

# 10 Commandments That Guarantee Your Success

## Handouts for a Keynote/Seminar

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Michael Larsen Michael Larsen. The commandments are the outline of a keynote and seminar.  
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## **A Golden Age for Writers:**

### **10 Truths You Need to Know About Writing and Publishing**

To be a successful, you need a positive but realistic perspective about writing and publishing. These ten observations form the basis for “10 Commandments that, with Luck, Guarantee Your Success as a Writer.”

1. Because the Web empowers you to reach readers, control and profit more from your work, collaborate on monetizing and publicizing your work, and change the world faster and more easily than ever, now is the best time ever to be a writer.
2. Writers are the most important people in publishing; readers are the second most important people.
3. The two basic, collaborative elements of writing are content and communication.
4. Writers are hybrids, producing work of different lengths, for different media, for free and for fees; and because writers have more options for getting published, they have to choose the right options for them, based on their work and their ability to promote it.
5. Getting an agent, and writing and publishing a book are easy, compared to making it succeed, so writers have to maximize the value of their work before they sell or publish it.
6. Agents and editors are as delighted to find new writers as new writers are to be discovered, but more than 80% of traditionally published books fail, and because it's getting harder to sell small books to big publishers, most new writers are better off self-publishing their work to test-market it.
7. Books are either prose-driven or promotion-driven.
8. A book is like an iceberg. Writing is 10%; marketing is 90%. –Jack Canfield
9. Content is king, readers curators, so social media can make books sell, regardless of who publishes them or how.
10. Agent Donald Maass says it takes writers five books to build an audience for their work, so writers have to take the long view in developing their craft and their career.

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## 36 Reasons Why Now is the Best Time to Be a Writer

1. **You are the most important person in publishing because you make it go. Technology enables you to control the two fundamental challenges of being a writer: creating content and communicating about it.**
2. **The phrase “unpublished author” is obsolete.** All you need to be published is a manuscript.
3. **You have more options for getting your work published at less cost than ever:** e-books, print-on-demand, podcasts, blogs, websites, a series of articles or videos.
4. **A book that costs nothing to write or publish will succeed.** If only one person buys it, it’s making money.
5. **There are more ways to profit from your books with spinoffs, speaking, and subsidiary rights.** Books in English--the international language of culture and commerce--and in translation are selling in more places and being consumed in more forms, media, and languages than ever. There are more speaking opportunities than ever, online and off.
6. **You can create a career out of an idea.** If you have a salable idea for a series of related books that you are passionate about writing and promoting, you can build your career book by book.
7. **You have more models--books and authors--to guide your writing and your career.** You don’t have to figure out how to write a novel or a memoir or build a career; you can use your favorite books and authors as models.
8. **A book that serves readers’ needs for information, inspiration, beauty, and entertainment well enough is unstoppable.** We live in an increasingly bottom-up culture, in which readers, not publishers, are the gatekeepers. Publishers spend millions of dollars a year buying and marketing books that fail, while social media enable self-published books and books from small presses go viral and become bestsellers.
9. **There are more than 30,000 publishers, and new houses continue to open their doors.** Big and midsize New York houses require that agents submit books. Other publishers buy books from writers, who sell more than 90% of books. Their sites have submission guidelines. You can do multiple submissions of e-query letters and nonfiction proposals.
10. **There are more subjects for you to write about than ever.** There’s a book in just about any idea that excites you enough to want to write about it.

11. **Writing is a forgiving art.** You can write as many drafts as you need; only the last one counts. As long as you have many knowledgeable readers and you learn from your models, mentors, and mistakes, success is inevitable.
12. **You can be an author without being a writer.** The two assets nonfiction writers have are information and the ability to promote their work. Until they can write at a professional level, they can work with an editor, collaborator, or ghostwriter.
13. **You can sell most kinds of nonfiction with a proposal.** Memoirs have to be finished, but most nonfiction is sold with proposals with an overview of the book, an outline, and one sample chapter, or two or more chapters for narrative books.
14. **Finding an agent is easier than ever.** If you have a book that's salable to a big or midsize house, it's easier than ever to find and get an agent.
15. **There are more communities of people to help you than ever.** You can get the help you need by joining, building, and serving communities, including readers, writers, techies, and publishing people, online and off.
16. **You have more ways to build your visibility than ever.** When your books are published, you need to be as visible as possible in as many ways and places as you can. But you have more opportunities to build your platform, online and off, than ever.
17. **You have more ways to test-market your books than ever.** You can maximize the value of your book before you sell or publish it by proving it works with a blog, talks, articles, videos, and whatever other ways work best for your book.
18. **You have access to an amazing array of resources, many free.** Finding the books, magazines, events, classes, organizations, publishing professionals, and online resources, information and communities you need is easy.
19. **You will continue to grow as an author.** Take the long view: think of your career as a lifetime of books, each better and more profitable than the last one.
20. **Writers have an easier, faster path to success than actors, artists, dancers, composers, or musicians.** Publishers accept more new ideas, writers, and books than gatekeepers in other creative fields.
21. **You don't have to quit your day job.** You can keep writing until you're making the income you need to devote your life to your calling.
22. **Money doesn't rule publishing; passion does.** If publishers believe in a book passionately, because they love it, they think it will sell, or it must be published because of its social or literary value, they'll do it.

**23. Word of mouth and mouse enable books to succeed faster than ever.** One of our authors, Cherie Carter-Scott, appeared on *Oprah*, and that afternoon, her book, *If Life is a Game, These are the Rules*, rocketed to the top of Amazon's bestseller list and then shot to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list.

**24. Anything is possible.**

- Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* has sold 50,000,000 copies.
- *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown has more than sold 80,000,000 books.
- R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* has sold 300,000,000 copies.
- The Harry Potter series has sold 450,000,000 copies.
- The more than 100 *Chicken Soup* titles have sold 500,000,000 copies.
- Barbara Cartland's romances have sold 1,000,000,000 copies.
- The Agatha Christie mysteries have sold 2,000,000,000 copies.
- *The Bible* has sold 6,000,000,000 copies and sells 5,000,000 copies a year.

**25. Thousands of new authors succeed every year.** *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *The Bridges of Madison County*, *The Christmas Box*, *Cold Mountain*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *The Shack*, *The Four-Hour Workweek*, *Dreams from My Father*, *I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell*, *Julia & Julia*, *The Help*, *Fifty Shades of Gray* by E. L. James, which has sold 100,000,000 copies, and *Lean In*; these bestsellers are first books. Because it's easier to promote nonfiction than fiction, it's easier for nonfiction books to become bestsellers, especially if authors have visibility.

**26. Self-published authors are on bestseller lists.** A growing number of ebooks are going viral and hitting bestseller lists.

**27. Books are more accessible than ever.** It's faster, easier, and often less expensive to buy books than ever.

**28. Technology is the greatest tool for writers since the printing press.**

Computers ended the physical drudgery of writing. Technology will help you with every aspect of being a writer, making it faster and easier to succeed.

**29. Technology is making the industry more effective than ever.**

- Publishers can sell books and subsidiary rights more efficiently.
- They can print, reprint and distribute books faster.
- Publishers can promote to the trade and the public online as well as off-line. Big houses have dedicated online promotion specialists.
- When publishers format books, they do it so that books can be used in all electronic formats.

- 30. Publishers know how books are selling.** They receive sales figures from Nielsen Bookscan that account for 75% of sales. This enables them to:
- know how their books and competing books are selling
  - schedule reprints based on sales, which lessens returns and ensures that stores have a steady supply of books
  - acquire the kinds of books that sales prove readers want and avoid those that aren't selling
- 31. The more people know, the more they want to know.** If readers like one of your books, they'll want the others, and e-books make it easier and faster than ever to buy them. All of your books will continue to sell as new readers discover them.
- 32. Independent bookstores are thriving again.** Bookstores are as essential to discovering books as libraries, and indies are better booksellers than chain stores. They can make books by new authors bestsellers by handselling them.
- 33. You can enjoy books in more ways than ever:** in print, on screens, and in audio.
- 34. You can share your reading pleasure in more ways than ever:** conversations online and off, a blog, reviews, a book club, talks, articles, books, videos, podcasts.
- 35. Five million book club readers can make your book a bestseller.** If book club readers like your books, they will have a long, prosperous life.
- 36. You spend your life enjoying the pleasures of the writing life:**
- Reading
  - Browsing in bookstores and buying books (and they're tax-deductible!)
  - Building a library of books you love
  - Finding the right words to express your ideas
  - Experiencing the satisfaction of finishing your books
  - Finding an agent and publisher you love
  - Receiving royalty checks
  - Seeing your name in print
  - Getting good reviews
  - Serving your communities
  - Hearing from fans around the world who love your work and buy whatever you create
  - Watching your craft and career develop and bring you greater recognition and rewards
  - Living to work instead of working to live

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## 7 Options for Publishing Your Books

**1. You can self-publish your books**--the new model for most new writers--using one or more of these options:

- Photocopying your manuscript and selling it in a three-ring binder
- Publishing them as hardcovers, mass market books or trade paperbacks
- Using print-on demand (POD) at no cost or by paying for services
- Using print-quantity-needed (PQN) for short runs
- Using offset printing for longer runs
- Publishing them for free online as a blog, articles, or a manuscript
- Publishing them with the growing number of publishers that have self-publishing imprints
- Selling them chapter by chapter as a subscription

2. **You can publish it in other media** such as app, software, a podcast, audiobook, or sell the rights to a company that does these products.

3. **You can pay for all of the costs to publish your book with a vanity or subsidy publisher.** But vanity publishing has no credibility in the industry.

4. **You may be able to partner with a business or non-profit** that will support the writing, publishing, and promotion of your book because it will support their agenda.

5. **You can sell the rights to**

- one of the five publishers that dominate trade publishing
- a small press, midsized, regional, niche, or specialty publisher
- an on- or offline trade or consumer periodical that will serialize your book
- a publisher for a flat fee as a work for hire
- an academic or university press
- a professional publisher that publishes books for a specific field

6. **You can work with a packager** who provides publishers with a file ready for the printer or finished books.

7. **You can hire an agent.**

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## The Big Apple 5 + 1

America's literary industrial complex includes five multimedia, multinational conglomerates that dominate trade publishing:

- Penguin Random House owns more than 250 imprints and divisions, including Random House, Knopf, Ballantine, Crown, Pantheon, Vintage, Bantam Dell, Broadway Doubleday, Anchor, Villard, and Del Ray.

Penguin's imprints include Penguin, Putnam, Viking, Berkley, Signet, Plume, Ace, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Dutton, Penguin Press, Perigee, Portfolio, and Author Solutions. Penguin Random House controls more than 25% of the publishing business.

- HarperCollins includes Harper Paperbacks, Harper Mass Market, HarperOne, HarperBusiness, Harlequin, Avon, William Morrow, Collins, and Ecco.
- Hachette Book Group owns Little Brown and Company and Grand Central Publishing, which has ten imprints.
- Macmillan includes Henry Holt and Company; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; and St. Martin's Press, which includes Tor, Picador, Griffin, and Thomas Dunne Books.
- Simon & Schuster, which includes Gallery, Scribner, Touchstone, and Atria.

They all have audio and children's divisions, and do E-books, and inspirational books.

Midsize New York houses that contribute to the *New York Times* bestseller list: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, W. W. Norton, Perseus, and Workman Publishing, which includes Algonquin Books.

The Plus 1 is self-publishers who:

- are everywhere
- Publish more books than the Big Apple 5
- will sell more ebooks than the big houses by 2020
- will continue to be a growing power in publishing.

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## The Invisible Book Chain: An Overview of the Publishing Process

You write your proposal or manuscript.

∨

You or your agent submits your book.

∨

Your editor likes it enough to do a proposal to buy it.

∨

An editor-in-chief or editorial board decides whether to buy it and for how much.

∨

You sign a contract and receive the first part of your advance against royalties.

∨

If you sold your book with a proposal, you write your book.

∨

Your editor edits your manuscript.

∨

You respond to your editor's suggestions.

∨

Your editor accepts your manuscript.

∨

You receive the second part of your advance.

∨

Your editor sends your manuscript to the production department, so it can be published simultaneously in print, and as an ebook and audio book.

∨

The production department copyedits your manuscript.

∨

You respond to your copyeditor's comments.

∨

The art department creates or outsources the interior design and the cover for a paperback and ebook or the hardcover jacket.

∨

In a series of launch meetings, your editor and the sales, marketing, publicity, and advertising departments:

- position your book on one of your publisher's seasonal lists
- create a trade and consumer-marketing plan
- choose the print, broadcast, and electronic trade and consumer media to carry out the plan
- prepare sales materials for sales conferences.

∨

Throughout the rest of the process, your agent and your publisher try to sell subsidiary rights.

∨

Your publisher will print advance reading copies (ARCs) and send them to early reviewers and for cover quotes.

∨

Your book and the plans for it are presented to the sales reps.

V

Sales reps sell your book to on- and offline bookstores, distributors, wholesalers, specialty stores, warehouse clubs, and mass-market distributors; and to school, college, and public libraries.

V

Your publisher's education department sells books with adoption potential.

V

Your publisher's special-sales department tries to sell bulk orders for books with premium and bulk-sales potential.

V

The production department arranges to print your book, based on pre-orders.

V

Your publisher's warehouse receives books from the printer, ships orders, and later receives returns.

V

Your publisher's advertising and publicity departments:

- do prepublication promotion
- send out review copies of your book.

V

Your book is published and has a brief launch window in which you and your publisher try to generate sales momentum with publicity, reviews, promotion, reading groups, and traditional and social media.

V

Readers learn about your book in a bookstore, in a library, from on- and offline media, a reading group, a review, or a friend. They read it, love it, and tell others they must read it.

V

Your publisher promotes your book for as long as sales justify it.

V

You promote your book for as long as you want it to sell.

V

Reprint meetings decide when to:

- reprint and how many copies
- sell or remainder part or all the stock if sales are too low
- make your book available in a print-on-demand edition
  - put your book out of print

at which time you can ask for the rights back and republish it.

V

You write the proposal or manuscript for your next book.

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## What Good is a Publisher?

Berrett-Koehler President and Publisher Steve Piersanti

Some observers question what value publishers offer and whether authors would be better off self-publishing their books, given that the authors, more than their publishers, will drive sales. The case for self-publishing is further strengthened by today's ability of authors to reach the marketplace through Amazon.com, the new social media, and the authors' own websites.

Self-publishing is the best avenue for many books, and I often encourage authors to go this route -- particularly when they are able to sell many copies of their books through their own channels. However, a good commercial publisher still brings tremendous value to the book publishing equation in multiple ways:

**1. Gatekeeper and Curator:** In today's insanely crowded marketplace with an overwhelming number of publications competing for our attention, publishers select and focus attention on books of particular value and quality, thereby helping those books stand out. The validation, visibility, and brand provided by publishers add great value to those books.

**2. Editorial Development:** Berrett-Koehler raises the editorial quality of each book in several ways, including extensive up-front coaching of authors to improve the focus, organization, and content; detailed reviews of the manuscript by potential customers to make the book more useful to its intended audience; and professional line-by-line copyediting. Such editorial development is often pivotal to a book's success.

**3. Design:** Self-published books often stand out in a negative way because their covers and interiors appear under-designed (or overdesigned). Some self-published books lack the professional and appropriate appearance that good publishers bring to books.

**4. Production:** Although authors can now produce books on their own computers, publishers can save authors a lot of work while bringing higher quality to layout, proofreading, indexing, packaging, and other aspects of production.

**5. Distribution:** Publishers can usually make books available through many more channels (trade and college bookstores, multiple online booksellers, wholesalers, and other venues not open to self-publishing companies) than authors can on their own.

**6. International Sales:** Berrett-Koehler's books are sold around the world through distributors in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and Canada.

**7. Networks of Customers:** Berrett-Koehler brings books to the attention of our networks of individual customers, institutional customers, bulk sales customers, association book services, catalog sellers, other special sales accounts, and countless other groups. We have been building up these networks for eighteen years, and they add lots of value in helping books to succeed.

**8. Publicity and Promotion:** Although the publicity and promotion efforts of authors may actually exceed those of their publishers, publishers still reach many prospective buyers that authors cannot reach on their own. This is particularly true for a publisher like Berrett-Koehler that has a multichannel marketing system that combines online, direct mail, bookstore, publicity, social media, e-newsletter, website, special sales, conference sales, and other channels of marketing for each new book.

**9. Foreign Translation Rights, Audio Rights, Digital Rights, and Other Subsidiary Rights Sales:** This is an area of great focus and success for Berrett-Koehler (with over two thousand subsidiary rights agreements signed thus far) and helps books to reach many more audiences than the publication of just the English-language print edition. Authors also receive extra revenue, a higher profile, and greater satisfaction when their books are published in a variety of languages.

**10. Coaching:** Perhaps the greatest value provided by publishers is less tangible than the previous items on this list. Just as coaching regarding a book's content and organization can be pivotal to its success, so too can a publisher's coaching on the title, price, design, format, timing, market focus, marketing campaign, and even tie-in to the author's business strategies make a big difference in whether a book succeeds.

Working with good publishers is a partnership. For books to succeed, authors and publishers must collaborate in many ways. For example, the publishers set the table through their marketing channels, but whether the books actually move in those channels often depends on the marketing that the authors carry out.

To receive Berrett-Koehler's excellent newsletter, visit [www.bkpub.com](http://www.bkpub.com).

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## 2020 Visions: 13 Guesses About the Future of Writing and Publishing

1. Ebooks are the dominant worldwide platform for books. Updating ebooks and integrating all media into them is easy. Readers judge authors by their ability to tell a story so compellingly that awareness of medium and technique disappears.
2. Foreign book sales are greater than domestic sales. Fifteen billion Web-enabled devices, most mobile, give everyone access to a global village square that is the center of culture. This empowers a worldwide community of writers and publishers that unleashes an accelerating explosion of communication, creativity, collaboration and commerce.
3. The human family uses smartphones with expandable screens for interactive information and entertainment as well as communication, so books have apps.
4. People remember what they read in print more than what they read on screens. Sustainably produced books with enduring value, more beautiful than ever, continue to provide the physical and literary pleasures only they can. In a machine-made, high-tech but visual culture, books are more needed and treasured than ever.
5. The big conglomerates are fewer and smaller. They publish more of their authors' work than just books, and thrive by partnering with their writers and devoting themselves to what they can do best: editing, design, and marketing.
6. The distinction between traditional publishing and self-publishing is gone. Writers have a greater range of options than ever, and they choose the right ones for each project.
7. Traditional and self-publishers have disrupted Amazon with a nonprofit, cooperative, online bookstore on which they list books and fulfill orders.
8. The disruption of superstores inspired the American Booksellers Association of Booksellers and the American Association of Publishers to collaborate on creating the biggest book chain: a community of 3,500—to 4,000 square-foot independent stores that thrive because:
  - \* They use the business model that works in their communities, including being co-ops, a combination of businesses, and community-supported nonprofits like other cultural institutions.
  - \* They have Espresso Book Machines. All books are formatted so they can be printed on EBMs that print a book with illustrations in a minute. Booksellers never run out of books, and EBMs solve the problem of returns so writers receive royalties monthly.

- \* They are community centers and a respite from staring at screens. They respond to their community's needs and tastes, provide events and classes, and are meeting places for reading and writing groups and community organizations.
  - \* Readers buy local, because 68 cents of every dollar spent in a chain store leaves the community; with indies, only 43 cents leaves the community.
9. New writers self-publish, and build their platform and community of fans until they have proven their potential, and agents and publishers find them.
  10. Successful writers are the most powerful people in publishing. They are CEOs of one-person, multimedia, multinational conglomerates--contentpreneurs who use craft, creativity, innovation and social media to create and sell their work, and who crowdsource their needs by serving a worldwide community of fans and collaborators.
  11. Writers and publishers surf the swelling tsunami of content by branding their work: they maximize their discoverability by integrating their content and communications to build their brand.
  12. Agents are mentors and collaborators who help clients maximize their creativity, visibility and income.
  13. Fifty billion sensors are integrated into a global neural network that increases productivity and lessens the need to work while a sharing economy helps liberate writers and publishers to pursue their goals.

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## **14 Ways to Excite Agents and Editors About Your Book**

- 1. Your query letter**
- 2. Your idea**
- 3. How timely your idea is**
- 4. Your writing**
- 5. Your first page**
- 6. You**
- 7. Your communities**
- 8. Your platform**
- 9. Your test-marketing**
- 10. Your promotion plan**
- 11. Your book's promotion potential**
- 12. The markets for your book**
- 13. Your future books**
- 14. Your pitch**

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## **The Hook, the Book & the Cook:**

### **The 3 Parts of an Irresistible Query Letter**

Agent Katharine Sands believes that the writing you do about your writing is as important as the writing itself. A query is a one-page, single-spaced letter with three or four indented paragraphs with a space between each of them. Without being self-serving, it explains why, what, and who: the hook, the book, and the cook:

#### **1. The Hook:** whatever will best justify reading your work

\* (Optional) A selling quote about your book (or a previous book) from someone whose name will give it credibility and/or salability. The quote could also be about you.

\* (Optional) The reason you're writing the agent or editor:

- the name of someone who suggested you contact the agent
- the book in which the author thanked the person you're contacting
- where you heard the agent speak
- where you will hear the person speak and hope to have the chance to discuss your book

\* Whatever will most excite agents or editors about your book:

- the opening paragraph
- the most compelling fact or idea about your subject
- a statistic about the interest of people or the media in the subject or the number of potential readers

#### **2. The Book:** the essence of your book

\* A sentence with the title and the selling handle for the book, up to fifteen words that will convince booksellers to stock it.

\* The model(s) for it: one or two books, movies, or authors that convey your literary and publishing goals: "It's Harry Potter meets *Twilight*."

\* A one-sentence overview of your book and, if appropriate, what it will do for your readers

\* The book's biggest market(s)

\* Its actual or estimated length

\* The length of your proposal and how many more pages of the manuscript you have ready to send



\* (Optional) The names of people, if they're impressive, who have agreed to give you a foreword and cover quotes

\* (Optional) A link to illustrations, if they're important

\* (Optional) If you're proposing a series, the subjects or titles of the next two books

\* (Optional) Information about a self-published edition that will help sell it

### **3. The Cook:** Why you're the person to write the book

\* **Your platform:** the most important things you have done and are doing to give yourself continuing visibility with potential readers, with numbers if they're impressive: your online activities, published work with links to it, and media and speaking experience with links to audio and video

\* **Your promotion plan:** the three most effective things you will do to promote your book, online and off, with numbers, if they're impressive

\* (Optional) Your credentials; years of research; experience, positions, prizes, contests, and awards in your field

\* A link to a video up to two minutes long that enables you to make the case for your book and you as the author

These elements are building blocks for you to assemble in the most effective order. Front-load the letter by putting what is most impressive as close to the beginning as you can, and include anything else that will convince agents or editors to ask to see your work. Get feedback on your letter, and someone proofread it.

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## The 12 Parts of a Perfect Pitch

A pitch is an oral query letter. Pitching a nonfiction book takes less than thirty seconds. The goal: generate maximum excitement in as few words as possible. Without being self-serving, you must capture the essence of your book, why it will appeal to book buyers, and what's most impressive about your platform, promotion plan, and credentials.

Books are either prose-driven or promotion-driven. Platform and promotion aren't as important for certain kinds of books such as reference books, or for academic presses, or for small, niche, or midsize houses outside of New York.

Half of the twelve parts of a pitch are optional; you may not need them. Here's how to excite agents and editors at Big Apple houses:

1. A sentence with the title (and subtitle, if needed) and up to fifteen words that prove your book is unique and salable
2. The model(s) for your book: one or two books, movies, or authors--"It's *The Tipping Point* meets *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*."
3. (Optional) A novel or narrative nonfiction book, such as a memoir, requires two or three sentences about the time, setting and story
4. The most impressive aspect of your platform: what you're doing to give yourself continuing visibility on the subject, online or off, with potential book buyers, and if the number is impressive, how many of them, and where. Wrong: "I give talks." Right: "I give X talks a year to Y people in major markets."
5. The most impressive one-to-three things you will do to promote your book, online or off, and how many of them, if the number is impressive.
6. The length of your proposal
7. The actual or estimated length of your manuscript
8. (Optional) The names, and if necessary identification, of people who will provide a foreword and cover quotes, if they're impressive
9. (Optional) If you're proposing a series, mention up to three books.
10. (Optional) Information about a self-published edition that will help sell it
11. Your most impressive credentials: your track record; experience in your field; years of research; prizes; contests; awards
12. (Optional) Anything else that will impress agents or editors

Like the overview of your proposal, these elements are the building blocks of your pitch. Arrange them in whatever order will give them the most impact. *How to Write a Book Proposal* discusses platform and promotion.

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## **Pushing the Envelope:**

### **9 Steps for Selling Your Book Yourself**

1. Make sure your proposal or manuscript is ready to submit.
2. Ask your writing community about their experiences with editors and publishers.
3. Research publishers online, in bookstores and directories, through their catalogs, and on their websites to make a list of editors and publishers.
4. To prepare a list of editors, use directories, acknowledgments in books, and calls to publishers to verify that editors are still there. Email authors and ask them about their experiences with their publishers.
5. Follow publishers' submission guidelines email or snail mail, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE), a one-page query letter to up to about fifteen editors at a time simultaneously, letting them know you're contacting other editors.
6. Email or snail mail, with a SASE, a multiple submission of your proposal or partial manuscript, following publishers' guidelines and letting editors know that other publishers have it. If the first submission doesn't work, use what you learn from the process to do the next submission.
7. Submit your work, impeccably prepared, in a professional way following publishers' guidelines in directories and on their websites.
8. Research when to expect a response, and if you don't receive one, follow up by phone, email, or snail mail until you do.
9. Get professional help with the contract from writer's organizations, the Web, books, or from an agent or intellectual property attorney at an hourly rate.

Then celebrate!

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## How an Agent Can Help You

An agent is

- A **mediator** between you and the marketplace
- A **scout** who knows what publishers are looking for
- An **editor** who can provide guidance that will make your work more salable
- A **matchmaker** who knows which editors and publishers to submit your book to
- A **negotiator** who hammers out the best contract
- An **advocate** who helps answer questions and solve problems
- A **seller** of subsidiary rights
- An **administrator** who keeps track of income and paperwork
- A **rainmaker** who may be able to get assignments from editors
- A **mentor** about your writing and career
- An **oasis** of encouragement

### 7 Reasons to Use an Agent

\* By absorbing rejections and being a focal point for your business dealings, your agent helps free you to write.

\* As continuing sources of manuscripts, agents have more clout with editors than writers.

\* Your share of sub-rights income will be greater, and you will receive it sooner if your agent, rather than your publisher, handles them.

\* Your agent enables you to avoid haggling about rights and money with your editor.

\* Your agent may be able to help you with publicity and self-publishing.

\* Editors may change jobs at any time, and publishers may change direction or ownership at any time, so your agent may be the only stable element in your career.

\* The selling of your book deserves the same level of skill, care, knowledge, experience, passion, and perseverance that you dedicate to writing it. An agent can't write your book as well as you can; you can't sell it as well as an agent can.

Adapted from *How to Get a Literary Agent* by Michael Larsen.

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## Finding the Agent Who's Looking for You:

### 9 Ways to Find the Agent You Need

1. **Your writing community:** Writers and other publishing pros can recommend agents.
2. **The Web:** Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, other social media, Google, agents' websites, databases such as publishersmarketplace.com, agentresearch.com, firstwriter.com, authorlink.com, and agentquery.com, which lists 2,000 agents.
3. **The Association of Authors' Representatives (AAR):** The 450 agents in AAR are the best source of experienced, reputable agents. Members are required to follow the AAR's code of ethics. The directories talked about in number six indicate when an agent is a member, aaronline.org.
4. **Writers' organizations:** They're listed online and in *Literary Market Place*.
5. **Literary events:** Writing classes, readings, lectures, seminars, book signings, conferences, and book festivals are opportunities to meet and learn about agents.
6. **Directories:** *Jeff Herman's Insider's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents*; *Guide to Literary Agents*; *Literary Marketplace (LMP)*. Directories vary in the kind and amount of information they provide, so check what different ones include about the same agency.
7. **Magazines:** *Publishers Weekly*, *The Writer*, *Writer's Digest*, and *Poets & Writers* have articles by and about agents. If you don't want to splurge on a subscription to *Publishers Weekly*, read it at the library. There's a free condensation of it available at publishersweekly.com.
8. **Books:** Check the dedication and acknowledgment pages of books like yours.
9. **Your platform:** Let agents find you—be visible online and off, get published and give talks, publicize your work and yourself. When you're visible enough, agents will find you.

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## 8 Steps to Getting an Agent

1. **Find a salable idea.**
2. **Write your proposal or manuscript.** The only time to contact agents is when you have something ready to sell.
3. **Research potential agents online and off.**
4. **Write an irresistible one-page query letter.** Then email it to up to fifteen agents simultaneously, but don't include the list of agents as recipients in an email. If you want to approach thirty agents, write to fifteen at a time. You may receive feedback that will enable you to strengthen your query letter or your work.

Get feedback on the letter, and have someone proofread it before you send it. Query by email, unless an agent prefers mail. If you're mailing your query, include a stamped-self-addressed #10 business envelope (SASE) for a response to be sure to receive a response.

5. **Follow the submission guidelines of the agents you contact.** Don't call or email to see if your work arrived or when you will get a response. Established agents receive thousands of submissions a year and don't keep a log. Make a note on your calendar or your copy of your query letter of when the agents' guidelines say you will hear from them and call or email them if you don't. If it's important for you to know that snail mail arrived, send it certified or get a return receipt.

If you're mailing your work, and you don't need the material back, include a #10 business envelope SASE for a response.

6. **Meet interested agents to test the chemistry for your working marriage.** Look at the challenge of finding and keeping an agent as creating and sustaining a marriage that has personal and professional aspects to it.
7. **Read the agent's agreement.** Make sure you'll feel comfortable signing it, and feel free to ask questions about it.
8. **Choose the best agent for you.** The criteria: passion, personality and experience.

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## 10 Commandments That Guarantee Your Success

### Content Creation: The Holy Trinity of Salable Prose

1. **Love what you do.** Make your work and how you communicate about it a labor of love for your craft and your readers.
2. **Know your goals.** Have personal, literary and publishing goals that inspire you to achieve them, and a plan to help you.
3. **Create content your readers love so much they share it with every reader they know.** The holy trinity of salable prose is
  - **Reading** to determine your goals and find models for your books and career
  - **Writing** as many drafts as it takes to make your work 100%
  - **Sharing** your work with many knowledgeable readers

### Content Marketing: The Holy Trinity of Discoverability

4. **Serve your communities.** Build and maintain networks of people eager to help you because they know, like, and trust you.
5. **Build your platform.** Develop continuing visibility with potential book buyers.
6. **Test-market your work.** Prove your book works in as many ways as you can.

### Contentpreneurship: The Holy Trinity of Success

7. **Share your passion for your work.** Communicate content the value of your work.
8. **Be a contentpreneur.** Run a creative, innovative business that creates, sells, and re-purposes your content to build your brand and generate diverse, growing income streams.
9. **Commit yourself to your goals.** Devote your life to your craft and your career.

### Context: The Holy Trinity of Sustainability

10. **Make the effects of your actions on people and the planet as important as your goals.** Working for the triple bottom line will create a literary ecosystem that will endure as long as you maintain it with content and service.

You can adapt the commandments to other fields and your personal life.

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## What's in It for You?

### Setting Your Personal, Literary, Financial and Publishing Goals

You can sum up your short- and long-term goals and how you will achieve them by answering these sixteen questions. When possible, start your answers with the word "I."

1. Why do you want to write?
2. What do you want to write--novels, nonfiction, children's or YA books?
3. Which book(s) is a model for your books?
4. Is there an author who is a model for the writer you would like to become?
5. What do you want your writing to communicate?
6. What do you want your writing to achieve?
7. What groups of readers are you writing for?
8. How many books do you want to write a year?
9. What advance would you like for your book?
10. How much money a year do you want to earn from your writing?
11. How and where do you want to live?
12. Do you want to write your book yourself, work with an editor, collaborate, or hire a ghostwriter?
13. Do you want to self-publish, pay to be published, or be paid to be published?
14. How will you support your writing until it supports you?
15. How will you use your success to serve others?
16. What literary legacy do you want to leave?

Put your answers up where you write. Read them if you become discouraged. Change them as you wish.

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## Providing the Information You Need to Sell or Publish Your Nonfiction Book

Writing a proposal gives you the opportunity to think through what your book will be, and see how well you can write and promote it, essential information whether you publish it or sell it to a publisher. Most proposals range from 35 to 50 pages and have three parts: **Overview**, **Outline**, and **Sample Chapter**. The first page of a proposal is the title page with the title of your book and your contact information. The second page is the table of contents for the proposal.

### Overview

Your overview must prove that you have a salable book and that you are the right person to write and promote it. Use these building blocks in whatever order is most effective:

- The opening hook, ideally a paragraph, that will most excite editors about your subject
- The book hook:
  - \* The title and selling handle, up to fifteen words of selling copy about the book. (Optional) If your credentials will significantly help sell the book, before the title, add an introductory phrase describing them, for example: “Based on an article in x / y years of research / y years as a z, [title of your book]...”
  - \* The book(s) or author(s) you’re using as models for your book
  - \* The estimated (or actual) length of your manuscript and when you will deliver it
  - \* The book’s benefits (optional)
  - \* Special features: e.g. illustrations, design elements, back matter (optional)
  - \* Information about a self-published edition (optional)
- **Markets:** The types and size of readers and retailers, organizations, or institutions that will buy your book. Other possible markets: schools, businesses, and subsidiary-rights markets such as film and foreign rights.
- **Platform:** A bulleted list in descending order of importance describing your continuing visibility to potential readers, Online, this may include numbers for subscribers to your blog, website visitors, your contacts on social networks, and online articles you’ve published.

Offline, your platform may include the number of articles you’ve had published in print media, the number of talks you give a year, the number of people you speak to and where, and your media exposure. Editors won’t expect novelists and memoir writers to have a big platform. For promotion-driven books such as how-to books, a platform is essential for big and midsize houses.
- **Bio:** Up to a page with information not in your platform, starting with the most important information. Include a link to a one-to-two-minute video about you and the book conveying as much passion as you can.

- **Promotion:** A plan that begins: “To promote the book, the author will, at his/her expense:...” followed by a bulleted list in descending order of impressiveness of what you will do to promote your book, online and off, on and after publication. Start each part of the list with a verb and use impressive numbers, if possible. Publishers won’t expect big plans from novelists and memoirists, and the smaller the house you’ll be happy with, the less important your plan and platform are.
- **Comps:**
  - (Optional) A list of about six strongest competitors for your book in order of importance—not just bestsellers. In addition to the title, author, publisher, year of publication, page count, format, price, ISBN, include two phrases—each starting with a verb—about the competitor’s strengths and weaknesses. End with a list of reasons why your book will be better and different than the competition.
  - A list of about six books like yours that prove the market for your book
- (Optional) **Spin-Offs:** titles for up to three related follow-up books
- (Optional) **Foreword:** The commitment to write a foreword by someone whose name will give your book credibility and salability in fifty states two years from now. Obtain commitments for cover quotes as well, if you can. Provide names of the most helpful candidates, if you can’t get commitments.
- (Optional) **A Mission Statement:** One first-person paragraph about your passion or commitment to writing and promoting your book.

### Outline

A page called “Table of Contents” listing the chapters and the back matter. Then one to three present-tense paragraphs about every chapter, using outline verbs like *describe*, *explain*, and *discuss*. For an informational book, you can use a bulleted, self-explanatory list of the information in the chapter.

### Sample Chapter

The one chapter that will most excite editors by fulfilling your book’s promise to readers and make your book as enjoyable to read as it is illuminating. Include about 10 percent of the book, about 25 pages. Memoirs should be finished. Agents and editors will want more chapters of narrative books and may want read the whole manuscript.

Adapted from *How to Write a Book Proposal* by Michael Larsen.

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## **The S Theory of Storytelling:**

### **Compelling Fiction and Narrative Nonfiction Readers to Turn the Page**

The beginning is the most important part of the work. –Plato

The first page sells the book. The last page sells the next book. –Mickey Spillane

The first page also sells every chapter, and the last page of the chapter sells the next chapter.

Agents, editors and book buyers only read far enough to make a decision.

If they don't like what they read on page one, they won't turn the page.

Browsers may not read the second sentence of a book in a bookstore.

This leads to “The S Theory of Storytelling” for fiction and narrative nonfiction that writers want to read like novels:

**Style**

**Story**

**Setting**

**Someone**

**Something**

**Something Said**

**or**

**Something Else**

**on page one must be compelling enough  
to make agents, editors, and book buyers turn the page.**

Every word you write is an audition for your next word.

Every line you write must convince your readers to read the next line.

Every page you write must arouse enough interest to keep readers turning the pages.

You face these challenges on every page you write except the last one.

The last page must make readers eager to tell everyone they know to read your book.

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## **Making Your Work Rejection-Proof:**

### **How 8 Kinds of Readers Can Help You Make Every Word Count**

1. **Friends and family:** You need and deserve encouragement; let your friends and family give it to you. They will tell you they like your work because they like you. What are friends and family for?

2. **Writers:** Tell writers you will critique their work. This will give you experience improving prose and help you build a community of writers willing to return the favor.

3. **A writing group:** Join or start a writing group, online or off—that meets regularly to discuss its members' work, so you can get feedback as you write. Working with more experienced writers than yourself will prove more productive than working with less experienced writers. Being able to give and receive constructive criticism is crucial. You may have to try more than one group until you find one that gives you what you need and whose members will benefit from your advice.

4. **Potential buyers:** They may not be experts on writing or on the subject, but they know what they like. Would they buy your book if they found it in a bookstore? Try to enlist knowledgeable booksellers—you also want them to buy your book—to render an opinion at least on your idea, title, and promotion plan. (The better customer you are, the more likely they'll oblige.)

5. **Well-read, objective readers:** They know good writing.

6. **Experts in your field:** Approach people who know what you're writing about, including experts, academics, influencers, and authors of books like yours.

7. **A devil's advocate:** Find a mentor whose taste and judgment you respect, and in whose knowledge you have absolute confidence. A devil's advocate is a word wizard who can combine truth with charity, analyze the structure and development of your book, and spot every word, punctuation mark, idea, character, and incident that can be improved or removed.

8. **A freelance editor:** Find an editor who has either worked for the kind of publisher or edited like books yours that were published by the kind of house you want for your book. But don't just rely on an editor. The more readers you have, the better.

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## From Me to We:

### Crowdsourcing Your Success by Serving Engaged, Win-Win Communities

- **Your personal community:** your family, friends, and relatives
- **Your test-marketing community:** people who give you feedback on every aspect of your work
- **Your publishing community:** authors, publishers, publicists, experts on the kind of books you're writing, and booksellers with whom you can talk shop
- **Your community of fans:** avid readers who follow you online, attend your events, and buy whatever you sell
- **Your community of authors in your field:** writers with whom you can share ideas, questions and problems
- **Your street-team community:** evangelists who adore you and your work, and champion you and your books every chance they get
- **Your community of collaborators:** people to help you monetize and publicize your work
- **Your community of mentors:** professionals you can count on for advice
- **Your media network:** people who give you time and space, online and off
- **Your bookselling community:** booksellers who welcome you when you tour and display your books prominently and handsell them
- **Your community of nerds:** a network of techies who help you with technology
- **Your speaking community:** speakers, audiences, clients, bureaus, and members of speaker's organizations
- **Your travel community:** people around the country who tell you about local media, booksellers, and literary events, and give you a place to stay
- **Your mastermind network:** five-to-nine people with varying business expertise who meet every two weeks, on the phone or in person, and serve as the board of directors for each other, sharing advice
- **Your community of causes:** institutions and causes you're passionate about with which you share your time, money, and energy

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## Visibility = Salability:

### Building a Platform for Worldwide Awareness of You and Your Book

\* **Register your name as your website asap.** If your name is taken, tweak it by, for example, adding your middle initial.

\* **Use your name for your email address:** [your first name]@[your first name followed by your last name].com. Keep your address clear, simple, and easy to remember.

\* **Participate** in social media, forums, message boards, chat rooms, and groups in your field. Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Google+ and LinkedIn lead the pack. Tumblr is replacing FB with the young. Goodreads towers over other social reading sites. Be where your readers are. Serve, don't sell. Maximize the professional; minimize the personal.

\* **Write a blog on Wordpress.** Share your passion for your field; discuss developments in your field; relate other news to your field; share content that will inform or entertain your readers; Consider blogging 80% or all of your book to get feedback on it, promote it, and attract book buyers, agents and publishers. (*How to Blog Your Book* by Nina Amir will help you.) Promote your blog with social media, by building a community of bloggers in your field and exchanging posts and comments, and by mentioning your blog online and in on all of your print materials.

\* **Build your website around your blog.** Provide a go-to source of information about your field; continually increases opportunities for visitors to learn and enjoy themselves; gives them the chance to give you feedback on the site and your work; hosts your updated speaking and media kits, including a list of speaking and media appearances, your articles, testimonials, and audio and video links. Use the title of your books to build a separate site for them.

\* **Build your ranking on search engines.** Use keywords on your blog and site.

\* **Make your email signature and business card a brochure.** Include your book cover(s), products, services, on- and offline contact info, and a headshot.

\* **Read** books and articles in trade and consumer magazines, websites, blogs, and ezines to build your communities of writers and influencers, and become an authority on your subject or the kind of book you're writing.

\* **Write** an e-newsletter; articles for trade, consumer and academic print and online media; articles, reviews; op-ed pieces; letters to the editor; a self-syndicated column and articles (ezinearticles.com); articles for websites that email them to their mailing lists; contributions for Wikipedia; audios and videos you produce and post; your media room and speaker's kit.

\* **Give** talks, classes, seminars, webinars, teleseminars, teleconferences, and workshops; do consulting, coaching, and training at businesses, nonprofits, conferences, and conventions; podcast your book. Join Toastmasters to learn the craft and the National Speaker's Association, if you want to get paid. When you're ready, send your speaker's kit to nonprofits, speaker's bureaus, meeting planners, and other people who can hire you to speak.

\* **Appear** in print, broadcast, and electronic trade and consumer media or on a radio or television show you create, online or off. Starting your own show will enable you to interview influencers in your field.

\* **Build relationships** with organizations, event organizers, and people in the media, academia, government, and professionals in your field.

\* **Build an email list** and a community of people in your field who will give or sell you access to their list.

\* **Win** contests, awards, and prizes.

\* **Participate in and lead** community, writing, and professional organizations.

\* **Partner with** a business, nonprofit or foundation.

**Put everything you do online in the service of your visibility, income, and enjoyment.**

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## **Taking the Guesswork Out of Publishing:**

### **12 Ways to Prove Your Book Will Sell by Test-Marketing It**

1. **Test-market your idea:** Try it out on trustworthy writers, authors in your field, booksellers, and book buyers to gauge its potential against past and future competition.

2. **Test-market your book title, chapter titles, and content:** a blog, a website, articles, talks, videos, podcasts, and social media will provide feedback and help build a community of fans eager to buy your book.

3. **Test-market your nonfiction proposal and manuscript:** Create a community of readers who can give you the feedback as you write and after you're done to make sure every word is right, and your writing has the impact you want. Have your readers grade your work on a scale of one to ten, both as a reading experience and, if applicable, its impact on their lives or thinking. Ask them to grade everything you want to be funny, moving, insightful, or inspirational, and the whole proposal or manuscript on a scale of one to ten.

4. **Test-market your book by self-publishing it:** If you can write your book before you sell it, and you have ways to sell it, prove it will sell by self-publishing it.

5. **Test-market your ability to get a foreword and endorsements:** Having a foreword and cover quotes from people whose names will give your book credibility and salability around the country on publication will help you, your agent, and your publisher sell it. You can use your proposal or manuscript to get cover quotes or the commitment to give them.

6. **Test-market your website:** Make sure it's effective as soon as you can and is attracting as many visitors as possible. Use the sites of authors and professionals in your field as models.



**7. Test-market your promotion plan:** Here are six ways to do it:

- Share your plan with your communities to help ensure it will enable you to achieve your goals for the book.
- Once your book is in stores, test your campaign in your city or the nearest major market to see if it generates publicity and sales.
- Integrate what you learn from your first city into your plan and your promotion materials to make them more effective.
- Or start by promoting your book to its core audience. If you've written a self-help book that will interest psychologists as well as the general public, consider trying to get psychologists, the core audience for the book, excited about it first, so they will recommend it to their patients.
- Use what you learn from your first city to launch a regional campaign, then, if you can, go national with it.
- Create a timeline for carrying out your promotion plan and get feedback on your timeline.

**8. Test-market a series with the first book:** If you are proposing a series of books, the fate of the second one depends on the sale of the first.

**9. Test-market your brand:** How you think, speak, dress, act, communicate, and relate to people are aspects of the promise your brand makes to readers. You need to build a brand that is durable, flexible enough to encompass what you want to do, commercial enough to achieve your financial goals, authentic, and ideally, original.

**10. Test-market your brand:** Either you or your books will become your brand. The experience your work provides and all of the ways you communicate can become an ever more effective way of selling what you create.

**11. Test-market your goals:** One way to evaluate your efforts is by answering this question: Do they help you achieve your short- and long-term personal, literary, and publishing goals?

**12. Test-market your commitment to your book, your writing, and your career:** These opportunities to test-market your work also test your commitment to your craft and your career.

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## **50 Shades of Pay: Making Money as a Writer**

Writers have more opportunities than ever to serve their communities, generate synergy, and build diversified income streams from their content, knowledge, ideas, and literary and business skills.

Authors of practical nonfiction will be able to benefit more from these opportunities than storytellers, but you're only limited by your imagination. More chances to profit from your work will emerge as technology and your career develop. There are more than fifty ideas here, and following what authors in your field are doing will spark more ideas.

### **Writing**

- \* A Book
- \* Revisions and new editions of the book
- \* An illustrated version of the book
- \* Mini-versions of the book
- \* Selling chapters of the book
- \* An illustrated version of your book
- \* A series of books, stand-alones or sequels, that sell each other
- \* Young adult, middle grade, and children's versions of an adult book
- \* Adapting a book for woman into a book for men
- \* Adapting a book about one city, state, country, or profession to others
- \* Adapting a general how-to book into books for different professions
- \* Articles and short stories
- \* Collections of short work
- \* Article syndication
- \* Column syndication
- \* Forewords
- \* A newsletter that has advertising and promotes what you offer
- \* Advertising on your blog/website
- \* Ghostwriting
- \* Advertising
- \* Media releases and other publicity materials
- \* Editing

### **Subsidiary Rights**

- \* Excerpts before and after publication
- \* eBooks
- \* Enhanced ebooks
- \* Audiobooks
- \* Feature or documentary movies
- \* Screenplays
- \* Video Games
- \* Foreign rights
- \* Merchandising

- \* Plays
- \* DVDs
- \* Television series
- \* Downloadable templates
- \* Merchandise such as cups, bookmarks, posters
- \* Crowdfunding

## **Speaking**

- \* Paid presentations for
  - corporations
  - nonprofits
  - conferences
  - conventions
  - schools and colleges
  - events you sponsor
 that will either buy books from you, your publisher, or a local bookseller to sell or give away
- \* Free talks for
  - libraries
  - service organizations
  - churches
  - professional and trade organizations
  - alumni associations
  - academic, trade-show, and writer's conferences
 at which you can sell books, products, and services
- \* Audios of talks
- \* Videos of talks
- \* Coaching
- \* Consulting
- \* Mentoring
- \* Teaching
  - your subject or about the kind of books you write about writing and publishing
  - about editing
  - about research
  - about promotion
  - how to create a website
  - how to use social media
  - how to make videos and book trailers
  - how to make podcasts
- \* Teleseminars
- \* Webinars
- \* Training
- \* Putting on live conferences
- \* Putting on online conferences
- \* Retreats that last from a weekend to a week

- \* Speaking, writing, or repurposing your work as a corporate spokesperson
- \* Facilitating a critique group
- \* Facilitating a book club

## **Sales**

- \* Crowdfunding
- \* Selling books at every opportunity
- \* Giving discounts for multiple books
- \* Bundling books, products and/or services at a discount
- \* Subscription for a membership in your organization
- \* Using your website to sell products and services
- \* Merchandising (cups, T-shirts, calendars, etc.)
- \* Selling products and services through ecommerce sites
- \* Selling books, products and services at events
- \* Reciprocal selling of books, products and services of other authors
- \* Selling books in bulk
- \* Tours of places in your books
- \* A business or nonprofit institute based on your ideas
- \* Having local businesses sell your book
- \* Using your email list to sell products and services
- \* Selling other people's products and services that relate to your book
- \* Selling your books in catalogs
- \* Renting your email list

Helping me add what I left out will lengthen the list.

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## **Writers to the Rescue:**

### **Changing the World One Book at a Time**

Now is the most exciting time to be alive and the best time ever to be a writer. But more than ever, we need the vision, guidance, understanding, and inspiration writers can provide. Despite its flaws, the United States is the world's only hope for a world based on freedom and justice.

But government, business, and non-profit and religious institutions can't make the changes people and the planet need with growing urgency. So change is rising from the bottom up. This creates the greatest opportunity writers have ever had, not just to make a living, but to make a difference. The right book will change the world. A book that changes the United States will change the world, because America is leading the world into the future.

We need writers to inspire help readers with the strengths that made American great: self-reliance, sacrifice, compassion, energy, creativity, innovation, ingenuity, generosity, pragmatism, courage, a pioneering, entrepreneurial spirit, and the eagerness to collaborate for the common good. These virtues have to be based on the belief in the human family that shares a global village, an ecosystem for which we are all responsible.

Life should be the celebration of a vision. We need to be driven by the need for bottom-up change, do-it-yourself reliance, small-scale living that replaces:

- possessions with experience
- the artificial with the natural
- consumption with simplicity
- economic growth with personal growth
- the desire for more with the need for enough

The need for books--fiction as well as non-fiction--to stimulate awareness and dialogue, provide solutions, and inspire change, is the greatest challenge writers could want. Your ability and imagination to create and communicate are needed more than ever:

- Help us to balance our obligations to others and ourselves.
- Help us appreciate our potential for accelerating change and motivate us to use it.

- Create a sense of the unity of the realities that revolve around us like planets around the sun: oneself as an individual, a member of a family, a community, a country, and a planet.
- Teach us an abiding compassion and responsibility for living things.
- Provide us with timeless, enduring, universal works of literary art that uplift our spirits by giving us faith in others, our future, and ourselves.

Charles Darwin believed that it's not the strongest or most intelligent species that survive; it's the most adaptable. Books are the most intimate, enduring, effective, authoritative, profound, and powerful form of communication. So books and writers have an essential role to play in helping us adapt to accelerating change and an unpredictable future. What can you do to help lead the human family to next stage of our evolution?

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## Bio

Michael Larsen and his wife and partner Elizabeth Pomada worked in publishing in New York before moving to San Francisco in 1970 and starting Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents in 1972. They are members of the Association of Authors' Representatives and have sold hundreds of books to more than 100 publishers and imprints. They are as eager as ever to find promising new writers.

Mike loves helping writers. He handles adult nonfiction and also has a consulting service for nonfiction writers he can't help as an agent. Mike is the author of the fourth edition of *How to Write a Book Proposal*, which has sold more than 100,000 copies. He also wrote *How to Get a Literary Agent*, now in its third edition, and with Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman, and David Hancock, is coauthor of the second edition of *Guerrilla Marketing for Writers: 100 Weapons for Selling Your Work*. Elizabeth represents adult fiction, memoirs, and nonfiction for women.

Elizabeth and Michael are coauthors of the six books in the Painted Ladies series about Victorian houses, which sparked a national movement and have sold more than 500,000 copies. The trade journal *Publishers Weekly* chose the second book in the series, *Daughters of Painted Ladies: America's Resplendent Victorians*, as one of the best books of the year.

Elizabeth and Mike speak for writer's organizations and conferences. Michael gives talks and seminars based on "10 Commandments That Guarantee Your Success," a humor-filled, inspirational, comprehensive, state-of-the-art overview of writing, publishing, and building a career. Mike and Elizabeth are co-directors of the San Francisco Writers Conference and the San Francisco Writing for Change Conference.

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**The 7<sup>th</sup> San Francisco Writing for Change Conference** / Changing the World One Book at a Time  
September 12, 2015 / www.sfwritingforchange.org / sfwriterscon@aol.com  
**The 13<sup>th</sup> San Francisco Writers Conference** / A Celebration of Craft, Commerce & Community  
February 2016 / www.sfwriters.org / sfwriterscon@aol.com / Mike's blog: [@SFWC](http://sfwriters.info/blog) / [www.facebook.com/SanFranciscoWritersConference](http://www.facebook.com/SanFranciscoWritersConference)