter

Here’s the good news: setting up a newsletter isn’t that hard. You can start a free account at one of the email marketing sites and come up with a “lead magnet” as something you can give people to incentivize them to cough up their email address.

The problem with a lead magnet—aside from its marketing-esque name—is that we all spent years downloading those

free PDFs in exchange for our email addresses only to never apply anything we learned in those PDFs.

In other words, don't just create any old PDF and think the masses are going to flock to it.

"The lead magnet has to solve a problem," says author and newsletter expert Holly Darling. "It has to be communicated clearly. Just having the word 'free' in there isn't going to get a great conversion. Clarity is what sells."

So consider what your ideal reader or client would want to know.

Maybe they want to take a quiz on the six signs of workaholism or read a PDF on how to meditate.

Or maybe they just want the information you're planning to send out every week. If you have a clear explanation of what that will be, you may want to skip the lead magnet altogether and attract people just by listing what your newsletter will include.

After trying dozens of different options, I now offer a "Discover Your Book in a Sentence" Formula, which provides a template for people to craft their book in a few words, but I also have a page on my site that simply lists what subscribers are going to be receiving in my Authority Secrets. People can subscribe on either page, and both receive an email from me every Thursday.

Over the years, I've played with different ideas—PDFs on how to write a memoir, quizzes on how to determine if you have a book in you and dozens of other things. If you're someone who likes to A-B test, it's definitely worth getting some solid data. If you're someone who breaks out in hives when they hear phrases like "A-B test," just play around and see what seems to work better.

Whatever you decide, make sure that as soon as someone signs up, you assure them they're in the right place.

The First Email(s)

Typically called a “nurture sequence,” the first few emails you send are meant to introduce you to the person who signed up for your list. While I used to have a six-email nurture sequence, sending so many emails to someone who just signed up for my list felt like I was drowning them in a sequence of hi-it’s-me-I’m-the-problem-it’s-me communication.

While the above was a shameless excuse to quote Taylor Swift lyrics, my point is that six emails to say hi-it’s-me-let-me-tell-you-about-me is too much. So now I just send out one confirmation email that reminds the person that I’m sending something they requested and also explains who I am and that they’re going to be receiving an email from me every Thursday (want in on that, btw? Just go to www.authoritybulletin.com). I also ask for them to reply to that first email and let me know how I can help them.

Don’t worry that asking subscribers to respond will mean you’ll be drowning in missives filled with the hopes and dreams of strangers. One out of every 20 subscribers, if that, will respond, and it only takes a few seconds to write them back. Responding to the new subscribers who write me has resulted, for me, in new friends, new authors to recommend in my KATU segment and even new editors my company hired.

If you get to the point where you’re deluged by emails from strangers who want to hear from you, you are experiencing what’s known as a quality problem—and I am officially jealous.

The reason you want your subscribers to write back to your confirmation email is twofold: one, you’ll learn about them so you can find out what they want to know about. And two, you’re teaching their spam filter to let you in.

But how do you find your subscribers?

Circulate Your Sign Up and Write Your First Few Emails

Before you start attracting strangers, just suck it up and ask friends and family if you can put them on your list. Chances are they'll say yes—if they don't, you know who to write out of the will—and asking them will get you used to asking people to sign up.

And then just break your cherry.

“You have to be comfortable with having 10 people on your list for a little while and thinking of it as a marketing experiment,” says newsletter expert Holly Darling. “Think of it as, ‘I’m going to take these 10 people and test a lot of theories out on them or try some stuff and see what works.’”

Once you have your first few subscribers, add the sign-up link to your email signature, pin the link to the top of your social media profiles and put it wherever else you can think of. And then get realistic about how writing your first few newsletters is going to feel.

Honestly, writing newsletters felt awkward for me for years. Looking back, I see why. I didn't understand that my newsletter wasn't supposed to be about me but about my readers. I forgot to think about my avatar. I just thought, every week, “Ugh, I committed to sending something so I'd better do it.” It felt like an albatross.

Then I started looking at the newsletters I received—the ones I always opened, the ones I sometimes opened and the ones I never opened—and asked myself what made me open the ones I did. Either the information was valuable, or I loved the writer's voice. So I thought, why not aim to provide the best information in the most interesting voice?

That makes it a creative challenge. In other words, that makes it fun.

Darling's advice is to just be honest with whatever you share. “If you are brave and vulnerable and talk about your

journey with your subscribers, they'll start rooting for you," she says. "That small little group of people that you start out with can become invaluable."

Of course, once you get going with a few newsletters, you're going to want to create a system.

Come Up with a Theme

Having a newsletter system—often a theme or template—is not only going to make your life easier but will also provide readers with clarity around what they're going to be getting. Consider James Clear's 3-2-1 newsletter, which is read by over a million people every week.

Each missive includes three short ideas from him, two quotes from other people and one question for the reader.

When I shifted my newsletter from being a random assortment of, well, things and instead made it one answer to a publishing question, one publishing tip and one publishing resource, it made my job so much easier.

You'll figure out your format by seeing what your subscribers respond to as well as what feels comfortable for you. Then if it seems like it's time to go in another direction, do so. The more you change it up, the better you're going to get at figuring out where you and your reader connect.

The added benefit of having a theme is that it gives you direction. While I used to dread the inevitable empty page, I now have four holes to plug things into every week. I get excited when I come across a story or idea that fits in one of the holes. And because excitement often results in greater success, my sign-up and open rates increase all the time.

But the main reason my newsletter is successful is that I keep it up. It's a non-negotiable part of the job. Taking yourself seriously as the authority-building entrepreneur means devel-

oping the work ethic of a bricklayer, which means that skipping a week or two is like laying a brick down without brick cream in the middle (bricklayers, please note: I know the stuff that goes between bricks isn't called "brick cream." But I wish it was because it sounds delicious.)

Consistency Is Key

Let's not forget why you're doing this newsletter thing: you're creating an army. Think about it like this: envision an auditorium, in 10 or five years, filled with people who have flown out from all over the world to meet and hear you.

Your newsletter is the baby steps for making that happen—gathering the army, person by person.

Or, to be less intense about it all, you're corralling a group of people who are interested in the same things you're interested in but are just a little bit behind you in the process.

If writing a newsletter every week is overly daunting, do it every other week. If that's too much, do it once a month. But commit to something. And know that the more you do it, the better you're going to get at it, the more you're going to like it and the more your readers are going to be there to support you.

If you gather a bunch of email addresses and only send something out every few months, people will receive it, think "who is this and what are they talking about?," believe it's spam, unsubscribe or, in the best possible scenario, delete. Don't do that to yourself—or them.

What you have to share is valuable, so start consistently showing people that. Then, when you have big news—your book is launching, your coaching practice is opening up, you're launching a course, whatever it is—you have a whole group of people who are used to hearing from you that will be eager to support.

This is a commitment that will pay off. Your subscribers will become your most ardent supporters. And the more you look at the newsletter as an opportunity to write and try out material every week—an opportunity to express yourself creatively—the more you’ll enjoy it.

So how do you get more people to sign up?

There Are No Tricks When It Comes to Gathering Subscribers

I can’t tell you the number of conversations I’ve had with entrepreneurs who look slightly ashamed when muttering something like, “My list is tiny” and then follow that with something like “Only 10,000 people.”

While I’ve wanted at times to accuse them of being full of it or ask them if they understand just how many people 10,000 is, I usually just keep quiet about the fact that my list has hovered at 4,200 for years.

Or who am I kidding? I’m a chronic confessionalist so I usually tell them my number and then add that I gather new people as quickly as I lose the old ones and ask them how the hell they have so many subscribers.

I’ve tried every method they’ve shared—from contests to promotion swaps with other entrepreneurs to running ads in popular newsletters. While the ads brought me the most subscribers—and contests brought the fewest—I’ve yet to discover one quick and easy way to grow a list.

It’s slow and unsexy, but the more you tell people about your newsletter—sharing on social media that you have one, including a sign-up link as part of your signature on your emails, talking about it when you go on podcasts—the more it will grow.

But it definitely isn’t an overnight process.

Still, there's good news about lists with under 100 people on it: your open rates—the percentage of people who actually open your newsletter—will be high. If you're the type who, like me, gets a serious dopamine rush when there's an open rate above 40%, new lists are fun.

Alas, once you're over 1,000 subscribers, that dopamine rush grows increasingly rare.

The Reality about Open Rates

While the average newsletter has a roughly 20% average open rate, always aim for better than average. Experiment with different subject lines by adding an emoji one week or using all lowercase letters one time and all caps another.

Holly Darling echoes this advice. “Try things that aren't really being done,” she says. “President Obama once sent an email that just said, ‘Hey,’ and I thought, ‘Well, that's weird.’ But I opened it. So then I started experimenting with ‘Hey,’ to see if it works. But I don't overuse it. Think about your subject lines as if you're sending an email to a friend.”

(I, too, have tried “Hey” as a subject line, figuring if it's good enough for Obama, it's good enough for me.)

You can always re-send an email to people who didn't open it. But Darling says that if you do that, you should always change the subject line since open rate statistics are unreliable and you risk sending the exact same email to the same person twice.

I know that on weeks when I send a second email—a Saturday special announcement in addition to my Thursday bulletin—the Saturday open rates are always slightly better. Does this mean that Saturdays are better for sending emails? I don't think so (you can find a study that says any day of the week is the best). I think it just means that people get used to

what you normally do so if you do something different, they think it's more important.

The point is this: gather your list and email everyone on it. You won't regret it.

Now Let's Talk Social Media

Social media sucks.

It's also wonderful.

Yes, it's disturbing and bad for our brains and brings out the worst in people and inspires comparing and despairing like nothing else.

It also gives us an opportunity to be our own TV stations, magazines, websites and radio stations. And it means gatekeepers can't stop us from declaring ourselves authorities.

I say forget the numbers. Ignore those TikTokers and IGers gathering thousands of likes as they hawk products. Remember this: a small, interactive audience is worth more than the masses every day.

Most people recommend picking one platform and putting your all into it.

I disagree.

Algorithms change, platforms become uncool, billionaires buy businesses and change everything, accounts get canceled and all that work you put into building your following just went to waste.

I say dabble in all of them and just make a little bit of progress whenever you can. Scheduling apps like Buffer, Tweetfully and Social Bee, where you can schedule a week or month's posts in one sitting, can make it much easier.

(Don't forget that you can start tracking that activity on the calendar I've made for you, which you can download along with other goodies at www.ongoodgifts.com!)

However often you post, make sure you're sharing your real self. In other words, leave the filters for the 20-year-old girls hawking lip gloss and just be you.

When Zara Barrie began the process of trying to sell a book to a traditional publisher, "I let my followers in on the whole process," she says. "When I got 38 rejections [from publishers], I shared about how bad I felt. Then when I got the book deal and started writing the book, I'd take them [my followers] along, sharing how many words I wrote that day."

By involving her followers in the process, Barrie got them invested. At times, she even asked them what they thought she should include in the book. The book became not just hers but theirs.

Write Useful Books author Rob Fitzpatrick employs a similar strategy, involving beta readers throughout the writing process.

But Fitzpatrick doesn't just take in the feedback so he can revise his work effectively; he uses beta readers' questions as an opportunity to spread his concepts to even more people. "Whenever a reader asks me a question by email, instead of responding through email, I record a five-minute video answer and send it out or post it on YouTube," he says.

That way, readers are constantly reminded of the fact that he's not just an author but an authority.

Social Media Is Changing

As I write this, social media is at a bit of a crossroads.

Then again, social media is *often* at a bit of a crossroads.

But today there's talk of TikTok getting banned and Elon Musk mutilating Twitter. People are burned out by the endless scroll, exhausted by the compare-and-despair social media inspires and fearful that they're handing all their private information over to Big Tech.

The platform Mastodon, which allows users to join a bunch of different servers run by various groups and people rather than one central platform controlled by a single company, got a lot of buzz as Twitter seemed to self-destruct in the wake of Musk in the fall of 2022.

BeReal, which is all about encouraging users to post unfiltered photos in real time, saw a 315% increase in users in 2022. And many people swear that they're leaving social media altogether for places where they can be a part of private communities, like Discord and Telegram.

Frankly, it's hard to tell what's going to happen. But I find it hard to believe that Pandora's going to go back in her box. Even if Facebook/Meta and Instagram get knocked out of the way in favor of newer, more addictive platforms that are yet to be invented, there's always going to be a way for us to build our authority using tools like this.

And I firmly believe there's a way to engage in social media in a non-toxic way—to use social media as opposed to having it use us.

And I promise, though it's uncomfortable at first, it gets easier all the time.

Push through the Discomfort

When we're scared or nervous about something, it's easy to just say things like, "Oh, that just isn't for me." But you need to fight every instinct to do that when it comes to your book.

"I have friends that quietly write their books," Zara Barrie says. "They don't talk about them and then when I see them at a party and ask how their book launch went, they'll say, 'Oh, it was a nightmare. No one cared.'"

Whether you fear you're never going to finish the book or are paralyzed by perfectionism, comfort yourself with the fact

that (as of this writing) 700 Instagram posts are going up every second and the algorithm isn't working in our favor. In other words, most people will either never see your post or forget they did.

The good and bad news is that—unless we're pet owners or parents whom creatures rely on for sustenance—we're just not that important.

But that also means that no one's going to remember if you just mention your book once or twice. You need to get comfortable talking about it consistently, bringing your followers into the conversation and remembering that it isn't just about you but about you *and* your audience.

Even if your followers are family members and friends who aren't part of the community of readers you're targeting, share about your book anyway.

First off, it's good practice.

Secondly, you never know if someone in your friend group or family knows someone else that they can share your content with.

Finally, if your posts are all about things related to commercial real estate and your friends who are only interested in furrries and video games react strongly to one of your posts, then you know you're *really* onto something.

So how do you share about your book?

You could take a photo of the manuscript on your computer and post it on Instagram with a caption about it.

You could take a chapter and break it up as a Twitter thread.

You could use that same material for a LinkedIn post.

You could make a video about it and post it on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram.

You could take a quote from the book and make it into a quote card on Canva.

You could record podcast episodes about it.

(Meta alert: I'm doing all of that with this book. And if you

follow me on social media, I bet you don't remember seeing any of this material. If you did, message me and I'll seriously give you a refund on this book and possibly pass your contact information on to the Guinness Book of World Records committee so they can consider you for "Best Memory.")

The point is to try something, see if people engage with it and if they do, start posting about it more. If they don't, try something else until they do engage.

And mark it all down on the calendar you get as one of your book goodies so you can consistently remind yourself of all that you're doing. Every step gets you one degree closer to making you the world's authority on your topic.

But Do You Have to Do This?

If you're thinking, *You're telling me I have to write my book and do all this, too?* I hear you.

You don't have to. But if you want to build your authority with your book, it will be the smartest thing you can do.

Even publishing icon Jane Friedman agrees. "I think you make your life increasingly difficult as an author if you don't use any [social media] whatsoever," she says. "It's possible. I've seen authors do it. But it's not a path I recommend, unless you just feel like for whatever reason that the negatives are going to really outweigh the positives."

But posting doesn't have to take all day. It takes me a couple of hours a week—a couple of hours that pay off over and over in terms of new clients, friends and opportunities.

I highly recommend experimentation here—not only with what you post but with your systems for doing it.

If you put all your efforts into one platform, a slight algorithm change—as I mentioned—can be devastating. I know an author whose publisher informed her they'd given her a book

deal because of her Instagram following so when an algorithm change decreased her number of comments and links, they decided not to release a hardcover version of her book and instead send it straight to paperback.

When I heard that, I first felt flooded with relief that I don't have to deal with traditional publishers anymore, and then realized it was time for me to bust out of my social media comfort zone.

I went back to Twitter, a platform I'd fully engaged in when it first launched, and we all tweeted about what we had for lunch. Although I had a verified account and over 20,000 followers, my interaction was pathetic. The platform had changed; it now seemed to be all about going viral with Twitter threads.

I tried some threads. No one cared.

Then I hired a Twitter expert to help me. She crafted a month's worth of tweets for me, giving me a great model and also the wake-up call that effective Twitter threads are a lot of work. Doubling down on Twitter was no small effort but it resulted in hundreds of new followers and newsletter sign-ups, not to mention interaction with some cool new people.

Then I busted my YouTube and TikTok cherry. I studied what worked, discovered what's true today and may well be different by the time you read this and decided to come up with a bunch of topics, shoot a dozen minute-long clips and post the same ones on YouTube and TikTok.

I also dove into LinkedIn—taking courses, following the formats of the experts and experimenting.

There's been no virality (yes, you can go viral on LinkedIn or any of the platforms). The followers on the platforms I'm new to are coming along so slowly that someone messaged me on Instagram to tell me that a small account on TikTok was impersonating me. I had to tell her it was me; I was just a newbie over there.

But it's growth. And I'm having fun with it. I used to look at social media as this sort of albatross—like, *Oh my God, I have to put out content! What is this never-ending cycle?* Now I try to look at it as a privilege to be able to share myself with whoever feels like witnessing it. There's no gatekeeper to tell me I can't publish something without their approval—just me and my phone and my ability to communicate with friends and strangers and whoever feels like communicating with me whenever I feel like. I like it.

You may end up liking it, too.

Still, I get your hesitations.

"I'm just not into all that self-promotion stuff," I've heard people say more times than I can count. "I'm just not comfortable putting myself out there." And I get it. Because you want to know who else isn't comfortable doing it? Me and everyone else I know.

But you know who wants to have people read her books and hire her company? Me. And all the other entrepreneurs I know who launch books.

Remember that it's not self-centered to promote your work. It's actually self-centered to *not* share something that will help people just because you feel weird putting yourself out there.

People can't love you until they know who you are.

So I say—right now—put this book down and take an action toward audience building, no matter how imperfect you feel, no matter how scared you are of being judged or of becoming one of "those people." And then mark it in your calendar.

Even if you only have a few people along for the ride.

“I Don’t Have Many Followers” Isn’t an Excuse

We all started with the same number of social media followers: zero. But rather than lament how lame it feels to share thoughts and photos with just a handful of people, think about how amazing it is that we have any.

“I hear so many writers say, ‘I don’t have a big following’ and I’m like ‘But you have 100 people,’” says Zara Barrie. “Those 100 people are reading your stuff.” Barrie continues, “Then I see that their followers are making comments but the person isn’t liking or interacting with them.”

Barrie is all about building relationships with people who comment on her posts. “Don’t be too cool to follow them back,” she says. “I answer every DM.” (Since she has tens of thousands of followers, this can take her a couple of hours a day.)

Also remember that interaction and authority on your topic is much more important than high follower numbers. The *New York Times* actually published a story in December of 2021 about how traditional publishers were overvaluing social media follower numbers.

The story broke down how, despite musician Billie Eilish’s 97 million Instagram followers, her book sold only 67,000 copies in roughly six months and how a book by Justin Timberlake (53 million Instagram followers) sold only around 100,000 copies in three years. The story’s conclusion? If you’re not sharing about your book with your followers, they’re not going to care about it. Even if you wrote “Sexy Back” and dated Britney Spears.

In other words, don’t worry so much about how many people are following you but about whether or not they’re responding to what you’re putting out there. Employ your creativity to try to make each post focus on a different aspect of your topic.

Look at it as a challenge: you’re obviously passionate about

your area of expertise. So share that passion with others from as many different angles as you can.

That doesn't mean you can *only* post about this one topic; throw in posts about your day-to-day life whenever you want.

But haphazard, unfocused posting—your workout one day, your dog the next—isn't going to help you become an authority.

Social Media: The Ultimate Research Tool

When I posted one day about how it's not self-obsessed for writers to put themselves out there—that in fact it's self-obsessed not to (it's a version of what I just told you a few sections ago), I got more comments and DMs than I could count. Friends and strangers messaged, "Did you write this for me?" People thanked me for helping them see that they needed to break through their fear.

In short, it took 10 or so different posts for me to determine a topic that really got my audience excited.

Listen to Your Day: The Life-Changing Practice of Paying Attention author Paul Angone likens this process to what a comedian does. "Comedians are constantly whittling their material down with every engagement to get to the real heart of 'Okay, what is my strongest hour?'" he says. "And I think we have to do that as authors."

Please don't worry that your followers will copy you; the real concern is getting anyone to notice us at all amidst all the noise out there. As scientist Howard Aiken says, "Don't worry about people stealing your ideas. If your ideas are any good, you'll have to ram them down people's throats."

Whether you have two followers or two million, it's crucial to remember what a privilege it is to have anyone, stranger or friend, care about what you're doing and working on. Zara

Barrie perhaps gets that more than anyone. “I constantly told my audience, ‘I have my [book deal] because of you,’” she says.

Jesse J. Anderson also knows that it’s more about being a participant than an influencer. “Early on, when you’re first building an audience, you’re just trying to get somebody to look at your stuff,” Anderson says. “But it builds because you interact with them [your followers]. It’s not ‘This is a person that reads my stuff’ but ‘This is my friend who likes some of the things I post.’”

And you may find those friends in surprising places.

Attracting a Fan Base on Quora: The Nicolas Cole Story

I’ll be honest: before Nicolas Cole told me his story, I thought Quora was just for teenage boys crouched over keyboards sticky with soda (and whatever else teenage boys make keyboards sticky with).

Cole is a bit of an icon in the online writing space, having churned out more books, articles and posts over the past decade than most would think possible.

And it all started on Quora in 2014. A former top World of Warcraft player as a teen who wrote a fantastic memoir about it, Cole was working in digital marketing but knew he needed an audience if he wanted to be an author.

“I thought, ‘If gamers are on YouTube and Instagram is for fitness and fashion, where does a writer go?’” Cole says. “Twitter wasn’t really it and Facebook wasn’t it and no platform seemed like it fit. A gamer friend of mine said, ‘You should check out this site called Quora.’ And so I did.”

After spending a month reading through the questions and answers on the site, Cole gave himself the challenge of answering one question on Quora every single day for a year.

He dove in, answering questions related to gaming, fitness, music, digital marketing and writing.

A few months into the project, one of Cole's answers went viral and landed on the front page of Reddit. From there, his answers began being reprinted everywhere from *Inc* to *Time* to the *Huffington Post*.

After that, he landed a column with *Inc*, where his work has now accumulated over a million views, and from there he founded his first company, Digital Press, which helped create content for entrepreneurs. He now runs Ship 30 for 30, the fastest-growing writing community on the web.

While Cole's online audience definitely contributes to the success of his books (his second book, *The Art and Business of Online Writing*, is considered a must-read for writers), he also realizes that audience building is about a lot more than book sales. It's about becoming an authority.

But Cole isn't the only Quora success story.

Quora Can Lead to Getting Quoted in the Media

Never Split the Difference author Chris Voss also experimented with the Quora world. "I heard that Gary Vee started going on Quora and answering every single question he could," says Chris Voss. "You answer a few questions and people start voting on them. Then journalists go there and copy and paste your answers. There's no shortage of journalists that need quality content."

Posting on Quora is as simple as searching for questions about your topic in the top search bar and finding a section of the book you're writing that answers it.

Paste that chunk in there as an answer. Do a similar search the next day and paste a different chunk.

If you keep doing that and your answers provide value, you

will build up a healthy Quora following. Don't fear that "giving the content away" will mean your book won't seem fresh. No one remembers what they read this morning; so even if someone sees your Quora answer and reads your book, they probably won't recall that they read the same thing in two places.

When it comes to Quora, focus less on gathering fans you can bring to your site or newsletter list and more on simply gaining authority. While you can post links to your site, you risk getting suspended or having your content removed. (It happened to me and made me feel a bit like a teenage boy with a sticky keyboard being scolded.)

If you concentrate on truly helping people by providing answers to their questions, you'll become a trusted source who people will want to follow.

While writing for Quora got Cole into magazines like *Inc*, many entrepreneurs contribute to business publications by going directly to them.

Joining Publication Boards and Communities

One of the major changes in online publications over the years is that people like me have gone from being paid to write to paying to write, with publications like *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur* and *Fast Company* offering entrepreneurs opportunities to become paid "board" or "council" members. Being a member means being able to write for those publications with the content marked as sponsored.

Principled journalists are horrified by this, decrying the fact that it can now be hard, if not impossible, to differentiate between actual journalists writing unbiased pieces and people who are paying for the opportunity to promote themselves.

While I'm a former journalist, I was never a particularly principled one.

Put another way: I always saw coverage and publicity as a game. The people with the most expensive publicists could get on the biggest shows and in the biggest magazines. The fact that we can now blatantly pay for that opportunity and the content is marked as "sponsored" feels a lot more honest to me.

Also, I like being able to do this to build authority around the idea of building your authority with a book.

Each of these publications has its own prerequisites for members. Usually, though, you have to have founded a company that nets at least seven figures a year. If accepted, you can expect to pay around \$2,000 a year. While there are various perks each publication offers, most members only care about the fact that they can post articles as often as once a month.

While editors at these publications are constantly on the lookout for articles that appear to be overly promotional, the less you try to hype yourself and the more you simply write about what you know, the more effective your authority building is going to be.

If joining a business publications board or council isn't for you, then you can always dive further into your topic on your own site.

The Rumors Aren't True: Blogging Is Very Much Alive

Bloggging...so 90s, right? Went out with Third Eye Blind and the "Rachel" haircut?

Er, no.

"I have a lot of friends who say blogging is dead because they tried it and it didn't work," says *USA Today* bestselling author and book marketer Derek Murphy. "But it just takes investment and dedication. And it's really important: if Amazon

decided to change something and killed my sales, I would have access to my audience [because of my blog].”

Murphy is quite strategic when it comes to what he blogs about: before coming up with a topic, he does keyword research to find out what people are searching for and then uses SEO title generators to come up with titles.

For example, when he knew he wanted to attract readers who would be interested in his book on writing, he wrote a post on the 10 best writing books, citing the biggest writing books out there.

Then he did a YouTube video on the topic.

Then he broke his one blog post into a bunch of posts, using different keywords in each one. At the end of each post, he'd include a link to his writing book.

Murphy explains, “If you're building content like that, people are finding you organically. And they're probably buying your book as well as some of those other books [you're recommending], which helps your Also Boughts [the section on your book's Amazon page where the site recommends your book alongside other successful books in your genre].”

Murphy has also turned posts like that into giveaways. “You can promote it as ‘If you're a writer and you want to win this free starter library of books, sign up here’ and when they sign up for my giveaway, they join my email list,” Murphy says.

While giveaways are notorious for adding subscribers who are just there for the free stuff, “if you have a good giveaway with a good prize that's really targeted to your target audience,” Murphy says, “you'll be building a list of people who like the content that you're already producing.”

Another way to get in front of your people is to get yourself on another writer's blog.

Guest Blogging

Being a guest blogger is a little like being a guest in real life. This means that you should know who you're staying with, be polite and not leave dirty towels on the bathroom floor.

In other words, if you know of a blog on your topic that already has an established audience, try to develop a relationship with the blogger—by commenting on their posts or showing up on their social media—before asking if you can write for them.

Once you're familiar with their blog, and you can see that they accept guest pitches, go ahead and send over an idea. "I've seen people who start off with just five blog posts and a really targeted lead magnet," Murphy says. "Then they focus on guest posts, writing 20 or so guest posts on sites that have the audience they want."

Guest blogging, it should be noted, is not quite as easy as it sounds. Any website that has fantastic traffic tends to be flooded with guest posting submissions and guest posting on a site that doesn't get traffic is, well, a waste of time. "You have to be really proactive about doing your research and finding the people who have the right audience," says Murphy.

To find the best opportunities, google "best blogs about" and your topic and then look to see which blogs have recent posts, comments or guest bloggers and then comb through it to see what hasn't been covered that you know about.

If you get a pass, don't take it personally. In fact, thank them for responding and ask if there are any topics they'd be interested in; then try again down the road, always remembering that you're building a relationship and not just looking to use them for a one-off opportunity. It took me a few tries to get an article accepted by Jane Friedman for her blog and it was well worth the wait.

Become an Apprentice

This section could also be called “Be a Cool Person.” The main idea is to, well, be someone that people want to say yes to.

Real Artists Don't Starve bestselling author Jeff Goins was an early proponent of guest blogging as a way to build an audience and has a specific technique he recommends. He says, “Email 10 people whose work you admire and say, ‘Hey, thank you for your podcast...this particular episode helped me do this specific thing. Do you have any other resources? Do you have a book I can buy or a course I could take?’”

To Goins, it's a numbers game. “If you put out 10 emails to influencers in your space whom you admire, some people go ‘Cool’ while other people's assistants will respond and some won't respond at all,” he says. “But if you do that with 10 people, you're going to see results. And then just keep showing up so that you can prove yourself as trustworthy as an apprentice.”

Apprentice—or fan or follower—is perhaps the key word in the phrase. One of the most exciting aspects of life as a creator today is that you can reach almost anyone you admire by simply sliding into their DMs or sending them an email.

While you should be regularly reaching out—and marking it in your calendar!—you shouldn't take that opportunity for granted.

WARNING: Don't Do This

Accessibility is both a blessing and a curse because you may feel compelled to blindly reach out to a stranger asking for a favor. And messaging someone you don't know to ask for help is rarely going to be effective.

I know, as a not-remotely-a-household-name person, what

it's like to receive regular messages from strangers asking for things—book blurbs, podcast spots, advice. Missives that say things like *If you publish my book, we can split the proceeds to I think endorsing my book would be an amazing opportunity for you* appear in my inbox with some consistency

I also know what it's like to have strangers start showing me love—commenting on my social media, reviewing my podcast or posting about my work.

And you want to know what happens? The first group's messages tend to get deleted while I end up offering blurbs, podcast spots and advice to those in the second group.

That's the thing: you're not just building relationships so you can do a guest post or two. The people who are further along than you can be there to mentor you at every stage.

“Don't just message someone and say, ‘Hey, you're a really great author! Hey, would you mind promoting my book?’” says publishing expert and author Dave Chesson. “Instead, give them reviews, reply to their emails positively...that's how you get stuck in their head. Then when the time comes, you can say, ‘I've learned so much from you. By the way, I just wrote my first book.’”

This doesn't mean that Tim Ferriss is going to offer you a blurb. (If you do manage to turn up Ferriss' email, which I once did because I wanted to tell him that I'd recorded a podcast episode that broke down how he launches a book, he has an autoresponder that essentially says he doesn't have the bandwidth to read email from people he doesn't know. Fair enough.)

But when you're drawing attention to yourself as a fan of people who are not as big as Tim Ferriss, I highly recommend letting them know you have a book and offer to send a hard copy, rather than just busting out and asking for a blurb. The person may then offer to blurb or promote it to their audience.

That's what happened to Barbara Legere when she finished

writing her memoir, *Keven's Choice*. “I follow [*New York Times* bestselling author of *Beautiful Boy*] David Sheff on Twitter and we chatted back and forth a couple times over the course of me writing the book,” Legere says. “When my book was done, I asked him if he’d like to read the manuscript. And the next thing I knew, he sent me a beautiful blurb for the cover.”

The Ways I’ve Shown Love—and How It’s Paid Off

I stumbled across the concept of getting help from people I admired in the best possible way: with no intentions whatsoever.

I got to know Dave Chesson, in fact, because I read every single one of his newsletters (and still do).

One time I noticed that a link in his newsletter was broken. So I responded to the newsletter to tell him that, also letting him know how much I valued everything he put out there. From there, he invited me to come on his podcast.

Another time, I heard a coach and author named Alan Weiss on a podcast (more on him later in the book). I was so inspired by what he was sharing that I googled him while at a stoplight and saw that his website had some broken links.

I Tracey Flick’ed out again and emailed him to tell him about the broken links and also to explain that I was so inspired by his podcast interview that I was actually writing him from my phone at stoplights.

He thanked me for both the correction and kind words and told me he’d give me half off his upcoming event in Manhattan if I wanted to go.

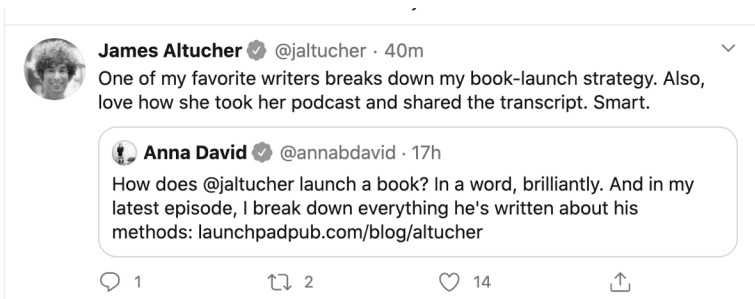
While I took him up on the offer and learned a lot at the event, the benefits of that one email didn’t stop there.

One day, out of the blue, Alan posted my first email to him

on his LinkedIn, where he had a very active following. Though it hadn't occurred to me that he would do that, when you find someone inspiring and tell them, they may well want to share that with their audience, promoting you in the process.

But my most effective expression of my fandom was when I wrote a story about how James Altucher was my favorite self-help writer, despite not being a self-help writer.

I messaged him the link on Facebook and next thing I knew, he sent that story to his several-hundred-thousand-person mailing list. We ended up meeting shortly after and he's been incredibly supportive of me ever since. When I recorded a solo podcast episode about how he launches his books, he even tweeted...



The point is this: never underestimate what throwing some love out there to the people you admire can do.

And this can be even more effective in person.

What Tim Ferriss Did at SXSW

Tim Ferriss' road to success is legendary in the book promoting world, mostly because he's shared it and also because no one is better at breaking down specific steps than Ferriss.

But here's the short version: he knew he wanted to promote *The 4 Hour Workweek* to people who would be most passionate about the topic: tech folks who represented the lifestyle the book described.

So, in 2007, he went to South by Southwest in Austin and, instead of going to the sessions, dedicated himself to being in the room for bloggers.

The networking techniques he followed required both humility and strategy. As he explained in this podcast episode where he broke down what he did, he'd walk up to groups of people and say, "Hey guys, do you mind if I join you just to eavesdrop? It's my first time here, I don't know

anybody. I'll buy you guys a round of drinks." (It was a joke; the room had an open bar.)

While saying something like that would make me die a little inside, Tim Ferriss is far more successful than I'll ever be so if something like that feels comfortable to you, who am I to stop you?

But that wasn't Ferriss' only stroke of genius: he also wrote and slipped notes to people he wanted to meet who were being mobbed and strategically befriended whoever was standing to the side of the Important Person, knowing it was probably the gatekeeper.

The result of all this? The influential bloggers he met wrote about the book, prompting bigger media outlets to write about it. The book hit the *New York Times* bestseller list, where it stayed for seven years.

Today Tim Ferriss is himself the most influential blogger in existence—to the point that there's a phenomenon known as "The Tim Ferriss Effect" that essentially says that a Ferriss recommendation means automatic success (author Michael Ellsberg wrote a [great post](#) for *Forbes* about it).

If that was Ferriss' path, next time it could be anyone's... including yours. Because here's what Ferriss inherently under-

stood: media attention isn't reserved for those lucky few that bookers and journalists discover and find newsworthy.

It's for people like you and me...people, in other words, who *decide* that they're newsworthy because of their authority and simply let the gatekeepers know.

And it's not nearly as hard to do as you may think.

SECTION 2: PROMOTING

(WHILE YOUR BOOK IS BEING WRITTEN &
AFTER IT'S OUT)

STEP 3: SHOW YOUR FACE

HOW TO BREAK INTO THE SEEMINGLY
IMPOSSIBLE BIG LEAGUES USING SPECIFIC
TECHNIQUES ANY AUTHOR CAN EMPLOY

I once interviewed a publicist who swore that no first-time author could attract mainstream media attention—that an author had to start on local TV before booking a bigger show before booking the biggest shows. I pointed out to her that my first TV appearance was covering the Oscars for CNN. She said that was an anomaly.

As you'll see in this chapter, it was not.

My point is this: many publicists don't even know what's possible if you just get a little creative.

I know this firsthand, having wasted literally tens of thousands of dollars on publicists who weren't able to secure even a fraction of the media attention I could get myself.

But I kept hiring publicists, telling myself there had to be a reason my publishers kept recommending it. (In retrospect I think it was so that I'd have someone besides them to blame if my books didn't get the press I'd hoped for.)

Just how ineffective were some of these publicists? Well, one actually sent a press release she'd written about me *to me* (since I was a member of the media as well as her client). It was generic and not remotely right for the publications I wrote for.

Some publicists, of course, are top notch: we refer a lot of our clients to the book PR company Smith, and they regularly get them on shows like *Today*, *Good Morning America* and *The Doctors* and quoted in places like the *New York Times*.

Still, PR has helped much more with their authority building than with their book sales.

“If you go on *Today* to promote, say, a workout book, and you share two or three different ways to work out, people watching that just take it as content,” says Skyhorse publisher Tony Lyons. While Lyons has seen a single television appearance move tens of thousands of books, “that’s really rare now,” he admits.

I learned this firsthand, when, back in the mid-2000s, I appeared regularly on *Today*, *Good Morning America*, Fox News and all the other networks; I was giving commentary on everything from addiction to dating to politics to pop culture. And even when the name of my book was displayed on the screen, I sold no more than a dozen books.

For a long time, this flummoxed me.

Then I realized: there are dozens of guests on these shows every episode.

Viewers do not sit there buying each guest’s book. As Lyons pointed out, often what the guest is providing makes their book unnecessary. And since studies show that roughly a quarter of the population hasn’t read a book in the past year, what are the chances that the people watching those shows are even interested in books?

The general thinking is that someone has to hear about your book seven times before buying it. (I heard that recently increased to 15. Who knows? Point is, it’s a lot.)

So...one *Today* show appearance = one of those times. That’s not great, especially when you compare it to the potential reader who already knows and likes you—the one you found and nurtured during your audience-building phase.

That person probably only has to hear about your book once in order to hit the buy button.

But TV is important even if it doesn't sell books. When I appeared on *Good Morning America* to promote *Make Your Mess Your Memoir*, I sold a handful of books but ended up bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars in new clients.

I much prefer that to book sales. And you can make it happen without a publicist.

The Secret to Pitching Media Yourself

Contacting the media directly may make you self-conscious. Done the right way, though, it can be incredibly effective.

Top business consultant Cameron Herold actually wrote an entire book on this topic—aptly titled *Free PR*. Using the techniques he breaks down in the book, he got his former company, 1-800-GOT-JUNK?, coverage everywhere from the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle* to *USA Today* to *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Inc*, *Success* and *Entrepreneur*. They were even on *Oprah* and *Dr. Phil* (17 times!)

In all, Herold says, they landed 5,200 stories about the company in six years.

Their secret? “We called journalists and said, ‘Hey, do you have two minutes? I think I have a good story for you,’” Herold explains.

Yep. The good old-fashioned telephone.

“At the end of the day, journalists don't really have time to find new content,” Herold says. “But they need new angles. And nobody uses the phone. If they get 200 emails a day, I have a one-in-200 chance of getting their attention. If they only get four voicemails a day, I have a 25% chance that they're going to call me back.”

According to Herold, locating the contact information for bookers and journalists isn't a challenge (he cites Muckrack, Cision and Media Atlas as places that provide it). He also suggests doing Google searches and looking up hashtags on Twitter to see which journalists are already writing about your topic.

There's another way to get in the media, too: become a source for a story that's already in the works.

How to Get Featured in the Media Regularly

There are a number of sites that are essentially dating sites but instead of matching singles looking to mingle, they match journalists with experts who want to be interviewed.

HARO—or Help a Reporter Out—is the biggest, and the short version of the way it works is this: anyone can sign up for HARO, and once you do, you'll begin receiving three emails a day that include a seemingly endless list of journalists seeking sources.

These journalists are from everywhere from the *New York Times* to your cat's blog and they are on every topic your mind can conceive of and many it can't. While some list the publication the query is for, others don't; so you may not know whether you're pitching one of the big guns or a tiny website.

Sometimes the journalists will request lengthy answers, so you have to write the equivalent of a story to be considered; other times, all you need to do is tell the journalist who you are, what you do and why you should be included.

One thing to know about HARO is that it's wildly unpredictable. The first time I used it, when I was running a website about addiction and recovery, I reached out with a short email to a journalist who was seeking sources on addiction. He immediately responded with a few questions that I answered by

email and, later that week, I was featured as the opener for a story in *Fortune* magazine.

The next week, that journalist was doing a story for CNBC and asked me for another quote. Over the next few years, he included me in dozens of stories.

A few years later, I started submitting elaborately written stories and emails to different journalists who were often writing for publications I'd never even heard of. I followed up repeatedly on a bunch of these stories and never even got a "no thanks."

Still, many of my clients and students have scored stories in big publications with a single email.

How to Succeed: Straight from the Source

HARO creator Peter Shankman, who sold the company to Cision in 2010, says HARO success is part numbers game (so you should submit yourself a lot) and part early response game since the first email goes out at 5:45 (so you should submit yourself early in the day). "By six o'clock [East Coast time], there are at least 100 people that have sent in a response to every single query," Shankman says.

Still, you needn't set your alarm for 3 am just yet, since a savvy response can really help you stand out. "Make sure your response is quick and to the point," Shankman advises. "Write in such a way that the reporters can just use those answers in their story."

Chris Joseph, the author of *Life is a Ride: My Unconventional Journey of Cancer Recovery*, has come up with another work-around: when he sees a listing on HARO that's a fit, he reaches out to the journalist on social media or by email if he can turn up their address.

Shankman's strongest recommendation is to create a template

and have it ready to fire off whenever you see a relevant query. “Have a mock write up of what you would send with some key parts left blank,” he says. “I’d write, ‘My name is Peter, I recently found a company called blank and based on your query about blank, I think I’d be the perfect person to answer your question.’”

Barbara Legere (the one who scored the blurb from David Sheff just by sending him her book) has had excellent luck with HARO, having been quoted in stories for *The Huffington Post*, *Salon* and *Prevention* magazine. “I didn’t know who I was pitching to,” Legere says. “If I had known, I may have been more hesitant to reply.”

While getting your name in print is fantastic, landing a TV spot is even better when it comes to authority building.

What Goes into Getting on TV

Before he became a regular in the media, *Never Split the Difference* author Chris Voss would study TED talks to see what separated the truly spectacular communicators from everyone else.

“Angela Duckworth’s Grit is one of the shortest TED talks,” he says. “And it’s riveting. You have to listen to it four or five times before it jumps out at you. It’s subtle. It’s tone of voice.”

Every show works differently when it comes to preparing. But in general you want to go into a TV appearance having rehearsed but not memorized word-for-word what you’re going to say.

Out of all the shows I’ve been on, *GMA* and *The Talk* were the most focused on prep, requesting written-out talking points ahead of time, doing run-throughs and essentially making sure every moment would run smoothly.

But I’ve been on other big shows on networks like CNN, Fox

News, and NBC where they allow you to just wing it. Of course, the more times you've been on a show, the more they're going to trust you.

So how do you get on TV and what happens next?

How I Got on Good Morning America

When I was releasing my book *Make Your Mess Your Memoir* a few months into the pandemic and knew I wanted mainstream media attention, I knew my book wasn't newsworthy. But I also knew I could somehow make it relate to the news.

After doing a little research, I wrote the following press release:

New Book Offers Hope to Those Seeking Outlets Post COVID-19 For Turning Their Personal Adversity Into A Memoir For Others

According to an April 2020 poll by Gallup, Americans indicate their mental health will suffer before their physical or financial health does. Gallup found that “majorities in the U.S. say they can continue following social distancing guidelines for as long as is necessary” before their physical health suffers (68%) or they experience significant financial hardship (54%). But fewer than 48% say their mental health will hold out as long.

A new book, *Make Your Mess Your Memoir*, offers help by suggesting that the best way to heal from struggles is to turn into a memoir for others to learn from—finding personal resilience in the process.

According to this book, it's people who have survived difficult times that should be penning memoirs. By that

logic, at this point in world events, everyone should probably be writing their memoir.

That's what *New York Times* bestselling author Anna David thinks. Her new book not only claims that this is THE time to be writing a memoir but also that writing a book is the best way to heal from crisis.

"Gwyneth Paltrow may have been mocked for telling people that they should have spent quarantine time trying to write a book or learn a new language but I was right there with her," David says. For six weeks during quarantine, David's company hosted free daily writing sessions on Zoom where anyone who wanted to could jump on, write and ask David questions. The result? At least 20 new memoirs were launched, on topics as diverse as surviving a rare form of cancer, parenting an alcoholic and going from a career as an athlete to one as a truck driver.

But really...should everyone be writing a book? Doesn't that mean there will be a lot of, er, less-than-quality books out there?

According to David, everyone has a story to tell. And with publishing as democratized as it's become in the Bezos Era, they all have the freedom to actually publish it. But still... should they?

"I can't guarantee that everyone who writes a book will create a great work of art," David admits. "But I can guarantee that anyone who shares a story of overcoming a struggle will begin to heal." David adds that she speaks from experience. "Nothing has helped me heal more than writing about those issues that have brought me the most shame and seeing other people relate," she says. "And that's saying a lot, seeing as I've been in therapy for literally three decades."

Step 2 for Getting on Good Morning America: Talking Points

Once I had the press release, I knew I had to get it in the right hands.

Because I had a publicist friend who owed me a favor, I asked him to send that pitch to some of his contacts.

But a publicist isn't necessary. If you google the name of any show along with the word "booker" or "producer," numerous LinkedIn pages will come up with contact information. If you get as determined and creative as Cameron Herold recommended, you may be able to get to the right person even faster than a publicist can.

In my case, when my publicist friend reported back that *GMA* was interested but had requested four talking points—my tips for staying mentally strong during the pandemic—I acted fast. This is what I wrote:

Journaling: This is the best way to sort out how you feel because putting pen to paper allows you to separate yourself from your thoughts as opposed to believing every single negative one. Always do it by hand and not on the computer since we associate computers with work. It's sort of like how you're not supposed to watch TV in your bedroom because beds should be associated with sleep. Journaling should be the opposite of work. If you keep journaling as a daily practice—rather than just writing down when you're depressed—you have documentation of how your feelings are always changing. Bonus: Make a daily gratitude list.

Spirituality: If you can accept that everything is happening the way it's meant to, then there's a reason for our current situation that we are not able to see at this point. Pain is inevitable but suffering is optional and fighting against what's going on is a recipe for suffering. If you surrender to

the fact that you don't have control, then you'll notice how everything is easier. For some people, this will mean prayer, for some it will mean a meditation practice, for some it will be sticking notes around the house that say "Acceptance."

Don't suffer alone: It's easy to think, if you're struggling, that you're the only one. (That thought is one of the main symptoms of depression—the other one being that you feel like it's never going to end.) We live in a society that has such shame around emotional and mental struggles so accept that this has been programmed into you and do everything you can to fight it. The people in your life want to love and support you but they can't if you don't tell them what's going on. Given what's happening in the world, they may well be feeling similarly and your reaching out to them would therefore be a tremendous help.

Do service: When this all started, I began hosting a daily Zoom writing group for anyone who wanted to join me to write for an hour. Thirty memoirs have been launched as a result. I also got certified to be a Crisis Text Counselor where I help suicidal teens get perspective on their feelings. My boyfriend and I volunteered at the Food Bank in South Central. I did these things not because I'm an excellent person but because service is the main way I get perspective on my own life.

Let me be perfectly clear about the words above: I'm not going to say I pulled them out of my ass but...well, I might have. By that I mean I didn't complicate anything. I wrote exactly what I knew and had experienced, and I approached it like I was an expert. As an author, you are an expert and you, too, have a great many thoughts and experiences to share. So you could easily do the same.

Step 3 for Getting on Good Morning America: The Pre-Interview

Back to GMA. After reading through my talking points, the producer wrote to set me up for a pre-interview with another producer. During that interview, I just said pretty much what I'd written up as talking points. From there, the producer summarized our conversation, making it into a script for the show. This was it:

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR BOOK, “MAKE YOUR MESS YOUR MEMOIR.” TELL ME WHAT INSPIRED THIS BOOK AND HOW IT REALLY HITS HOME RIGHT NOW DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES...

Anna: I have read so many memoirs and so many business books so I wanted to combine them into one book, to help others – the same way I've been helped through these. There's no better time than now to be writing – it's the most healing activity I know of and then sharing that writing and having people relate is the best feeling in the world. When you see people's reaction to your work and writing, it's healing!

YOU HAVE THREE TIPS ON HOW TO CREATE A MORE POSITIVE MENTAL STATE AND TEND TO OUR SELF-CARE. WHAT'S FIRST?

Anna: Getting into acceptance is key. Once you establish that then you're ready to take the first step. First is journaling. In a time when we're all getting down, it's important to have a trail you can follow. This is the best way to sort out how you feel because putting pen to paper allows you to separate yourself from your thoughts as opposed to believing every single negative one. It gets me to see truths that I can't see. It's a big part of 12 step programs. It's almost like a self-interview. You think through “what is the trigger in me, and what can I do about it.” Always do it by hand and not on the computer

since we associate computers with work. It's sort of like how you're not supposed to watch TV in your bedroom because beds should be associated with sleep. Journaling should be the opposite of work. If you keep journaling as a daily practice—rather than just writing down when you're depressed—you have documentation of how your feelings are always changing. Bonus: Make a daily gratitude list.

YOU SAY SPIRITUALITY IS IMPORTANT, WHY IS THIS A KEY STEP?

Anna: Spirituality can mean a lot of different things. My counselor in rehab said they thought I was spiritually dead and I told them I wasn't religious and they said it had nothing to do with religion. So many things can be spiritual. They said playing with puppies can be spiritual. Watching the sunset can be spiritual...anything that shows you're not in control. It's the greatest release ever! You don't have to pray. There's never been a period that's clearer that we're not in control than now. Just believe there's something bigger than you.

WHAT'S YOUR LAST TIP?

Anna: Last is do a form of service. I got certified and started volunteering as a crisis text counselor. By helping others, I'm able to get perspective on my own life. Also, when this all started, I began hosting a daily Zoom writing group for anyone who wanted to join me to write for an hour. Thirty memoirs have been launched as a result. It took focus off of what was going on and in turn has been so healing. But I would also say, you don't have to suffer alone—that's key!

So there you have it. They take your stuff, make it work for them and give it back to you. You familiarize yourself with how they're approaching it, remind yourself that they're your ideas so you can't screw them up, take a deep breath and go for it.

To see the GMA segment that aired, click [here](#).

While the press release that I wrote was designed to get me

booked on TV, there's another type of press release you can write: one that isn't meant to have any bookers or journalists reach out to you at all.

Why Would You Want a Press Release to Not Attract Media Attention?

While it seems insane to want to write a press release with no plan to incentivize a journalist or producer to contact you, there is actually a reason: Google.

If you're firmly established as an author or already have a strong web presence, you can ignore this strategy. If you're newer to building your authority—if, when you're Googled, your book or authority around your topic isn't likely to be at the top of the search—what I'm about to share with you is gold.

There are services out there that will, for a few hundred dollars, circulate a press release about you to thousands of outlets, many of which will simply print the press release as it is on their site.

While the sites aren't going to exactly be the *New York Times* (and probably won't even be sites you've heard of), if you make the press release about you as an author and include the name of your book and any other authority-building information, it will—overnight—start appearing in thousands of places online.

If a strategy like this seems cheesy or not worth the time, let me tell you about an entrepreneur I met—incredibly successful, a bit arrogant—who told me how proud he was of the fact that he'd hired a very inexpensive company to write and launch his authority-building book.

Wanting to see the results of that, I googled him.

That's when I discovered that this guy had the same (unique) name as a guy who'd made news several times for

various crimes he'd committed. Even worse, Google had conflated information about the criminal with information about this guy, so some photos of the entrepreneur popped up on stories about the criminal and vice versa.

I pointed this out to the entrepreneur—strongly urging him to do something to repair the issue—and he said he'd spent tens of thousands of dollars working with reputation management companies to try to change this and nothing had worked.

One press release sent to 6,000 outlets—touting this guy as an entrepreneur, author and authority—would have moved the criminal down to probably page 10 of the search results and gotten rid of the problem.

Even if you don't share a name with a criminal, this can work wonders. But you can also try to *create* the news.

Making Yourself Newsworthy

When Peter Shankman was a publicist in his pre HARO days, he excelled at what's known as “newsjacking.”

Shankman's third book, *Can We Do That?!: Outrageous PR Stunts That Work—And Why Your Company Needs Them*, breaks down a few of them. One was when he was working for Yoo-Hoo chocolate milk and one of their trucks was stolen—so they put out an APB announcing that whoever found the truck got free Yoo-Hoo for life (the truck was found in 45 minutes, but the story left me craving chocolate milk for days).

Another of Shankman's stunts involved 150 dotcom guys jumping out of an airplane, and a third was when they got a yarn store to add two plastic needles and giant balls of yarn to a bus they drove around Manhattan.

So how can an author do this? Your book may not involve a stolen Yoo-Hoo truck but it does have your personal experience. According to Shankman, it's just about hooking a jour-

nalist from the beginning. “We have a 2.77 second attention span in this country,” Shankman says. “So what can you do to make someone reader stop and say, ‘Okay, I’ll give you more time’?”

Consider what James Altucher did when he was launching his 2013 book, *Choose Yourself!* For the first month, he made it available exclusively through Bitcoin. In 2013—otherwise known as a time when very few people were talking about Bitcoin! *Choose Yourself!* sold 40,000 copies in its first week and while of course that’s not just because of Bitcoin, the news it made certainly helped.

Inserting Yourself into the News

When she was releasing her book, *I See You Made an Effort: Compliments, Indignities, and Survival Stories from the Edge of 50*, Gurwitch started researching how her book played into what else was happening in the world a good six months before her launch.

Because her book was about turning 50, she knew that anything else turning 50 that year would receive coverage; she did some research and determined that *Playboy* was hitting the same milestone. “Something like that gave me both writing and talking points that I could reference in both my writing and promotion,” she says.

To Gurwitch, this actually makes the process much easier. “Why should I reinvent the wheel?” she says. “I don’t need to invent an audience for something that’s in the social zeitgeist. A project will be successful if I can get as many people talking about it as possible. So I just need to identify where people are already talking about the thing that I’m doing.”

Seeing where people are already talking about your subject isn’t unlike coming up with news pegs. Consider this the most

fun research project imaginable: discovering the other people out there who are as passionate about your topic as you are. Search social media hashtags and Facebook groups. Find your topic's thought leaders and see what they're sharing. Listen to podcasts. Think of creative ways you could get on TV.

But you also have to know where to draw the line.

Don't Get as Desperate as I Have

I speak from personal experience when I say that it can become easy to convince yourself, when you're in the midst of a book launch, that media attention is crucial.

When, in 2010, I was promoting my memoir about spending a year trying everything Helen Gurley Brown recommended in 1962's *Sex and the Single Girl*, my publisher kept telling me the book wasn't selling well. Desperation crept in. Other year-in-the-life books, like *Eat Pray Love* and *Julie and Julia*, had been sensations. I felt like if more people knew about my book, it could be, too.

So I reached out to a friend who worked for Anderson Cooper's talk show.

She wrote me back, telling me they were putting together an episode on single women getting back together with their ex-boyfriends. Would I be willing, she asked me, to reunite with an ex-boyfriend on air?

Hmmm. I considered my ex-boyfriends. Not a tempting group. That's why they were exes.

You'd mention my book? I wrote back.

She responded that they could.

The fact that I reached out to not just one but two exes to pitch them on this idea should be an indication of how far down the "must get media attention for my book no matter what I do" rabbit hole I'd gone.

I'd love to tell you that I realized the insanity of my ways at the time. But the truth is that the only reason the shoot never happened is that neither of the exes I contacted were up for it.

Perhaps, if I'd had more long-term vision I wouldn't have grasped at that particular straw.

Don't Give Up Before the Miracle, AKA Play the Long Game

While Jennifer Keishan Armstrong hasn't stooped as low as I have when it comes to what she's been willing to do for publicity, she knows how hard it can be to let fate take its course once you've done all the work.

She advises, "Do everything you can to promote your book so that you feel good about what you've done, but know that you can only do so much, and once you've done as much as you physically can, you just have to let it go and hope for the best and realize that you wrote a book, and that's amazing, and you should celebrate that. And also: just because it didn't launch well doesn't mean you shouldn't keep at it either."

Chris Joseph, the author of *Life Is a Ride: My Unconventional Journey of Cancer Recovery*, is a spectacular example of playing the long game. He committed to doing something for his book on a regular basis, and 18 months after his book's release, it has over 135 five-star Amazon customer reviews. Joseph, meanwhile, has not only appeared on numerous podcasts but has also published another book and even hosts several podcasts of his own.

"A year and a half after the release, the book is the gift that keeps on giving," he says. "When you win a championship, no one can ever take that away. When you publish a book, no one can ever take that away."

And there's one way in particular to make sure it's a gift that keeps giving and giving and giving.

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR VOICE

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAYING THE PODCAST GAME RIGHT

Podcast expert Alex Sanfilippo knows about the power of podcasts.

But even he was surprised when his friend Brant went on a podcast a year after his book launched and the book instantly sold out. And we're not talking about a podcast hosted by Joe Rogan, Tim Ferriss or the girl who talks about calling daddy but simply a multilevel marketing podcast with an active fan base.

Sanfilippo's friend saw the impact of podcasts long after his launch but *Never Split the Difference* author Chris Voss saw the impact of podcasts on book sales immediately. He even credits appearing on podcasts as the ball that got his book's incredible success going.

After Voss appeared on Lewis Howes' show, Voss says, "It hit hard. He did a great interview. Then the other podcasts jumped." The other podcasts included Dax Shepard's *Armchair Therapist* and *The James Altucher Show*, among many others. This not only helped *Never Split the Difference* sell millions of copies but it also made Voss into one of the best-known former hostage negotiators on the planet.

Here's the great news: podcasts like booking authors. "I find authors much easier to say yes to because you know that they're going to be good at answering questions and they have great authority," says podcast host and Rise 25 co-founder John Corcoran.

Here's the less great news: podcasters receive dozens of pitches a week and 99% of them are generic, publicist-written drivel that are all but screaming "Please delete me!"

Unless you're working with a publicist who has personal connections with podcast bookers, you're much better off pitching yourself. And if you do it right, it will pay off over and over again.

Why Podcasts Are So Important

Podcasts aren't just incredibly intimate—you're literally in people's ears—but they're also custom tailored to your audience.

"When you're on a podcast, it's about something specific," says Skyhorse publisher Tony Lyons. "And if the guest teases what the book is about and there's a strong enough nexus between the book topic and the show, you might have 1,000 people suddenly just click on their phones and buy the book."

The reason podcast audiences are so valuable is that they tend to be both highly literate and passionate about learning. As media expert Christina Nicholson says, "Somebody is reading the title of that podcast episode and deciding to devote their next 30 minutes to listening to it."

"They really get to know, like and trust you," Nicholson adds. "They hear your voice and aren't just reading a quote online or seeing you for three minutes on TV. And nine times out of 10 they're listening to you because they want to learn something or grow in whatever it is you're talking about."

In other words, the listeners are often your ideal readers. So how do you get to them?

Determine the Shows You Want to Go On

To find shows you want to appear on, podcast expert Jeremy Enns recommends going to the pages on iTunes for every show you think is a fit and then looking at the bottom of the page where it lists the shows those listeners also liked. Put all of those on a master list, listen to each show, find the contact information for the ones you like and reach out.

Still, it's important to not be overambitious. The biggest shows don't accept pitches at all and rather than assuming you may be the exception, it's better to focus on shows that would be thrilled to have you. You're not only going to be staving off rejection but also finding better opportunities.

"So many people say they only want to be on shows that have 100,000 downloads per episode," says podcast expert Alex Sanfilippo. "People think of it like social media, where 50 likes may not mean a lot. But podcast listenership is like people sitting in seats. If I told you, 'I have 50 people in the next room who want to hear exactly what you have to share,' you'd show up every day of the week to speak to those 50 people."

According to Sanfilippo, the best way to start the selection process is to decide how many shows you want to go on. "If you search your topic, there are going to be tens of thousands of potential shows out there," he says. "Don't just say 'I'm going to go on all of them.' Commit to a number that's realistic."

Once you know where you want to go, start pitching.

You Are the Least Important Part of Your Pitch

It's easy to assume that your podcast pitch should be about you. You're doing the interview to promote your book, right?

Wrong.

You're doing the interview to help the podcast host and listeners.

This means that the most effective podcast pitch is not going to be about you but about the show and the audience. So instead of writing a host and explaining how amazing you are and how your book is going to revolutionize the world and change the lives of everyone who reads it, focus on the show. By listening to it, you've identified what the host is interested in and perhaps noticed some topics the show could delve into more deeply—topics you could speak to.

“You want to make yourself relevant to the podcaster,” says podcaster and entrepreneur John Corcoran. “So if they have a specific narrow focus, you want to cater to that and say, ‘Hey, I know that you feature only woodworking experts on your show but I’ve noticed that you haven’t had anyone on who talks about the financial aspects of how woodworking businesses need to operate. I just wrote a book that’s the definitive guide to how to manage your finances for a woodworking business. I think that would be really relevant and valuable to your audience.’”

The key part of Corcoran's advice is that you need to know the show well. And the thing that's most important is that you're an actual fan of the show.

On that note, want to know the secret that will make a podcaster's heart skip a beat and get your pitch moved to the front of the pitch pile? Write a review for the show on iTunes. Explain, in a non-sycophantic way, why you love the show and attach the screenshot of your review almost as an afterthought.

Make sure you tell the host how you'll share the episode

everywhere, touting any social media or newsletter lists you have. Podcasters want to reach new audiences and you may offer that, even if your audience isn't huge.

And if you don't hear back? Don't take it personally. In fact, assume they didn't even get your first email.

"Message across different platforms and mediums," suggests Corcoran. "Try LinkedIn, try email or picking up the phone or whatever social channel people are on."

Just like with HARO, it's a numbers game. But one that can be incredibly effective.

An Example of an A+ Pitch

You know the terrible pitches I told you all podcast hosts receive every day?

You know those terrible podcast pitches I told you that podcasters receive every day? Every now and then you receive the opposite: a pitch that's so well written and so obviously written by someone who belongs on your show that you respond immediately.

I've received a few fantastic ones over the years but here's my favorite:

Hi Anna,

You've got to be one of the best podcasts hosts to listen to. You're actionable, friendly, and actually seem to enjoy what you do. You also seem to be incredibly creative in how you do business, such collaborations with seemingly very different people like Gene Moran.

For me, creative strategies have been the only way to build something when starting out from nothing.

With COVID coming to an end and all of the new opportunities for authors that come along with this changed world, I wonder if

your listeners would be interested in a story of creatively getting your book into the hands of your ideal readers.

Especially as a new self-published author with no budget. How do you actually get traction in those early days?

For me, it all started when Syracuse, Virginia Tech, The University of Houston, Kansas State and 7 other universities sent our book to 40,000 students. I was 21 with no publishing experience.

My name is Alex Strathdee and I'm an author and founder of Advanced Amazon Ads. I'm curious as to if I might be a good fit for your show. I've included some things (such as the intro above) that I can talk about on your show below and if you think I'd be a good fit, I'd love to chat further with you.

Other topics I can cover:

-Creative book marketing and monetizing (Like how we got Kohls to pay me \$1,000 to send our book to our ideal readers)

-Self-Publishing as a young entrepreneur

-Why, when, and how should you do Amazon Advertising (experience with 200+ books and \$300,000+ in ad spend)

-Digital nomad/minimalist entrepreneurial lifestyle (Everything I own fits into a suitcase and a backpack)

Previous interviews & articles

Interviewing the CEO of the 5th largest Defense Contractor in the world: <https://news.northropgrumman.com/file?fid=5bad3doe2cfac254bd712d8c>

Recently featured on the Get Published Summit with names like Dave Chesson and Marc Reklau: <https://www.thegetpublishedsummit.com/>

Recent mention in Redbookmag:

<https://www.redbookmag.com/life/money-career/g34090816/build-your-network/>

Let me know if you and your team think I'd be a good fit for the show or want to chat further. Either way, thank you for the great podcast and I look forward to being an avid listener. After listening to a couple episodes, I was even inspired to leave a review.

*Respectfully,
Alex*

P.S. Congratulations on the movie deal in the works! You must be so proud! Hopefully you can get the rights sorted out quick.

I dare anyone to say no to that; not only did he shower me with compliments, but he made it clear he had a compelling topic that my listeners would like.

BTW, You'll see Alex Strathdee quoted in this book (you'll actually get details on how he got his book to all those students). From that email, he became first a guest and then a friend. Didn't I tell you this works?!

The Worst Pitch I Ever Received

On the polar opposite end of the Strathdee pitch is one I received several years ago for the podcast I used to host about addiction and recovery. Here it is:

*Subject: I heard your fun to interview with!
Date: February 9, 2018 at 8:11:06 AM PST*

Hi Anna,

I'm reaching out in hopes to chat about becoming a guest on The AfterParty podcast (I was informed that it's now called Recover Girl).

Does that mean you only have women on the podcast? If you allow men on as well...

My name is _____, I'm an artist living in NY and my new book _____ just released for pre-order on February 3rd. Would love to chat with you about it and see if it's something you'd be interested in speaking to me about on your podcast. My goal is to inspire both artists and addicts to keep walking their path and to follow their dreams, so I thought this would be perfectly in line with your show. I'd love to chat about the book and my journey of recovery, or any related topic.

If this interests you, I'd be happy to talk about it more on Recover Girl! I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks, _____

As a grammar snob, the “your” instead of “you’re” in the subject line already felt like a knife stab. But to not even know the name of the show or whether or not it features men? If you’re going to write a pitch like this, all I can say is this: expect your email to be featured in a book as an example of a bad podcast pitch.

Pitching badly doesn’t just make you look clueless; it’s also going to make you think shows are rejecting you when they’re actually just rejecting your email.

“People will say, ‘Oh, I tried the podcasting thing but I just couldn’t get a response,’” says Sanfilippo. “When I’ve asked to

see the pitch, it's five or six paragraphs of 'I did this, then I did that.' What the podcaster cares about is: What are you showing up with and how will you add value to my audience?"

But there's even more to an amazing appearance than adding value for listeners.

The Secret to Being a Great Podcast Guest

It may seem obvious but the best way to ensure a successful appearance is to know the show well. Happily, if you did your research and pitching right, you already do.

"Sometimes I'll go on a show where the host is really monotone," says Sanfilippo. "If I have that 'What's up everybody, how y'all doing today' energy, the listeners are going to think, 'Who is this crazy guy that got brought on the show?' The listeners like the host so it's important to understand how you can respectfully enter the host's stage."

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of listening to the podcast beforehand. Going onto a show without listening to at least one episode is missing the entire point of being on a podcast. Podcasting is an incredibly intimate medium and the fact that a host is having you on their show, no matter how big or small, is a big deal. Would you show up to an intimate dinner party thrown by a stranger without knowing anything about them? (No, because that would be dangerous but you get the idea.)

Think about it like this: if you go on *Today*, viewers may be fans of the host but really they're fans of the show.

A podcast listener, on the other hand, is a fan of the host first and show second. The host is essentially inviting you into their living room and presenting you to their friends.

But there's more to doing a great job than just knowing the show.

“To be a great podcast guest,” says Robert Greene, “you have to be authentic and relaxed and be willing to tell stories with some self-deprecating humor.” He adds, “Nothing is worse than an egotistical writer who kind of shows how wonderful they are and how great their book is. They’re so eager to promote it that they come off as if they have no sense of humor.”

However counterintuitive it sounds, the best thing you can do is not focus on promoting your book. “Guests that have sold the most books [from a show] were the ones that barely talked about them,” says Sanfilippo. “If an author says [on a show], ‘Well, I’m not going to tell you about chapter five, because you have to grab the book to learn about that,’ nobody’s interested in that. People want to know that they can trust you.”

What makes a one-time guest into a repeat guest, or even just an appreciated guest, can also be what happens once the show airs.

After your appearance, no matter how big or small your audience, share it on social media, or however you can, and tag the host. Some guests go way further, mailing handwritten thank you cards and even gifts—none of which is necessary, but it is indeed memorable.

But if you just thank them and share the episode, you’ve established a relationship for the next time you release a book.

It’s a Cliché Because It’s True: Size Doesn’t Matter

If I can leave you with one final point about podcasts, it’s that appearing on podcasts whose audiences comprise your ideal readership is so much more important than getting on the “big” shows.

“I developed a strategy early on where I will go on podcasts that have 10,000 or even 5,000 listeners,” says multiple *New York*

Times bestselling author Robert Greene. “If I like the person and feel like they have a future, I want to be maybe the first person that kind of helps blow them up.”

While Greene is far more generous than most authors in his situation, he also knows that this strategy can pay off. “If you take those people who only have 5,000 listeners and you do 20 of them and you do them well, that’s going to spread,” he says. “Word of mouth is the best publicity and the best way to get your book sold.”

Sanfilippo echoes Greene’s point, adding that appearing on smaller shows can actually be more effective than going on the big ones. “Massive shows grow because people really like the host and in many cases they just block out the guests,” says Sanfilippo. “They expect to learn something and expect to be dazzled but they are not going to follow any call to action.” He adds, “I’ve been on a few different million-plus-downloads shows and they’ve done less for me than some shows with under 100 listeners.”

But going on smaller shows isn’t the only surprising aspect of effective book promotion. The truth is, the more unusual the idea, the more powerful it will often be.

STEP 5: GET CREATIVE

NON-OBVIOUS WAYS FOR YOU TO CREATE YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES

Mike Koenigs isn't someone to let an opportunity pass him by. This is a guy, after all, who wrote a book called *Money Phone* about how you should make a video with everyone you meet at a conference so when you follow up with them for a sales call, you can easily remind them who you are.

It therefore makes sense that when he was on his way to South by Southwest and saw the popular 80s actor Richard Dreyfuss on the flight, he knew he was going to find a way to connect.

And he knew his book was the way.

And so Koenigs grabbed a copy of his most recent book—he makes it a habit to always travel with them, for exactly this reason—and googled to find out what charities Richard Dreyfuss supported, what his passions were and how he used his celebrity status to further the causes that matter most to him.

Armed with that information, Koenigs signed his book and then, when the plane landed, he caught up to Dreyfuss and introduced himself, adding that he had an idea for how Dreyfuss could raise money for his non-profit.

Recalls Koenigs, “He said, ‘I need you. Come with me, boy. Walk along with me.’”

The first thing Koenigs asked Dreyfuss as they started walking was if he’d written a book. Dreyfuss confessed that he’d been thinking about doing it for years and had tried but hadn’t finished anything.

“The bottom line is he didn’t have a platform beyond his acting career—no list, no real reach,” Koenigs says. “He spends a lot of time on planes raising money. I said, ‘I can show you how to turn your dreams into a book that can be a platform that can be a fundraiser for your nonprofit without the travel.’”

Koenigs’ belief in the significance of publishing a book is as strong as can be. “Your book is a ticket to get past the velvet rope and become a well-positioned VIP in any circumstance anywhere,” Koenigs says. “It can provide value for anyone you come in contact with.” (For the record, two weeks after their airport meeting, Dreyfuss came to Koenigs’ home studio where they shot a video about his nonprofit.)

While Koenigs’ goal was simply to connect with and help someone he admired, you can also use relationships with influential folks to promote your book.

Find the Right Influencers for You

“Influencers” may be one of the worst words to come along of late, but that doesn’t mean they can’t be enormously helpful.

Still, you don’t need to run into them in an airport to get their attention.

Jessica Lahey, the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Gift of Failure*, had a gut feeling that the actress Kristin Bell would respond to her book about raising well-adjusted kids. So she looked up contact information for Bell’s manager and publicist and sent copies of the book along.

But a gut feeling only means so much. Lahey knew she was going to have to get a few lucky breaks in a row for her plan to work. “The only way she was going to pick up my book was if it was interesting to her—or really, if the person who opened the box thought it might appeal to her,” Lahey says.

It all worked out: Bell loved the book so much that she posted about it on Instagram with a caption urging her followers to buy it.

Still, in this day and age, we don’t necessarily need movie stars to shout us out. And—good news—we don’t have to be up on the latest teenage TikTokers who have somehow become influential when it comes to which books hit the bestseller lists. When Nicolas Cole was releasing his memoir, *Confessions of a Teenage Video Gamer*, he reached out to gamer friends with YouTube channels and asked them to put the book in one of their videos.

To determine who has influence over the people you want to reach, look up your topic and the word “celebrities” or “influencers.” Lahey knew Kristin Bell was a new mom. So what can you find out about people that are big in your field but who aren’t being inundated with requests?

In other words, forget about Reese, Jenna, Emma and all the celebrity book clubbers and shoot for people whose attention will be easier to get.

Once you’ve identified them, determine how you can get their attention. This may require sleuthing and creativity. My friend Jeff Garlin from *Curb Your Enthusiasm* told me that if anyone sent a script to his manager and included an order of gefilte fish, he’d read it.

So, if you can identify a well-known person who could share about your book, what is their version of gefilte fish? Google can tell you. And an IMDB pro account can give you their representative’s name and address.

If you want a well-known stranger to help, make sure you’re

set up to impress them, with a book website that would wow anyone.

Transforming Your Site into a Book Promo Machine

While there's no law that says you have to change your website when it's time to promote your book, the authors that excel at building their authority devote at least one page of their site to show off their book exquisitely. (Instead of creating an entirely new site for your book, I recommend buying the domain for your book title and redirecting it to the book page on your site.)

On that page, you can do a lot more than just have a book description and cover. You should include the basics—links to everywhere that your books can be purchased, your photo and cover images—but here are some other things you can do:

- Make mock-up images of your cover (the website MockUpShots can instantaneously create hundreds of images out of your book cover—everything from Spiderman holding your book to what your book would look like in a field, in a bookstore, on a cellphone or anything else you can think of. Use those mock-ups all over the site.
- Have a place that lists bonuses for bulk orders (sites like BookPal can arrange for bulk orders at serious discounts, with orders counting toward the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists)
- List out the attributes and benefits of your book like you would if you were creating a page for a course. Include testimonials, quotes, reviews and podcast interviews.

- Include your photo, bio and book description in a way that makes it easier for podcasters and bookers to download and access it.
- Create a book trailer and feature it on your site.

The more creative you get, the more appealing you're going to be. And that's important when it comes to planning your launch events, since you're competing with every other author out there.

How to Make Your Local Bookstore Want You

While bookstores hold readings all the time, they tend to only want to host those they know will bring in a crowd. Sure, it's cool if it's your local bookstore that you've shopped at for the past decade, but the person you talk to there may not find the fact that you share a zip code all that scintillating.

But you can get a bookstore's interest if you do some strategizing.

First order of business: make sure bookstores can order your book from a distributor like Ingram Spark (as opposed to just making it available on Amazon) and also make sure your books are marked as returnable.

Although getting the book distributed and returnable is a bit complicated, it's well worth it, since it's actually much easier to get your book into stores if you publish independently and not traditionally.

When my books were being published by HarperCollins, they got my books into stores for the first few weeks. But once those copies were sold, the Harper sales rep told me that bookstores weren't interested in carrying my titles. It was only when I began publishing my own books that I discovered that only a tiny percentage of traditionally published books are sold at

bookstores—as little as 20 percent—and so when a publisher is pitching a bookstore, they're also pitching dozens of other titles. If you're launching your book yourself, you're only pitching you.

I recorded a podcast episode about the best way to get bookstores to carry your book, but the short version is to simply walk into a bookstore and ask them.

I discovered this accidentally when I was browsing in a Barnes & Noble in LA, randomly started chatting with a clerk there and mentioned that I was an author. He asked if the store sold my books and I explained that my publisher had told me long ago that Barnes & Noble wasn't interested in carrying my work.

He marched me right over to his computer and asked me which of my titles I thought he should order. I mentioned one of my traditionally published books (*Party Girl*) and one I'd published myself (*Make Your Mess Your Memoir*). With a push of the button, he ordered *Make Your Mess*, explaining that HarperCollins had marked *Party Girl* as not returnable so he couldn't order it.

He suggested I come back to the store once my book was in stock, sign copies and post photos on social media. That, he said, would inspire people to come in and buy the book, in turn prompting the store to order more copies. I did as he suggested; and when I went in to sign copies, another clerk got so excited to meet a local author that he offered to promote the signed copies prominently in the store. And this was in ever-jaded Los Angeles!

After sharing this technique on my podcast, I've heard from dozens of people who have been successful using it with their own books.

When it comes to having the store host a reading, always think about it from the store's point of view: it's only worth it for

them to pay staff to be there if they believe people will actually show up and buy books.

“Any venue is going to be looking at your ability to get a turnout,” says publishing veteran Jane Friedman. “So you need to tell them, ‘At my last event, at such-and-such a venue, we had this many people turn out, and we sold this many books.’ If you’re totally new and don’t have that track record, you could mention maybe that you have an email list of a certain size, or you’re active on social media, or you’re partnering with this person who does have a presence and is going to be marketing and promoting it.”

Partnering will not only ideally bring in twice the audience but also make it a better event; I mean, let’s get real...do you really want to listen to someone read from their book? Okay, yes? Well, you’re a better person than I am. I would much rather listen to two writers having a conversation.

In post-pandemic life, many bookstores host virtual events but securing one of those also requires a bit of strategizing since the stores still need a staff member to host.

So it’s up to you to come up with something fun and interesting.

Make it Fun

We get so excited about our books that we can forget that asking people to come to a place where they’re meant to be quiet and listen to us read aloud is, well, not the best invite that exists.

Why not make our book parties things people actually want to attend, and aren’t just coming to because we showed up for four of their birthday dinners where the check was split evenly 12 ways and we always ordered less than everyone else?

When I was planning a Zoom launch for my pandemic-

released book, *Make Your Mess Your Memoir*, I invited two friends with big audiences—Ryan Hampton and Lisa Smith—and then promoted the event as a “Messy Pitch Party.” The concept was that people would show up to support my book, but they could also pitch us their book ideas and get feedback on them.

Jane Friedman suggests coming up with a theme for the event or tying it to a current event—something that can make it more than just you reading from a book.

Sometimes, you catch a lucky break and don’t have to do anything. When my first book, *Party Girl*, came out, an incredibly popular novelist named Jen Lancaster read an advance copy, loved it and reached out to me to see if I wanted to do a reading with her. Having no idea how rare an experience this was (it was my first book and I was delusional enough to think these things happened all the time), when she invited me to appear alongside her at the Chicago Book Festival, I cavalierly accepted and my publisher flew me there.

We each read from our books and answered questions under a massive tent with hundreds of people in attendance. While her line for signed books after the event dwarfed mine, having a writer like that generously share her audience with me is the sort of thing you can’t engineer but can happen.

The same thing happened when James Frey took an interest in my second book, *Bought*, and we did a reading together in DC that drew a massive crowd. But keep in mind, when coming up with a good event partner, chemistry goes a long way. “Sometimes I see friends do their book launches with somebody who has clout but they don’t know each other,” says Zara Barrie. “It’s very static.”

But there’s something even more important than chemistry.

The Reality: You Need People to Buy Books at Your Reading

Want to know the most tragic part of landing a reading at a bookstore?

You scored it.

You killed. People laughed at the right parts, cried at the right parts and are congratulating you and taking photos.

But then...

Not everyone buys the book.

See, most of the people who show up won't know how important the actual book sales are. I've thanked more people than I can count for coming to a reading while thinking, "Please buy the book...oh shit, you're not buying the book...can I ask them to buy the book?"

"The hilarious thing is there can be a thousand people in an audience and you will always remember who didn't buy the book," says *New York Times* bestselling author Annabelle Gurwitch. "It's just awful. You're trying to be entertaining or maybe your book is very serious and you're trying to be of service to this really important message and you're also counting how many people are going to buy."

The reason the author notices who buys and who doesn't is that if you don't sell a certain number of books, the bookstore will not be inviting you back. In other words, if you're ballsier than me, just ask those friends to buy a copy.

Unless, of course, you're in a place where you don't know a soul.

Why Traditional Book Tours Are a Waste of Time

While many authors dream of book tours, book tours don't tend to sell a lot of books. *Never Split the Difference* author Chris Voss says, "Book tours in and of themselves are the biggest waste of time. . . I did a couple early on just because they [the publisher] said I should."

I can't tell you how many stories I've heard from authors about taking a bunch of flights somewhere only to have no one show up for the reading. In December 2022, when a novelist named Chelsea Banning tweeted that only two people showed up at her reading at an Ohio bookstore, the post went viral, prompting other authors—including Stephen King, Neil Gaiman and Margaret Atwood—to chime in with their own tales of readings with few or no people in attendance.

When it comes to your hometown, here's the deal: your friends are often terribly supportive on your first book; on your second book, the support tends to wane. By your eighth, you may be lucky to even get a congratulations. (I'm sorry, wonderful friends who are reading this; it's the truth!)

Still, there are all sorts of ways to make a book party fun. Marie Forleo made her book tour into something more like a Beyoncé concert when she was promoting *Everything is Figure-outable*: she rented out theaters in multiple cities, performed a series of dance numbers and called in famous friends to participate.

But you don't need to learn a bunch of choreography if you don't want to. I had a client who posted on social media whenever she traveled and hosted impromptu book parties in the hotel lobby or her room.

You do you. Make your own tour however you want to. Or skip it altogether and host a local event outside of a bookstore.

Getting Creative with the Venue

Sometimes authors forget that the only thing a book event actually needs is books. In other words, you can have a book party anywhere you want by just securing a place and showing up with copies of your book. I've thrown different book events at restaurants and clubs in LA, New York and Miami. Still,

while they've all been fun, most of them have also been money pits.

Every now and then, you can even get someone else to pay the tab. (Truth: I've never been able to make this happen for myself, though I know plenty of people who have. In other words, if you want to throw me a party so I can prove firsthand that this happens, I'm in.)

Some brands, products and even clothing lines not only have marketing budgets but also might want to be aligned with books that will promote their brand, product or line to your audience.

Bedside Reading CEO Jane Ubell-Meyer has even more creative ideas about how to get your book reading or party sponsored.

"Let's say your book takes place in Detroit," she says by way of example. "Go to the Detroit Tourism Board and tell them, 'Hey, I just wrote a book. It takes place in Detroit. Can you help me with this? Can you do a launch party? Are there any marketing dollars from the city of Detroit for artists working in Detroit promoting the city of Detroit?'"

If the city's not game, however, there are all sorts of other places that may be.

Find the Businesses with Discretionary Funds

According to Ubell-Meyer, a lot of businesses have budgets to help local people in the community—even your local bank. While signing books where you normally withdraw cash may seem a bit surreal, getting the place that stores that cash to use some of it on you isn't impossible, according to Ubell-Meyer.

"Banks need to get involved in their community," she says. "It serves them well to do local events because that brings new potential customers to their local bank."

Ubell-Meyer suggests you first ask yourself what company is aligned with your values and could also benefit from being your sponsor. But don't, she says, go to the first person on the ladder there. "Go to the top first," she advises. "Because if the CEO says, 'Let's do something with this author,' it happens. If you go to the marketing or PR team, then they can easily say no because they don't want to risk thinking out of the box to their bosses."

The first step, says Ubell-Meyer, is to FedEx a copy of your book to the CEO of the company. She says, "Add a note that says 'I wrote this book and I thought of your company because we're in alignment with our core values. And perhaps we could do an event together or you can give this book away for your holiday gifts. We're coming up on Mother's Day—or whatever holiday it is— and perhaps there's a way to synergistically we can both help each other.'"

Of course, you can also use your book launch as an excuse to get out of town.

The Stealth Way to Score an Out-of-Town Event

The best way to both secure a venue and pull a crowd outside of your hometown is to piggyback on something already happening.

When Annabelle Gurwitch has a book coming out, she'll research organizations in certain areas and reach out to the planners to say she's going to be in the area, whether she's going to be or not. If they're interested in having her appear, she'll reach out to another organization in the area to say she's going to be in town and that she'd love to participate in whatever they've got going on.

"I don't even know how it's all going to work out at that stage," she says, "but then I'm able to tell them [my publisher]

something like ‘I’m going to be in Boston speaking at this women’s conference at the time of the book release. Is there a book festival that’s happening then?’”

According to Gurwitch, it’s not so much about the event but about getting the organization behind you. “It [the benefit] is the surrounding press and the fact that those organizations are emailing people promoting their event and in turn promoting my project,” she says, “so it’s this cascading domino effect of getting more and more people spreading the word.”

Gurwitch is one of the people, by the way, who has experienced the horrors of an empty audience. She recalls, “One year I did South by Southwest and it was standing room only and one year I did South by Southwest and there were three people in the audience: one was sleeping, one was someone who wanted to publish a book and the other was in a dragon onesie.”

Still, it’s not about quantity but quality; it turns out that one of those three people—let’s assume it wasn’t the one wearing the dragon onesie or the one sleeping—was an event organizer who booked Gurwitch for another event.

But good news for introverts: there are ways to sell books that don’t require leaving the house.

The Covert Road to Big Sales: Bulk Buys

A popular technique perfected by people like Tim Ferriss and Ryan Holiday is setting up an array of bonuses for people who bulk order your book during your launch. When Tim Ferriss was launching *The Four-Hour Body*, he offered bonuses for those who ordered between one and 10,000 books, and those bonuses included everything from hanging out with him in San Francisco for four hours to spending 10 days in India hanging out with Miss India (seriously).

While most of us have neither the resources nor the motivation to go so buck wild on offering bonuses that extravagant, this, too, is an opportunity to get creative.

It can be as simple as creating a page on your site that lists bonuses for people who buy five copies, still another for people who buy 10 copies and so on up to 1,000.

Sometimes you can luck into bulk orders. That's what happened to Elizabeth Lyons when she discovered that hospitals were ordering her book *Ready or Not, Here We Come!* for their Marvelous Multiples program and giving the book to all of the participants in those classes.

Yet since every purchase counts, you can also reward those who just buy a single copy.

The Single Purchase Thank You

Sometimes people need a bit of a push to purchase a single copy so it never hurts to offer a bonus to incentivize them. "I usually have some sort of evergreen bonus—get the book and get something else that will help you with the book, whether that's a worksheet or course," says *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author Jeff Goins.

Zara Barrie created bookmarks with affirmations for anyone who pre-ordered *Girl Stop Passing Out in Your Makeup*, a bonus that ended up having the added benefit of creating social media buzz. "I'd be up till 3 am and the mail was a mess because of Covid but it was so worth it because then people posted them," Barrie says.

I'll confess that I've gone down the rabbit hole in terms of bonuses and swag and found it to be, well, little more than a rabbit hole. With my second book, *Bought*, I mailed anyone who emailed me their receipt a postcard featuring a photo of

me doing some activity I detailed in the book. I also gave the 50th person who sent me their receipt a Kindle.

For the re-launch of *Party Girl*, I had what I felt were the most adorable booty shorts imaginable made, with REFORMED PARTY GIRL printed across the back. I mailed a selection of “sober influencers” I knew beautifully wrapped packages with the shorts, REFORMED PARTY GIRL stickers and pens, as well as signed copies of the book.

I envisioned an Instagram sensation, with the posts going viral and everyone wondering where these amazing shorts had come from.

Instead, one of the people I sent them to posted it. Most didn’t respond. The few I nudged wrote back things like “They’re really cute but I hate my thighs so I’ll never wear them” or “Thanks for thinking of me!”

The conclusion? Keep the swag for the people who support you and not those you hope will. But also know that getting support may require stepping out of your comfort zone.

Suck It Up and Ask Your Friends for Help

If you’re friends with fellow writers or entrepreneurs, you’ve probably been on the receiving end of a “me mail.” They often begin “Dear Friends” and are about a book, movie, show, speech, media hit or anything else the person wants others to know about and share with others.

I’ve received and sent more of these than I’d like to admit; the main message I have about them is that whenever I receive one, I usually don’t remember how humbling they are to write.

“I always say a little secular prayer before I send out the email—just ‘I hope that people don’t get annoyed by this,’” says *New York Times* bestselling author Annabelle Gurwitch. Her advice for

the missive? “Don’t make it too hard for people,” she says. “Tell them exactly what you want them [to share about your work]. And you can couch it in ‘Whatever you want to do is fine but here’s the link to tweet, here’s something that people have done.’”

Book marketing expert Amber Vilhauer has perhaps the best strategy I’ve ever heard of when it comes to corralling your network for your launch.

“Asking friends to support your book launch tends to be pretty transactional,” she says. “It’s become ‘Hey, I’m launching a book in two months, I really need a favor. Can you please send an email to your list? Can you put it on social media? Can you buy bulk copies? Because I need the help. So can you help me?’”

As Vilhauer points out, emails like that can put a serious strain on relationships, particularly when many people are fielding a number of requests like this.

She instead suggests taking a more humanistic and cause-based approach by trying to connect with your friends to your “Why, Vision and Values.” By doing that, she says, “Your network will connect to your Cause and more naturally want to pitch in and get the word out with you, creating a win-win.”

By way of example, she offers this as an improved communication approach for authors to experiment with: “I’m a big believer in human connection and yet I’m seeing how much trust is broken everywhere. The only way that we’re going to move forward and be Better Together is if we can find a way to be open, connect and trust each other again. I wrote this book because I believe in that. You strike me as a person who believes in connection too, and if you stand by this cause, let’s create a win-win that we can create, where I can help your business and you can help mine and we can fix this world together.”

That’s a very different approach, she points out, than asking

people to send an email to their newsletter list. A cause gets people a lot more excited than a product.

But what if you feel like you don't have anyone you can ask?

You Know More People Than You Realize

Vilhauer understands that many people begin this process believing that because they're not connected to big players, it's not even worth trying. That's why she encourages everyone to look in places that may not at first occur to them.

"Go through your prospecting calls, your client calls, the people you met at events," she says. "Look at your Facebook contacts, your LinkedIn connections, who you talked to in the last year, who's in your phone. When you start to really look around, you know a lot more people than you think you do."

Once you have a group of people, don't just send a mass email asking for support. Instead, Vilhauer advises, reach out and offer them as many options to help as possible, including having you on a podcast, providing a blurb, introducing you to somebody who might benefit from the book's message, co-hosting a webinar, having you speak, posting on social media, sending an email to their newsletter subscribers, doing an Instagram Live or posting an Amazon review.

Vilhauer advises staying on top of them, in a gentle way—always emphasizing that you're there to support them in any way they'd like—and making sure that you provide step-by-step instructions for anything they agree to so that their favor takes as little of their time as possible. Vilhauer's clients even provide a PDF that walks people through how to post Amazon reviews.

Speaking of Amazon reviews, out of all the favors out there that anyone can do, an Amazon review is perhaps the most significant.

The Importance of Amazon Reviews

Studies have shown that 97% of customers say that online reviews are one of the most important factors when it comes to choosing a product. But reviews have become much more than just a way for a potential reader to get a sense of what other people liked and didn't like about your book. It's "social proof"—a term coined by the brilliant Robert Cialdini to show whether or not your work is relevant.

No reviews? Decidedly not relevant.

Around 20 reviews? Ah, worth looking into.

Over 50? Now we're cooking.

Over 1,000? That's a book that will keep selling forever.

You want the bulk of these reviews to come during your launch week because the Amazon algorithm highly favors new books, which means the reviews can also help propel your book to the number one release in its categories.

Once you have between 20 and 30 reviews, the Amazon algorithm allegedly kicks into place so that the site will begin recommending your book in their "Also Boughts."

If you want Amazon to start doing your promotion work for you, know this: it's more challenging than you might think to get these reviews. Since roughly one out of every 100 to 200 people who read your book will review it, I recommend setting yourself up for success by gathering what I call a Launch Squad: a group of people who agree to read your book ahead of time, write a review, purchase your book once it's available and then paste that review on Amazon (and, if they're willing, also on GoodReads, Barnes & Noble, Kobo and the rest of the online book retailers) during your launch week.

When putting your group of advance readers together, try to be as strategic as possible.

Gathering Your Squad

You may deeply love your family and friends, but when it comes to purchases and reviews, supporters and fans are actually better than the people you're closest to.

Here's why: you want those who have an Amazon history of buying books like yours. Friends and family members who buy books about dog breeding and traveling to Greece aren't going to help your book about business leadership. Their purchases could, in fact, actually hurt your chances of success because they can confuse the Amazon algorithm.

Also, if the Amazon Gods (who are unpredictable and yet bizarrely all-knowing) think there's a connection between you and the reviewer, they won't approve the review. In extreme cases, they will actually ban the person from ever reviewing another Amazon product.

I, for the record, *am* an extreme case; I must have reviewed too many books by people I know because one day I got an email from Amazon saying my account had been canceled for violating their terms of service. It provided no other details, and while Amazon still loves accepting my purchases for many items I order and don't need, no number of calls or emails to Amazon's (usually quite helpful) tech support team will convince them to either reveal what it is I did that got me banned or reinstate my account.

Most people, however, are able to review. And if you've gathered a newsletter list and been emailing the people on it, they can be your core squad. If you haven't, posting on social media or joining communities interested in your topic will be your best way to recruit. You can offer them a gift—in the form of a thank you in your book, access to a class for free, a shipped copy of the book or anything else—but you cannot pay anyone to give your book a positive review.

Once someone has agreed to join your Launch Squad,

email them either a PDF of your book or a link to where they can download it roughly a month before the launch. Make it clear that you're not asking for a five-star review so much as an honest review; you can even tell them to make suggestions in the review if they think there's something you could have done better. When a book has only five-star reviews, it actually looks less legitimate than a book with a variety of stars. I know another publisher who tells clients to ask a few friends to purposely give two- or three-star reviews in order to make the five-star reviews seem more real but I wouldn't suggest going that far. (Then again, I tend to be triggering enough to attract a few three-star reviews without any effort; go, me!)

But your main focus should be on getting your Squad to come through.

Managing Your Launch Squad

Plan to regularly nudge your Squad between when you give them a copy of your book and your launch, then uploading the book a week before your official launch day priced at \$1.99. Send your Squad the Amazon link and ask them to purchase the ebook and then copy and paste their reviews so that on the actual launch day, the book will be both well reviewed and well ranked. On launch day, you can bump the ebook price up to \$9.99.

If this all sounds like a lot of work, you're not wrong. But it's work that's well worth it. Chris Joseph, the author of *Life Is a Ride* and editor of *The Epiphany Diaries*, says that gathering a Squad is the number one thing he recommends other authors do. "It not only helped propel the book to the number one spot on bestseller lists," he says, "but it also brought awareness to the book because people could say, 'Hey, it's a number one best-selling book.'"

The system works fantastically, aside from one fly in the ointment: not everyone, even your greatest supporters, will follow through.

How to Deal with the Flakes

The reality is this: usually between 50 and 60 percent of the people on the Squad actually do their reviews.

These people like you—in the words of Sally Field, they really like you—but, well, life gets in the way. They don't want to admit to you that they never read your book. Their cat died. Their mother-in-law came for a surprise visit.

In those cases, you can always let them know that it's never too late to review the book. Also tell them it's fine if they never finished reading it—that they can review the book based just on the part they read and then go back and edit the review later. Hammer home the fact that reviews don't need to be long or detailed.

Some people will require a lot of follow-ups. Some people won't require any. And still some people will have their reviews rejected by Amazon without any reason given.

If a review is rejected, the person who wrote the review can re-submit a shorter version of the review with a lower star rating and it will sometimes then be approved. They can also reach out to Amazon to ask why their review wasn't approved; sometimes Amazon will then approve it.

If it's your mom, husband, child or best friend whose review was rejected, just move on; Amazon clearly considers their review biased and you don't want them banned from reviewing like I am!

A Request from Me That You Can Copy

In all this talk about how crucial book reviews are, it would be negligent for me to not brazenly say this to you: if you've gotten *any* value whatsoever out of this book so far, you will not only be helping me by reviewing the book on Amazon, but you'll also be helping *you*...the you who existed before you got to the stage where you're educating yourself about how to launch a successful book.

If you're thinking, "Yeah sure, I will later," keep in mind that numerous studies show how much helping others improves our mood and lowers our cortisol; so this one small act will mean not only helping me and the person who's in the stage you used to be in but also yourself!

It will take less than a minute and all you have to do is...

If you're on Audible, hit the three dots in the top right of the device, click Rate and Review, then leave a few sentences about the book with a star rating.

If you're on a Kindle or e-reader, scroll to the bottom of the book, then swipe up and it will automatically prompt a review. Or just go to www.ongoodamazon.com.

If the tech gods are not behaving and those things don't work, you can go to the book's Amazon page and leave a review.

The review doesn't have to be long, overly detailed or brilliantly written. Just a few sentences about how what's in here has helped you would be absolutely fantastic.

[ON THAT NOTE, I GIVE YOU FULL PERMISSION TO COPY THE TEXT ABOVE, MAKE IT YOUR OWN AND USE IT IN YOUR BOOK. ALL I ASK IN RETURN IS YOUR REVIEW!]

Once you do that, I'm going to tell you the secret that will change your life: how to make money from your book.

SECTION 3: PROFITING

(AFTER PUBLICATION)

STEP 6: GET ON STAGE

GO FROM AUTHOR TO SPEAKER

When I decided I wanted to be a paid speaker, I asked a friend for an introduction to his college speaking agent and she agreed to represent me because I was an author. Once I was signed, I thought it would be an easy ride.

I was wrong. The first step, when it comes to getting hired by colleges, is to apply to conferences like the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA). If you get in—I applied to NACA numerous times and only got in twice—you have to fly yourself to where it's held and give a truncated version of your speech while the bookers (often college students) watch.

There's something uniquely humbling about flying yourself to a random city in order to try to appeal to college students who are glued to their phones. Still, humility never hurt anyone (or so they say).

And NACA can result in numerous bookings, potentially filling up your calendar with speaking gigs that pay thousands of dollars apiece.

Over the years that I spoke at colleges, I was flown every-

where from North Dakota to Alaska, and met kids who told me that their lives were changed by someone talking about addiction in a way they had never heard before.

But I'd never tell anyone that breaking into the college speaking market is easy. In this chapter, I'm going to tell you about some more direct ways in.

While at first glance, writing a book and speaking seem like they're entirely different activities for entirely different types of people, they're actually far more similar than you might think at first glance.

Both books and speeches are created by authorities.

Both contain ideas and words.

And, if you're smart, both can contain the *same* ideas and words.

In other words, these two seemingly opposite offerings—and skill sets—can feed one another quite magnificently.

Added bonus: being a published author makes you a kajillion times more likely to be able to land speaking gigs.

“Every single time, event bookers will pick a published author over someone who hasn't written a book,” says speaking coach and author Topher Morrison, “even if the other person is a better speaker and has a better demo reel and is more entertaining.”

Even better news: you already have the bulk of the speech written.

Think About Potential Keynotes as You Write

When Cameron Herold writes his books, he's already got his future speaking gigs at the forefront of his mind.

“All my speeches come from my book content,” Herold says. “I have a ‘Highs and Lows of CEOs’ talk that's chapter 12 from

my book *Double Double*. I have a ‘How to Grow When it’s Slow’ keynote that’s based on chapter 11 from *Double Double*. It’s been refreshed over the years from my experience of having worked with so many companies, but the speeches start with the information from book.”

If you think that people wouldn’t want to buy a book if they’ve already heard the speech, or vice versa, the opposite is actually true.

“It takes six hours or eight hours to read a book,” Herold says. “When people are hearing it from you in an hour, they’re getting the real synthesized, higher energy version. And there’s something about hearing an idea from a person and then reading the book that reinforces the learning cycle.”

Using this system has brought Herold more influence, not to mention money, than he could have ever expected. “At the time that I wrote [my first book] *Double Double*, my speaking fees were \$7,500,” he says. “They’re now \$30,000 plus business class travel in the US, \$40,000 plus first-class travel internationally and \$5,000 for a Zoom webinar. Each book has helped raise my fee.”

(Yes, I’m also drooling at the notion of a clean \$40k for a speech, let alone first-class travel to do it.)

So how do you make your book into a speech?

The Conversion Process

To create a speech from your book, Topher Morrison recommends asking yourself the big lessons or takeaways from each of the stories in your book. As he points out, one story could have 10 or 15 different takeaways depending upon the audience that you’re speaking to.

Morrison compares a great speech to a concert made up of

vignettes. He recommends making those vignettes between 30 seconds and five minutes long.

The format for a book and speech probably won't be the same. While some speakers recommend starting with your most seminal moment, Morrison advises that you don't start off with your "best hit" because the crowd is still assessing you.

"Buying a book is a situation where someone has thought, 'This person has something I need and I want to hear it,'" Morrison says. "But with a speech, it's completely the opposite. It's, 'Who is this yahoo, and why do I have to sit here and listen to them speak?' So, you've got to win them over. And if you go in too hard, too fast, you're like that guy at the bar who's hitting on all the girls. It's like...Slow your roll, cowboy. Just bring it down a notch or two. Be cool."

According to Morrison, crowds want to be entertained more than anything else. "Your job is not to change their lives in 45 minutes," he says. "Your job is to entertain the crap out of them. Get them to laugh, get them to cry, get them to feel, get them to emote."

The easiest way to write your speech from your book, according to Morrison, is not to do a straight copy-paste but to record yourself telling the stories from your book and then have the recordings transcribed.

Then, he says, take three highlighters—green, yellow and red—and put them to use.

"Use red for unnecessary dribble, yellow for 'I like it if I have time' and green for 'This is so good I have to keep it in the presentation,'" Morrison says. "And if you're like me and you're being honest, you'll have mostly red, a lot of yellow and just a few greens."

Practicing Your Speech

Once I have a speech written, I memorize it loosely rather than word for word because a conversational approach is going to be so much more authentic. I always record myself reading what I've written and then listen to it repeatedly—when I'm walking, driving or doing anything else—until I've got the basics down.

Then I record myself telling a more natural version of what I've written until I've got that roughly memorized.

Morrison emphasizes the importance of working on your rhythm when practicing. "I call it the charisma pattern," he says. "There is a cadence to a presentation: you start off at a medium pace, work up to a louder, faster pace and then, after you get louder and faster, you drop it down to something slow and soft."

While giving the speech in front of a friend is a good way to start getting used to public speaking, the best practice is going to come from doing it in front of a real audience.

"There are so many organizations—from One Million Cups to your local Chamber of Commerce to the Elks, the Moose, the Eagles, whatever—that are starving for speakers to come in," Morrison says. "You can reach out to all of the local chapters and say, 'I've just published my first book, it's on this topic and I think that your audience might benefit from it.'"

When I've needed practice, I've asked teachers and rehab owners I know if I can talk in front of their captive audiences. I've also shown up at my local Toastmasters chapter. Practicing in front of a crowd not only got me accustomed to an audience hearing that speech but also showed me when people responded best and when their eyes glazed over.

The added benefit of practicing in front of a crowd is that you can ask someone to film it so you can get footage for your reel. A technique I learned from my friend, strategic advisor Maresa Friedman, was to buy a second phone (used, from Ebay), not activate any plan on it, and take it with me to any speech or presentation I give.

I ask someone who's there to shoot it—offering to pay them if it's appropriate. While they're not always going to be great filmmakers, you'd be amazed what a stranger can capture with a phone. And because it's your second phone and doesn't have any information on it, the person won't have access to your personal information and your world doesn't collapse if the phone somehow gets lost.

If recording in front of a bunch of strangers makes you nervous, you can also call in some friends. Morrison suggests holding a small event and just having someone video it with an iPhone (though he recommends using a mic that plugs right into your phone so it sounds more professional).

Once you have the practice, the next step is to make yourself someone bookers want to hire by booking some prestigious unpaid gigs.

Try for a TEDx Talk

The absolute best—and fully attainable—option when it comes to getting impressive speaking experience is to do a TEDx talk.

TED, which started in 1984, brings in people like Malcolm Gladwell and Bill Gates to speak. And while TEDx is an offshoot of TED that is actually a series of independent events run by any school, organization or group that wants to hold one, it's so strongly associated with TED that most people don't even know the difference between TED and TEDx. Because people like Brené Brown and Simon Sinek's careers were launched when they gave TEDx talks that went viral, TEDx has its own cachet.

While doing a TEDx talk means giving up your rights to the video, not getting paid and not being able to promote any of your work from the stage, it's well worth it. Not only can you

put it in your bio, on social media and anywhere else you can think of, but the video goes on the TED site.

That little red circle is worth more than any money in the world (unless, perhaps, we're talking about \$40k and first-class travel).

“A TEDx talk gives you credibility that you simply cannot find through any other activity you might do,” says Bridget Sampson, an author and Emeritus Professor of Communication Studies who's both given a TEDx talk and trains other people to give theirs. “I was a professor for 26 years. But nobody cares about that. All they care about is that I have a book and have done a TEDx talk.”

Applying to TEDx

The process of getting a TEDx talk isn't nearly as daunting as you may think. There are untold numbers of TEDx events all over the world and more seem to pop up constantly. Sampson says she's actually heard that at least one TEDx event happens every single day—even more if you count globally.

Since every TEDx event is organized independently, there's no database that lists which events are open to outsiders (many of them are only for a certain school or community) or, if they are open, where to apply. This means that you may have to go down a bit of a rabbit hole to determine how to apply or even if you can apply

When we've helped our clients apply, we've chased down event organizers through their social media accounts, friends of friends and however else we could. The hardest part of doing a TEDx talk is finding one near you and figuring out how to apply.

When I decided I wanted to do TEDx, I googled until I found all the TEDx talks that were coming up in California

over the next year. I applied to those that were open to applicants and accepted the three that were within driving distance from LA. While each event had its own theme, they were general enough that I was able to craft my topic toward each of them.

But here's where TEDx is different from almost any other speaking opportunity out there: TEDx stages want to feature new material. This means that if an application asks how often you've delivered your talk and your instinct is to respond that you've been delivering it for years, the gatekeepers actually want to hear that your talk is brand new, since that means that the information will be fresh.

How many other cool opportunities desire *inexperience*?

If you're not sure you have enough material for a TEDx talk, Bridget Sampson offers some assurance. "I guarantee if you've written a whole book," she says, "you have enough gems in there to give a 10- or 15- minute talk that will wow people."

Once You Decide to Apply to TEDx, What Next?

While most TEDx events don't require you to have your talk written when you apply, you should have a fully fleshed-out idea or even an outline.

Once you're accepted, it's entirely up to the event organizers what you need to do next. For one of the TEDx events I did, I had to go to a training session in San Diego. For another, I had to give the talk to the organizing committee over Zoom. And for the third, I didn't have to do anything at all.

It's worth noting that the school that didn't require anything ahead of time was the worst organized of the TEDx events I spoke at. It took place in what was basically a school auditorium where the acoustics were terrible and they only had one lapel mic, which meant that the speaker before me

had to take it off and I had to put it on while the audience watched.

It literally reminded me of the “talent” shows I used to put on for my mom and the neighbors, where I lip-synced songs from *A Chorus Line* and they pretended to like it.

While you can't control how organized your TEDx event is going to be, there are some TEDx events that are considered more prestigious than others.

But here's the thing: it doesn't matter whether it's the hardest TEDx event to get into or the easiest: once you're featured on the official TED site, you've achieved the sort of credibility that puts you in place to land paid speaking jobs. And honestly just being able to say you're a TEDx speaker can be enough to put you, in people's minds, a cut above.

Whether it's TEDx or any other stage, do everything you can to kill it during your performance.

Taking the Stage

It's pretty much a guarantee that your first few times speaking in front of a live audience will be nerve-wracking; so just remember that the more you practice, the more confident you're going to feel.

Some people find that a slide deck makes things easier because it can be a prompt if you forget what you're saying. Other people find that the additional complication of connecting a computer to a projector and clicker adds unnecessary stress.

Whether you're using a slide deck or not, remind yourself that if you screw up, no one's going to know unless you call attention to it. In other words, things like “Whoops” or “Didn't mean to skip to that slide” should not be uttered.

Also know that no matter how prepared you are, something

probably will get screwed up. Each time you do the speech, you'll learn one more thing to avoid the next.

Try to check out the auditorium or room beforehand and if there's a way for you to mingle with the audience pre-performance, by all means do it. Then just embrace whatever you do to keep yourself centered—maybe you meditate, maybe you listen to a certain song—and take a deep breath before walking on stage. Bring water with you on the stage and take sips before you get dry mouth, but make sure you don't drink so much water before going on stage that you have to pee the whole time!

When speaking, keep in mind that listening to someone speaking in the same voice over a period of time can be dull; so be sure to alter your tone and pitch as much as possible. Move around. Let your passion carry you. Look different audience members in the eye. Speak directly to audience members if that feels right to you. And never let on how nervous you are.

Once you've got some speaking gigs under your belt, it's time to set yourself up to get hired.

Landing Paid Speaking Gigs

The first order of business is to create a page on your website that promotes you as a speaker. It should include pictures of you speaking, testimonials about you as a speaker, your reel and descriptions of your keynotes. (You can see an example of a speaking page like this by visiting mine at www.annadavidspeaking.com.)

For your reel, you can splice together whatever footage you have of yourself speaking, but whatever you can do to make it look like you were in front of a large crowd is better.

Much like how we all listed every last yogurt shop we worked at on our first resumes to make it look like we had more

experience than we did, you can use workarounds to hide the fact that you don't initially have a lot of live speaking footage. (For the record, I worked at two yogurt shops but was fired from one for—and this is a direct quote—“not swirling the yogurt correctly.” And that was the *second* shop, not the first!)

Anyway, for my first reel, I added in quotations from my book and blurbs on title cards so that there was something to cut to in between footage of me speaking. I also once had someone film me in an empty office while I stood on a chair to make it look like I was on a stage.

According to Topher Morrison, a one-sheet—that is, a one-page PDF that lists information about you, a summary of your speech and endorsements from luminaries—is even more important than a reel. This is especially true if you can get someone with great name value to recommend you.

The one-sheet is important, Morrison says, because often-times event planners don't have much time to make decisions. “Sometimes at these board meetings where you've got the planner and the board, they don't want to sit there and watch 15 different speaker reels,” Morrison says. “If someone they knew recommended you, they may say, ‘So-and-so said this is a great speaker. Here's their one sheet. They look like they're smart. I like the photo. Let's get that one.’”

Of course, to get people to recommend you, you need to have them hear you speak.

Getting Booked without an Agent

Most of the speakers I know got their start by becoming friends with bookers, mastermind creators and other people who can provide opportunities. My mentor, Genius Network founder Joe Polish, allowed me to speak at one of his annual events because we were friends. Although it wasn't a paid gig, it gave

me the chance to share the stage with Tony Robbins, something I have bragged about at least once a week since it happened.

While you're going to have the best luck connecting with people who can put you on stage by joining a paid community, getting speaking jobs doesn't require joining expensive groups. It can be as simple as serving those in a position to hire you.

I got to know Joe Polish when my sister-in-law introduced us. From there, I interviewed him on my podcast and he interviewed me for a documentary he was making. Then he invited me to come to a Genius Network event, and I wrote a *Huffington Post* article about him. Roughly a year later, we were writing books together and he was asking me to speak at his event.

In terms of networking, they say the teacher comes along when the student is ready. So the best advice that I can give is to make yourself a ready student and then serve that teacher as best as you can—not because you want something from them but because you find the person so inspiring that you want to.

Of course, making lifelong friends with powerful people isn't something that happens overnight. So while you're networking, you can also be developing your online presence as a speaker.

Playing the Google Game

Although it sounds unlikely, corporate bookers with budgets of upwards of \$50,000 a speaker often go to Google when they're looking to bring someone in to speak.

That's why, if you google "best speakers on leadership" or "best speakers on happiness" or best speakers on any topic that's popular at corporations, paid ads for specific speakers are going to pop up before any organic search results.

If you're interested in trying to get speaking gigs through

this method, it's not worth trying to compete with the speakers who have already dominated the Google ads game on their topic. You're far better off adjusting your topic slightly, even if you're just changing a word (say, "strength" for "leadership" or "wellness" for "happiness") and trying to become the main speaker on a subject that hasn't already been saturated.

The key with Google ads isn't to sit back once you set up the ads but to run ads while also consistently feeding the Google machine stories that align you with that topic. If you can add a blog to the speaking page on your website and post regular stories about you speaking on your topic to the blog, it's going to help you pop up to the top of any search a booker may be doing for speakers.

While snatching up keywords and regularly posting blogs may take effort and money, landing just one corporate gig is like passing your driving test (though with no bespectacled person sitting beside you, marking down everything you do wrong). In other words, once you've done one, you're on the circuit, which means you can start promoting yourself as a corporate speaker and reaching out to other corporations.

If playing the search engine optimization game isn't your style, you can also compile a list of events in your state over the next year and begin reaching out to the ones that are a good fit for you and your topic. It really is a numbers game so the more people you can contact, the more success you're going to have.

The Kick-Ass Pitch Letter

Perhaps no one has ever been better at pitching herself for speaking jobs than Jessica Lahey, the *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Gift of Failure* and *The Addiction Inoculation*.

A year and a half before *The Gift of Failure* came out, she

wrote 2000 personalized letters to heads of schools, principals and superintendents. Each letter, she says, had a short excerpt from the book and a note that said, ‘This book is going to be coming out a year and a half from now. And wouldn’t this be a great book for you to use as a community read so that all your teachers and your parents are reading it? And then I could come in and speak.’”

Lahey didn’t stop there. She also wrote, “Here’s what those speeches could look like. I could talk to your students and do professional development for your teachers and do a talk in the evening. And by the way, did you know that a professional development budget could pay for part of it and your parent association budget can pay for part of it?”

As Lahey explains, understanding how to get people to say yes plays a major part in your success. And once you get a yes, it’s time to determine what to charge.

Figuring Out Your Fees

If you’re doing direct pitching without an agent, it can be hard to know what you’re worth. While your rates will rise as your speaking career develops, you don’t want to name a price so low that you sound like you have no value and you don’t want to go so high that you lock yourself out of the game.

While you can always ask the booker their budget, true pros are ready with their rate. Starting at around \$1,000 plus travel is a good place. Once you nail the \$1,000 gigs, raise your fee to \$3,000. And it only goes up from there. Cameron Herold, after all, has gone from \$7,500 to \$40,000 and Speaking.com lists Tim Ferriss’ speaking fee at over \$75,000 while Brené Brown reportedly gets up to \$90,000.

Once your speaking career is kicking along, Morrison recommends shooting even higher. “Sometimes these big

corporations don't bat an eye [at big numbers]," he says. "Remember that the bar tab at a conference for a large corporation will outweigh your speaking fee by at least five times. While \$10,000 or \$20,000 seems like a lot, it's a drop in the bucket for these large corporations that are spending \$300,000 or a half million or \$2 million or even \$10 million on their annual conferences."

All that being said, many authors offer to speak in exchange for book bulk buys. My friend Ryan Hampton employs that strategy and has thus had organizations purchase in the neighborhood of a thousand books.

If the event doesn't bulk order and your goal is to sell copies to your audience after you speak, there are both effective and ineffective ways to promote it from the stage.

How to Pitch Your Book in a Non-Douche-y Way

Topher Morrison learned how to make audience members want to buy your book after hearing you speak from a speaker named Tom Antion.

"All you do is you take one small piece from your book that's a really golden gem, and say, 'Let me just read something for you quickly,'" Morrison says. "You open your book and read two to four lines—that's it. And you set it down like it's a nice piece of art."

Morrison says that if you zero in on one of your points in your book but make it clear that it's one point of several, people become obsessed. "They think, 'The rest of the book must be just as good' and want to buy it," he says.

Morrison's own book sales jumped roughly 60% when he started doing this. "It creates a beautiful open loop," Morrison says.

The entire concept of an "open loop" is actually a key part

of building your authority with a book because everything you do should lead people to want to hire you, book you, learn from you and get to know you. In other words, your book should be the ultimate gateway drug...to you.

And doing it right means making your competitors an afterthought in your prospective clients' minds.

STEP 7: GET CLIENTS

MAKE MONEY FROM YOUR BOOK BY BECOMING THE ONE EVERYONE WANTS TO HIRE OR LEARN FROM

Cameron Herold estimates that between his coaching and speaking, his five books have netted him millions. And that number is consistently growing because with each book, his speaking and coaching rates have risen exponentially. At the time of this writing, his coaching clients pay him \$2,700 an hour.

How has he gotten those clients? Many times, it's by giving his books away.

"I used to take 10 copies of my book with me when I spoke at an event," Herold says. "I'd sell the book for \$20 to the first 10 people that came to the stage. I'd be like, 'Hey, I made 200 bucks' and I'd blow it on wine or go for a massage or food."

But then he saw what someone he knew—the former VP of marketing for Kodak—did at events.

"He handed out a copy of his book to everyone in the audience," Herold recalls. "I said to him, 'God, that must have cost you a lot of money.' He said, 'Not really, the cost of the books and shipping is maybe \$4 a book, so it cost me 800 bucks.' I asked if the event paid for it and he said no."

Herold did some quick calculations. "I realized that me

making \$200 was way less advantageous than him having spent \$800,” he says. “Because if everyone in the audience gets a copy of my book, I get more speaking events and coaching clients.”

From there, Herold created his own system: a few weeks after he lands a speaking event, he sends the event organizer a note saying he forgot to ask about books. *How many people will be in the audience?* He writes. *I can send books to everybody for \$10, including shipping.* Says Herold, “They usually come back and say, ‘That’d be great. There are 300 people.’ I say, ‘Cool. Here’s another \$3,000 invoice.’ And they’re good with that.”

If an organizer responds that they don’t have it in their budget, Herold asks if they can afford \$5 a book. If they can’t afford that, Herold responds, “My treat, I’ll give everybody a book.” This strategy has paid off, for Herold, over and over again because it makes everyone who hears him speak understand that he’s an authority.

How Your Book Makes You an Authority

The evolution from author to authority happens instantaneously in your potential client’s mind.

People read how-to books because they want to know how to do something. And while your book should break down the how, it should also reveal just how complicated the task or project is. The book is therefore serving two distinct groups at once: the one that wants to do it themselves and the one that wants to hire someone to do it for them. And who better to hire than the person who wrote the book on it?

“Your book shows the reader that there is a *next level* of understanding [to the topic] that they hadn’t been aware of,” says Rich Goldstein, the author of *The ABA Consumer Guide to Obtaining a Patent*. “After reading it, they may reach out and say,

‘I’d love to get *your* take on *my* situation’ or ‘I’d love to *hire* you to handle it.’”

But a book can do much more than just bring in clients. Goldstein’s book changed the world’s perception of him. “People went from introducing me as ‘Rich Goldstein, the patent attorney’ to ‘Rich Goldstein, the author of the book on patents,’” he says.

Author and entrepreneur Tyler Wagner emphasizes the importance of your book offering a “value ladder”: “There are always ways to make the content of your book into different formats. Some people will pay \$300 to \$1000 for a course and some people just want the same thing done for them. Building that value ladder from a \$20 book all the way up to a \$50,000 done-for-you offer and everything in between means you don’t miss out on any potential customers.”

It’s not just what you can make in your day-to-day life but also in your future. Goldstein points out that being an author can increase the value of your brand in a way that may pay off in a huge way if you ever sell your business: “When you go to exit your company, the fact that you wrote the book on the topic could be the difference between a \$20 million exit and a \$25 million exit.”

So how do you get your book in front of the people you most want to see it?

Get Your Book into the World’s Most Valuable Swag Bags

While it may seem initially counterintuitive to give away something you should be compensated for, the opposite—as Cameron Herold explained—can often be true.

I see this every year when I go to Joe Polish’s three-day Genius Network event in Phoenix.

Attendees are either Genius Network members (who pay

either \$25,000 or \$100,000 annually) or entrepreneurs who have paid \$10,000 to attend the event. Translation: the room is packed with heavy hitters who would make ideal clients for people in many different industries.

After people check in, one of the first things they do is take a stroll through a gifting suite. And what's in the gifting suite? Books written by fellow attendees—probably at least a third of the people there.

The authors are happy to pay for the printing and shipping (not to mention the event) because they know that just one person from the event hiring them will yield 10 or even 100 or 1,000 times whatever they spent in printing and shipping.

This can also work in a more piecemeal way.

Send Books to Prospective Clients

While patent attorney Rich Goldstein has always offered his book for free to anyone who requests it, that strategy went into hyper-speed when he “got deep into” the audio app Clubhouse during the height of its frenzy (in late 2020 and early 2021). Over a period of a few months, he got over 100 book requests and landed at least five clients from that alone.

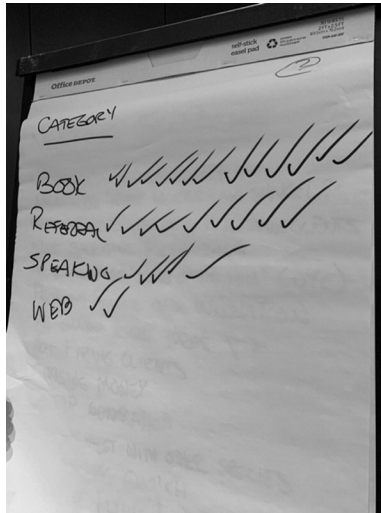
Business consultant Alan Weiss has a specific suggestion when it comes to giving your book to potential clients: he suggests sending two signed copies of your book to a prospective client, reasoning that any prospective client knows another prospective client and since people are less likely to throw away a signed book, your potential client will probably give the extra copy to someone else who might hire you.

I saw firsthand how well Weiss understands what a book can do when I attended one of his seminars in New York.

He started the event by putting a large easel pad at the front of the conference room before going around the room asking

each of us how we'd heard about him. As people spoke, he wrote down what they said. It quickly broke down into four options—Book, Referral, Speaking and Web—and whenever someone repeated what a previous person had said, Weiss added a checkmark to the easel.

After he'd gone around the entire room, "Web" had two checkmarks, "Speaking" five and "Referral" had more. But the one that dwarfed the rest, to the point that the others seemed like an afterthought, was "Book." Out of some sort of premonition, perhaps, that years later I would be writing this book, I took a picture of it (which, miraculously, I was able to find on my phone).



If the guy who wrote the seminal book on consulting attracts more people to his events with his books than any other way, it's time to listen.

But books can do more than just attract one person at a time to a conference. They can also inspire teachers to incorporate them into a curriculum.

Getting into Schools

Publishing veteran Jane Friedman wrote her book, *The Business of Being a Writer*, with the intention of having it used by MFA and undergraduate writing programs.

Write Useful Books author Rob Fitzpatrick also knew he wanted in on the educational market.

“If a book gives teachers tools they can use, they don’t recommend it to five people—they recommend it to 5,000,” Fitzpatrick says. “They’re hungry. If they read it and think, ‘Here’s a new framework’ or ‘Here’s a new tool or concept,’ they know they can use it in their classes.”

Fitzpatrick recommends writing how-to books with the classroom in mind. “Provide a lesson in a box or a couple of lessons for different situations, thinking of it as a way to help teachers plan classes,” he says.

But you don’t have to get professors to add your book to their curriculum to benefit from their interest.

Using Schools as an Advertising Venue

Alex Strathdee (the guy with the world’s best podcast pitch from the promotion section) did more than just wait for colleges to come calling when he and his cowriter Rishav Khanal published their book, *Experience Over Degrees: The Blueprint to Get You the Job Your Degree Doesn’t*.

When the book became an Amazon bestseller, they knew it could help a lot more college students if only more students knew about it. But how could get it in front of them?

One day they came up with a solution: they would reach out to the schools directly.

And so, weekend after weekend, Strathdee would sit in coffee shops, web scraping thousands of email addresses of

college administrators. He emailed each, offering the book for free to their students.

Roughly 50 schools got back to him, and 11 agreed to distribute the ebook to their students.

They did it; they got their book in front of 40,000 students!

But they still weren't making any money.

And so, in the same way that they'd compiled the list of 3,000 university contacts, they compiled another list: this one was of the email addresses of over 200 different companies they thought would want to hire college seniors.

"We reached out and offered them ad space in our book," Strathdee explains. "We essentially turned our book into a product."

They ended up landing six advertisers (including Kohl's, who paid \$1,000). This made them enough money to not only pay for what they'd invested in the book but also to support them in launching their first two companies.

Still, you don't need a college to get your book in front of eager learners; you can also use the information from your book to start your own education portal.

Offering Courses Inside the Book

While virtual courses have been around since the 80s, we're in something of a golden age for course creation, with many entrepreneurs pulling in seven figures a year from their video courses alone.

And what better place to get content for your course than with the information from your book?

That's what Pat Flynn did with his book *Will It Fly*.

His book is all about teaching people how to verify whether or not their business idea would be successful. So, throughout

the book, he offered a link to a free course that had more information on the topic.

Publishing expert Dave Chesson, who helped Flynn with his strategy, told me that roughly a third of the people who bought the book signed up for the free course and that Flynn offered those people a paid course that dove even deeper into the topic.

The results? The paid course brought in over \$111,000 the day it launched.

That number, to be clear, wasn't from Flynn's entire email list but just from the list he'd gathered from the book.

While the concept of clearing a cool \$100,000 from a book launch is somewhat mind blowing, entrepreneur Mike Koenigs was actually able to one-up that.

Making Over Seven Million from One Book

Inside his book *Publish and Profit: A 5-Step System for Attracting Paying Coaching and Consulting Clients, Traffic and Leads, Product Sales and Speaking Engagements*, Mike Koenigs included a way for readers to sign up for a free masterclass. Koenigs then sold the masterclass attendees a \$2,000 program that built on the information in his book.

The \$2,000 program then promoted a \$5,000 live event in San Diego where Koenigs and his team helped clients name their books, create their book covers and learn a system to write and launch them to bestsellerdom. (The \$2,000 program cost was applied toward the \$5,000 event fee.) At the \$5,000 event, Koenigs sold people on a \$25,000 mastermind on how to use the book and platform that book created to attract clients, leads, sales and speaking engagements.

Says Koenigs, "It was a natural evolution. We'd say, 'Raise your hand if you'd be interested in spending a day or two with

me and learning more.’ Half the room would raise their hands.”

But that wasn’t the end of it. Because Koenigs had a production studio in his office, he and his team would then ask the attendees if they wanted to make, market and launch a course out of the book’s content and then get media trained so they could feel comfortable on TV, radio and podcasts.

In the end, Koenigs says, “I could produce hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional sales by providing another high-quality service to everyone in the room. More importantly, people could create a platform that would 3 to 10 x everything they touch for the rest of their lives—way beyond what their current business could do.”

The result? Over a million dollars in under 100 days. And that funnel went on to become a \$7.5 million franchise.

This Isn’t about Becoming a Millionaire

To be clear, my seven-step process isn’t just about how much money you can make.

But it *is* about being compensated—and appreciated—for your experience and knowledge.

If that seems somehow wrong, consider the tale of the woman who approached Picasso at a Paris market and asked him to do a drawing. He dashed off a drawing on a napkin, handed it back to her and asked for a million francs.

When the shocked woman asked him how he could ask for so much money for something it only took him a few minutes to draw, he responded, “It took me 40 years to draw this in five minutes.”

Even if you’re not Picasso, you can have his self-respect.

Some people are always going to have a problem with the combination of art and commerce. That, in my opinion, is their

loss. People who believe that books should be written without any revenue plan and that it's somehow *déclassé* to try to make a profit from a book are basically resigning authors to pennies for their time.

It doesn't have to be that way. There is absolutely nothing wrong with you being paid for your knowledge, skill, time and effort.

Keep writing about what you know. By coming up with something that helps your readers take what's in your book to the next level *while* making you money, you're creating a scenario where everyone wins.

If you hear a voice saying, "Why me?" or "Who am I to think the world needs to hear what I have to say?"

Here's my retort: Why *not* you?

I look forward to hearing about you as the authority in your field.

A NOTE FROM ANNA

You made it to the end! Unless you were hate-reading (which I've done—no judgment here), you must have gotten something out of this book! If you haven't already done it after my earlier plea, I can't tell you how much a review would mean. You can do that by going to www.ongoodamazon.com.

If you'd like access all the goodies that can help you build your authority with your book, go to www.ongoodgifts.com. And if you know you want to work with my team on your book, visit www.launchpadclientform.com.

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TERMS USED IN THE BOOK

A-B test: Also known as split testing, this is a method of comparing two versions of a title, cover, website, product or marketing campaign to determine which one performs better.

Algorithm: A mathematical formula used by social media platforms to sort, filter and prioritize content shown to users; what everyone blames for a lack of likes and comments.

Also Boughts: The section on an Amazon book page that lists books that people who have bought that book have also bought; considered free promotion by Amazon.

Amazon review: Customer reviews of your book and the most important “social proof” a book can have.

Atticus: Layout software created by Dave Chesson.

Barnes & Noble: The bookstore chain founded in the 1800s that struggled in the wake of Amazon bookstore destruction but has made a comeback in 2022 by opening new stores.

BeReal: A social media application that focuses on promoting authenticity by encouraging users to post unfiltered selfies.

Bestseller lists: Can refer to everything from the *New York Times* to the *Wall Street Journal* to an Amazon category to *USA Today* (although *USA Today* eliminated their bestseller list at

the end of 2022); in terms of prestige, the *New York Times* list matters the most, but whether or a not a book hits the list depends on the number of other books being sold that week and whether or not a book meets the *Times*' editorial standards.

Big 5 publishers: The five largest international book publishers in the world: Penguin Random House (PRH), Hachette Livre (part of Lagardère Publishing), HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster and Macmillan; two of these five were scarring to the author when she had her books published by them.

Blurbs: What people in traditional publishing call “endorsements”; what people in self-publishing call “book descriptions.”

Book tour: Going around the country (or world) to visit different bookstores to read aloud from your book; widely considered a waste of time and resources.

Bonus: A free gift (such as a course or worksheet) an author gives to readers to incentivize them to buy their book.

Buffer/Tweetfully/Social Bee: Social media management tools that allow users to schedule and publish content simultaneously to multiple social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Bulk orders: More than one copy of a book sold at a time; authors often incentivize organizations to bulk order by offering free speaking or courses.

Clubhouse: An audio app that became all the rage in late 2020 and early 2021 only to become radically uncool when life got back to (almost) normal.

Corporate speaking: Well-paying opportunities to give speeches at companies or events.

DMs: Direct Message on social media; referenced in rap songs and by creepy dudes a lot.

Discord: A communication platform where anyone can set up a server for groups of people to communicate by text, voice and video.

Ebook: A digital version of a book that can be read on a computer, tablet or phone.

Elevator Pitch: A way to describe your book by filling in these blanks: My book is for _____ so that they can _____.

Elon Musk: Publicity-appreciating billionaire who bought the social media site Twitter and may be running it into the ground (TBD).

Endorsement: A recommendation for your book by a celebrity or luminary in a field; also called a “blurb.”

Event booker: Human being who may be able to hook you up with tens of thousands of dollars if they hire you to speak.

Exit: Selling your company.

Expert blindness: Knowing so much about a topic that you can’t explain it well to someone who doesn’t know very much about it.

Followers: People on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn that follow you; not to be confused with friends!

Forbes/Entrepreneur/Fast Company council: A “board” you can join that involves you passing certain criteria and paying a fee in exchange for being able to write for the website.

GoodReads: An Amazon-owned site filled with people who seemingly love to feel empowered by trashing books.

Google ads: Advertising campaigns run on Google’s search engine and other websites that are targeted to specific audiences based on things like location, demographics and interests.

Guest blogging: Writing for another person’s website.

Hardcover: A book bound with a stiff cover that’s more expensive to produce and ship than a paperback.

Help a Reporter Out (HARO): A service where journalists list the sources they are seeking; anyone can sign up as a potential source and receive three emails a day listing those stories.

IG (Instagram): Social media app launched in 2010 that birthed the “influencer” movement.

IMDB Pro: A paid account for the International Movie Database (also owned by Amazon) that lists the contact information for celebrities.

Influencer: Someone with usually at least 100,000 followers who has “influence” because of their following; some are paid to shill.

IngramSpark: Book distributor for authors to make their books available from booksellers other than Amazon; Ingram charges between \$25 and \$49 for a user to upload a book that will then be distributed to up to 30,000 bookstores and libraries.

Instagram Live: A feature on Instagram that allows users to broadcast live video to their followers in real time.

James Clear: Author who came out of seemingly nowhere to publish the mega bestseller *Atomic Habits* and cultivate an enormous email list.

KDP: Kindle Direct Publishing; where authors upload their books for distribution on Amazon.

Keynote: A 30- to 45-minute speech delivered by a well-known authority at a conference, event or meeting.

Keywords: Specific words or phrases that describe the content of a book and help readers find what they are looking for on Amazon.

Kindle: An ebook-reading electronic device made by Amazon.

Kobo: An e-reader and e-book company that sells books through Walmart.

Launch: The day or week a book is published.

Launch Squad: A group of people who read and review a book before its launch so that they can paste reviews on Amazon a few days before the book’s “official” launch in order to help its ranking and provide social proof.

Lead magnet: A freebie PDF, cheat sheet or swipe copy meant to entice people to sign up for an email list.

LinkedIn: The most adult of the social networking sites; it now looks like the guy you never took seriously until you realized he was “the one.”

List: A group of subscribers to a newsletter.

Live event: An event that happens IRL instead of online.

Mass email: A type of email sent to a large number of recipients at once.

Masterclass: Another word for “webinar” that makes it sound more fun.

Mastermind: A group of people, often entrepreneurs, who share a common interest that gather so they can share ideas, offer support and provide feedback to each other.

Mastodon: An open-source social media platform like Twitter that’s decentralized, which means that it is not controlled by a single company or organization but instead made up of a network of independent servers. It became all the rage when Musk bought Twitter as people made big pronouncements about leaving Twitter. (They may be back by the time you read this.)

National Association of Campus Activities (NACA): A professional organization made up of college students who decide which speakers that college will hire to give speeches.

Newsjacking: Injecting a brand or product into a breaking news story in order to generate media coverage and increase visibility.

Newsletter: A communication aimed at a specific audience meant to keep subscribers informed and engaged with a person, brand, organization or company; often unsubscribed to.

Niche: A specific area of focus within a larger market or industry. The riches are in them!

Nurture sequence: Also known as a “drip” campaign, this is a series of automated emails that are sent out to a specific list of subscribers over a period of time to guide them through the

process of learning about a person, product or service so that they will eventually buy a book, course, service or product.

One sheet: A type of promotional material used to provide a quick overview of a product, service, event or company that is usually handed out in person (but can be emailed as an attachment).

Online course: A type of educational program delivered usually via the internet, which can be offered by universities, entrepreneurs and even your creepy neighbor who seems to always have weird people going in and out of his place.

Open loop: A storytelling technique used to create suspense or anticipation; can be used in books and speeches as well as movies, TV shows, ad campaigns, books and anywhere else story is used.

Open rates: The percentage of people who open an email out of the total number of people who receive it (the average for most newsletters is 20 to 30%, though the fewer the subscribers, the higher the open rates tend to be).

Paperback: A book with flexible cardstock cover that's less expensive to produce and ship than a paperback; it should thus always cost less than a hardcover but sometimes costs more on Amazon when they need to get rid of hardcover inventory.

Pitch: A presentation or proposal of a larger version of an idea made to publishers, bookers or anyone else in a power position.

Platform: A way of reaching and communicating with a large audience to share ideas, opinions and messages.

Podcasts: Digital audio files divided into individual episodes that can be listened to in any order; while they became popular in the mid-2000s, they exploded during the pandemic to the point that even your dentist now has one.

Pre-interview: A type of initial screening process that takes place before an on-air interview.

Press release: A document used to announce news or information to the public in a format that's easy to understand.

Publisher Rocket: A software tool designed to help authors and publishers optimize their book listings on Amazon and other online retailers by analyzing data from Amazon's search algorithm and giving users information on how to improve their book's visibility and sales.

Quora: An online question-and-answer platform where users can ask and answer questions on a wide range of topics; like Reddit, only less cool.

Reel: A short video, usually between one and five minutes long, that showcases a person's work through a compilation of clips of their work.

Reese/Jenna/Emma: Witherspoon, Bush and Roberts, respectively; three people, two actresses and one the daughter of a former president, that have book clubs and can therefore often determine the fate of a book (if they like your book, it's pretty much a guaranteed bestseller).

Shadow ban: A situation where a social media user is not explicitly banned from a platform but their content isn't visible or searchable. While this usually happens when someone is posting content that's abusive or controversial, plenty of people (including the person typing this) have claimed they were being shadow banned when they posted something that simply didn't attract much interest.

Share: Another word to describe a social media post.

Slide deck: A PowerPoint presentation that speakers prepare and use while giving speeches.

Social proof: A psychological phenomenon where people look to the actions and opinions of others through testimonials, media attention, likes on social media or book reviews to decide if they should do or buy something.

South by Southwest (SXSW): An annual festival and conference in Austin, Texas that started as a music festival in 1987 but has evolved into an event highlighting film, media, tech and more; from the author's limited exposure, an excuse for

many people to justify getting drunk for multiple days in a row.

Speaker: Person who speaks or presents in front of an audience, sometimes paid and sometimes not.

Speaking agent: An agent who represents a speaker in exchange for 10 to 20% of the fee.

Subscribers: People who have signed up to receive regular updates or information from a particular source via email; despite signing up, they are often not excellent at opening these emails (see “open rates”).

Swag: Standing for “stuff we all get,” swag is usually a free promotional item.

Swag bag: A collection of things given away at conferences, trade shows or festivals.

TEDx: A program of local, independently organized events organized by local volunteers. While not directly affiliated with the TED organization, TEDx follows their guidelines and uses their license.

Talking points: A set of key points or arguments that a speaker makes during a speech, interview or presentation.

Telegram: A messaging app similar to WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger but with end-to-end encryption for secret chats and the ability to create large groups and channels; originally favored by the paranoid but starting to be embraced by others.

TikTok: A social media platform where users create and share short-form videos that are usually around 15 seconds and set to music or other audio; started as a lip-syncing app and is now responsible for the enormous popularity of romance novelists no one had heard of before; because of its unique algorithm, it is easier for a person without a substantial following to go viral. Often threatened to be outlawed by the government.

Tribe: Originally referring to indigenous societies, this is a group of people who share a common culture, language,

history or identity; may be considered wildly politically incorrect by the time you read this (so please don't cancel the writer as the word was considered totally legit when typed).

Twitter thread: A series of tweets that are connected and published one after the other by the same user in order to share longer thoughts or ideas that wouldn't fit in a single tweet.

Viral: A video, tweet or image that's shared and viewed by a large number of people very quickly on social media; can result in some pretty terrible people becoming "famous" overnight.

YouTube: A video-sharing website launched in 2005 that allows anyone to upload and view videos. Responsible for the fact that the name PewDiePie means anything to anyone.

ALSO BY ANNA DAVID

Party Girl

Make Your Mess Your Memoir

*How to Get Successful by F*cking Up Your Life*

The Miracle Morning for Addiction Recovery (with Joe Polish and Hal Elrod)

+ a few others she doesn't care that much about

