

Your Book Publishing Coach Newsletter

*The insider's guide to writing,
publishing, and making money with information products*

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***** **MAIN ARTICLE** *****

Procrastination: Key to Success?

We all hear about how bad procrastination is.

"Never put off to tomorrow what you can do today," the success experts chide.

Like many maxims, there's some truth to this. Like many maxims, it doesn't go far enough.

A profound lesson I've learned from one of my mentors is that there are two kinds of procrastination. To be successful at achieving what you really want in life, you need to become a master procrastinator.

A master at *what* to procrastinate, that is.

See, there are the Important Things, and there are the less important things.

These Important Things rarely appear very Urgent. Many of the Urgent things are rarely that important.

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You need to become a master at procrastinating the less-important things, even if they're urgent, so that you can give priority to the more important things.

If you want to write a book, for instance, you need to learn to procrastinate the things that are less important than this goal, and make sure you first do the things that will propel you toward that goal.

That might entail learning about what it takes to get published. Once you gain a little knowledge, you can start constructing your plan. Then you need to start writing.

How do you find the time to do this? By making a commitment to become a master procrastinator.

By mapping out your plan, at least the next few steps, and at the same time decide what you will put off until you take your next baby step toward your goal.

It's not easy, this setting of priorities. I wrestle with it every day. The Urgent always threatens to crowd out the Important but Not Urgent.

The only way I've found to take care of the Important but Not Urgent things is to do at least one little thing FIRST, and procrastinate an Urgent task until after that Important Thing is finished.

Here's what else I've discovered: When I do this—take care of the more important things first—I usually have more energy to do those urgent but less important things. I may initially think I don't have time for the Important Thing, but perhaps it's more a matter of energy and focus.

When I let the Urgent rule my time and attention, in the back of my mind that Important thing I'm not getting done is draining my energy and slightly scattering my focus. Therefore, it takes more time to do that Urgent thing, and I end up never getting to the Important thing.

On the other hand, when I do something that is Important to me, something that takes me where I want to go, I am better able to focus on other things that need doing, and I seem to have more energy to do them.

In the end, then, I end up actually getting everything done—Important and Urgent.

Today, take a moment to jot down something you really want to do. Something Important to you, though it may not be important to anyone else. Something that will take you a step further toward accomplishing some dream.

Next, write down one tiny step you can take today, or first thing tomorrow, and do it first! When thoughts of other things crowd in, tell those Urgent things, "I will get to you in due time."

Notice what happens to your energy, your time, and your ability to get other things done when you become a master at procrastinating the right things.

If you need help in knowing what's important in terms of writing a book, I invite you to check out any [past issues of the Your Book Publishing Coach newsletter](#) you may have missed. There are lots of articles there that will show you possible "next steps," depending on where you are already. (Go to <http://www.wordstoprofit.com/newsletters.html> if link does not work.)

And if you're ready to actually start your book, this resource might be perfect for you: Jump Start Your Book: 12 Questions You Must Answer Before You Write Your First Word (<http://www.wordstoprofit.com/JumpStartYourBook.html>). There's a whole tool kit here that will get you started—the right way—right away!

***** **WRITING TIPS** *****

Two Never-Fail Ways to Overcome Writer's Block

The last time I experienced writer's block was probably 25 years ago. Sometime before I discovered the two techniques I will describe for you now.

The only trouble I sometimes have in writing is keeping myself from writing too much.

For instance, I started two other articles before I settled down to this one for this week. The other two kept morphing into longer articles that will probably become Special Reports or even e-courses. (They're on self-publishing.)

First, let's do a little background on why we might experience writer's block.

Causes of Writer's Block

Usually when you experiences writer's block it's because the "internal editor"—some call it the more rational, left side of the brain—is overriding your more creative side. Some little voice in your head is telling you things like, "That's a stupid idea," or, "the way you're saying that is totally boring," or, "What makes you think you can write?"

Maybe it's not a "little voice." Maybe the Critical Voice is fairly screaming at you. How can you hear your Creative Voice with that Critical Voice screaming at you?

So, you have to trick the Critical Voice.

One way to do this, ironically, is by letting it have its full say.

Start writing out all the things this Voice is saying to you. This works best when you do it by hand, but if you're used to composing on the computer, you can do that.

Write as quickly as you can. Whatever's on your mind, get it down. Don't worry about grammar, punctuation, or if it's legible. Get it out.

This is called "free writing," and it often works like a charm. What happens is you often just write through the block, and the idea comes.

Another variation of this is to write down what you would like to write about if you weren't so blocked. "I want to write an article about self-publishing but I don't know where to start or what to say or how much to tell people. Maybe I should go do a little research on the topic. Or would that really be procrastinating?...." and on and on. Before I know it, I'm actually writing about what I intended to.

So the first method is to mind dump, free write—whatever you want to call writing through the block.

Mind Mapping: Circumventing Writer's Block

The second method is what I use to circumvent writer's block altogether. It works by deactivating that logical, often critical left side of your brain, and tuning in to the non-linear side of your mind. Some call it mind mapping.

It would be easiest if I could just show you how to do this. I'll have to describe it in words.

First, take a blank piece of paper (you must do this by hand), and write your main idea in the middle of the paper. This article would be called "writer's block." Then, you draw a circle around that word. Then draw a line from the edge of that circle, and make that line an arrow.

At that point, something else should pop into your head. Write down the word or phrase and draw a circle around that.

Does another word pop into your mind? Is it associated with your main idea or your other word/phrase? Draw another arrow from whichever circle it seems linked to, and put your word down.

Another word or phrase should come to you. Draw the arrow from the natural association, write down your word, circle it, and so on.

You will quickly have a paper filled with circles, arrows and words. A totally non-linear "outline" of your idea.

Guess what happens next? That more linear part of your brain jumps in, eager to create some logical order of the visual disorder before you. The first line of your article, chapter or whatever should come to you effortlessly, and you're on your way. Simply refer to your "mind map" and flesh out the ideas. Sometimes I number those points that radiate from the main idea circle, in the order that seems most natural.

This process has never failed to work for me. However, I need to emphasize a few things about the technique.

Why You Must Do It Exactly This Way

First, this kind of mind mapping needs to be done by hand. I know there are computer programs out there that do mind mapping. They're fine for some things. However, to overcome writer's block, you must do the exercise by hand, on a piece of paper, with pencil or pen (use whichever one you prefer). Using a computer is not only slower, but it pulls you into a linear mode again—which means it won't work.

Some people like to use squares or triangles as well as circles, or simply put straight lines when they do a mind map. All of these introduce too much linearity to the process. To overcome writer's block, you need to completely circumvent the linear process. So use only circles, arrows, and words. Keeping it simple and non-linear allows you to tap into the more emotional, creative side of your mind.

By the way, I use this second process for everything I do. I plan whole books this way. I prepare articles, talks, web copy, my weekly schedule, family vacations, even grocery lists this way.

Try it—I think you'll like it!

***** **INSIDER'S TIP** *****

The Best Way to Publish Your *First* Book

People ask me all the time, "Is it better to try to find a traditional publisher or to self-publish?"

My answer is always, "It depends." It depends on your goals, your resources, your book idea, the marketplace. There are many factors to consider. (I do encourage you to

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consider them, and show you how, in [Jump Start Your Book: 12 Questions You Must Answer Before You Write Your First Word.](#))

Nevertheless, there are several good reasons to consider self-publishing first.

1. It's very, very difficult for a first-time author to get published these days by a legacy, or traditional, publisher. Ironically, part of the reason for this is precisely because the current technology makes it so easy to publish! There are so many books out there, the bookstore shelves are overcrowded (and that distribution model is so flawed—but don't get me started on that!). Publishers are more and more wary of publishing unproven authors.

I don't blame them. I've been on the "inside" of publishing enough to sympathize with their side of it. It's very expensive to produce, publicize, and distribute a book—especially given the very flawed bookstore distribution model. (Oops! I couldn't help that one.) Profit margins are often razor thin. Publishers put out maybe \$10-30,000 to produce a book, and they never know which books will make that back.

In fact, 85 percent of all books published don't even "sell through" enough to pay back their advances! I'm often amazed that publishing remains an industry (especially given the very flawed business model from which they operate—uh-oh, here I go again).

2. You may make more money—at least per book. When your book is published by a traditional publisher, you may get an advance against royalties. It's increasingly true, however, that advances for first-time authors are pretty paltry—not much more than \$5000. In fact, advances are shrinking. I just heard one publishing professional report that the most common advance these days is \$0! Nothing.

Even if you do get an advance, remember that most books don't even earn out their advance, and that it's an advance against (future) royalties. Typical royalty: 7-10 percent of net, which means after the bookstores or other distributors get their discount (typically 45 percent). Let's do the math. A book that sells for \$19.95 has a (discounted) base price of \$12.97 (45% discount means you net 65 percent of list price). Of that, you get your 7.5 percent royalty (typical paperback royalty—hard cover is almost unheard-of for a new author). Now you're down to 97 cents per book sold. Out of that comes, off the top, 15 percent to the agent (if you had one). So your net royalty per book is a whopping 82.7 cents per book.

Now, if you can produce the book for \$10, and it's something you can actually sell for \$19.95, you will net \$9.95 per book if you self-publish and sell it yourself. The tricky thing, of course, is to make sure your production costs will not exceed the price you can actually sell the book for. The trouble with a lot of "publishers" such as lulu.com is that you can easily price yourself out of the market. You have to be very careful and very realistic about what the market is used to paying for your kind of book.

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The other trick is to make sure you have an audience, or can build an audience, for your self-published book. If you can speak and sell it from the back of the room, this can be very effective. If you already have some kind of platform, some kind of audience, you can learn Internet marketing strategies and sell it online. The Web is becoming increasingly effective for promoting and selling books, which is why I'm so encouraged about publishing these days.

3. You get published quicker. A legacy publisher may take 9-18 months to produce your book, once they get your manuscript. It might only take you half that time to do it yourself. You reap the rewards quicker if you self-publish.

What are those rewards? Publishing a book positions you as an expert, like almost nothing else. According to Kevin Hogan, author of *The Science of Influence*, nothing boosts your credibility and expertise in the mind of the public like your own printed book. An advanced degree is actually second to having published a book. You can build on your expertise before, during, and after you write the book, and reap the rewards of being a published author quicker.

Once your book is published, and you begin to promote it, you will make connections you can't imagine now. Doors will open to you. When you're perceived as an expert, people approach you; you don't have to work as hard to go out to find them. You can charge higher fees for your services, products, speaking—whatever it is your book supports.

Then there's the incomparable satisfaction of hearing someone say, "Your book changed my life...."

You might as well begin to reap these rewards sooner than later!

4. As you learn the ropes of promotion, you can attract a legacy publisher—who will then be willing to pay you a larger advance than they would earlier. You will have to learn how to promote your own books anyway, no matter how you publish initially. If you successfully promote your self-published book, and build a big audience, it's likely a legacy publisher will approach you.

This is another result of the self-publishing phenomenon. Increasingly, publishers are looking for successful self-published books to take on. It's only good business. You (or perhaps a smaller publisher) has taken the initial risk, and you've proven you know how to promote your book. The risk is much less for them.

Your advantage to being picked up at that point by a legacy publisher is that they will give you wider distribution (i.e., in bookstores and chains and other retail outlets), and you may well get a decent advance. (At that point, you will be in a position to know

whether you want to sacrifice income for the greater distribution and having them pick up the hassles of producing, warehousing, and distributing the books. You may decide you'd rather keep it self-published.)

If you are picked up by a traditional publisher, you can still sell your book and build your platform while they are producing your book. You can typically keep selling your book up to 60 or 90 days before your new book is published. Then, of course, the publisher will want to be able to sell the new edition, and you will have to retire your initial edition. (Often, this will include complementary materials—beware! For more on that, see the article, "Know Your Author Rights.")

I predict that more and more legacy publishers will look for successful self-published authors. They'd be foolish not to.

5. You're more likely to work hard to get your return on investment if it comes out of your own pocket. Isn't this human nature? Don't you think you'd work harder to recoup \$5000 from your book if it's your own money invested? And this motivation may be just what you need to propel you to success.

Ultimately, you are the one who will have to promote and sell your book, no matter how you publish. Always, always remember that. You are your book's own best advocate. Writing is only a piece of the picture. The real work comes later, in promoting it and making sure your investment of time, energy, and money yields a return.

But that's where the fun begins....

(**Note:** If you're wondering about my cryptic remarks about the book distribution, check out the Your Book Publishing Coach blog. There's a post called the Fatal Flaw in the Book Publishing Industry" that reveals all. Go to <http://www.yourbookpublishingcoach.com>. While you're there, sign up by filling out the "subscribe" box on the top right-hand corner. That way you won't miss any posts.)

***** **MARKETING TIP** *****

Your Book is Only the Beginning ...

Recently a publisher approached me about republishing a book of mine that had gone out of print years ago.

Needless to say, I was thrilled.

It feels like news of a loved one's demise to get a letter from a publisher saying your book is going out of print. To receive news that a publisher wants to resurrect a book is—well, it's a joy akin to experiencing a miracle. Isn't resurrection always a miracle?

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The publisher, however, has ideas about this book. If we go ahead with this, it will be a very different book from the original. New title, half the length, whole new format: "lots of open space, with bullet points, built-in action points, and sidebars of specific topics." The sample book they gave me looked more like a magazine in book format than a typical book.

You know what? I think their suggestions are very good! Once I gave up my initial conception of what the book should be based on what it had been, I caught their vision. (When a traditional publisher makes suggestions, welcome them! Publishing pros usually do know what they're talking about.)

At first, I wondered how I could cut all that content and not hurt the book, but now I'm not perturbed at all. In fact, I welcome the chance to shorten it. The strategy they're suggesting is really a good one, and I suspect will be used more and more in publishing. Which is the main reason I'm writing about this now.

The idea is to have a short book (95-120 pages) that is easy and quick to read, offers good help but is not in itself complete. For more in-depth help, the reader who wants it can go to a website to get more information.

This is a good model for any author to follow. It is a huge change in the old book model (and welcome, in my opinion). Before the Internet, the customer would buy a book and there was really no way to initiate a back-and-forth relationship with an author. By making something valuable to the reader available online, an author can start a relationship with the reader that is satisfying to both.

I encourage you to consider your book only the beginning of your relationship with your readers. Find ways to make readers want more of you, and then give readers more if they go to your website and get into your "funnel." In this case, I may offer both a workbook and group study questions. Both of these work well for almost any nonfiction book.

Even with fiction, you can find ways to draw people into your fictional world. I know a novelist, Charlene Baumbich, who created a whole site called <http://www.welcometopartonville.com>, the fictional setting of her Dearest Dorothy books. Readers who love the characters of Partonville get to read the "Partonville Press" and sign up for Charlene's Twinklegram (doesn't that just put a twinkle in your own eye?). On the site Charlene also cleverly places reviews of the book, updates of her speaking schedule, all in a very engaging format.

Such "extras" give readers a richer experience. They keep readers coming back. They promote loyalty. You're able to give readers more of you. It all works together to generate that most wonderful advertising there is--word of mouth.

So if you're writing a book now or thinking of one, plan into your strategy ways to get readers to come to your website for more. They will thank you for it, you'll sell more books and reach more readers, and everybody will be happy!

... And if you're ready to incorporate these suggestions into your book starting now, I invite you to check out the [Jump Start Your Book: 12 Questions You Must Answer Before You Write Your First Word](#). It's actually a complete Tool Kit for starting your book, including some terrific audio incredible bonuses and a follow-up coaching session to plot the right publishing path for you.

All great accomplishments start with one decision, one action step. [Check out Jump Start Your Book now](#) and see if it's the right action step for you at this time. (<http://www.wordstoprofit.com/JumpStartYourBook.html>)

Get Your Questions Answered ...

If you have a question for Diane about writing, publishing and/or promoting a book, send your question to questions@WordsToProfit.com.

I will be answering all questions on a free upcoming teleseminar. Even if you don't have a question but you would like to tune in, send a blank email to the address above and you will receive notification of the next teleseminar. You can listen in and hear the questions other people have and still learn a lot.

***** **ON THE BLOG** *****

This was a rather active month on my blog. Here's what you may have missed:

- A Stretching Experience (what happened when I said yes to an impossible task)
- Simpleology Simplified? Maybe Not Quite Yet ... (update on the new WebCockpit)
- The Fatal Flaw in the Book Publishing Industry (don't miss this one!)
- What I Learned about Success from Simpleology's Flaws
- A Book Launch to Watch

There's even more there as well. Check it out:

<http://www.yourbookpublishingcoach.com>.

***** **RESOURCES** *****

Want to Write for Children?

If you want to write for children, I know no better resource than Suzanne Lieurance's [The Children's Writers Coaching Club](#) (<http://snipurl.com/CWCenter>).

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Writing for Children is a definite art, and Suzanne knows just how to help you hone your craft. She has written 13 books for children that are currently on the market, with one more due out next year. Suzanne was a regional advisor for the [Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators](#), and taught online workshops about children's writing at www.coffeeshouseforwriters.com for several years. Suzanne has also been an instructor with the [Institute of Children's Literature](#) for over 5 years, working with more than 100 students every year. Many of her students have become published--some of them even before they finished her course.

Many of Suzanne's coaching clients are currently also taking an ICL course or have graduated from the Institute. They join her coaching club to get the kind of additional help not offered by other writing courses or programs, such as live teleclasses and weekly group coaching sessions.

If you [sign up now for her coaching club](#) now, you will have the opportunity to hear the interview with Children's Author Janice Levy on March 28. You will also get a chance to ask Ms. Levy *your* questions about professional background, her books, children's literary agents, and any aspects about any aspect of writing and publishing a children's book.

Suzanne also offers some terrific home-study tools about writing for children. If you have a children's book manuscript sitting in a drawer somewhere, or if you've ever aspired to write for children, you'll want to [check out what Suzanne has to offer](#). (One is a free ebook called "Tricks of the Trade" which contains six great articles on how to write for children--and get published.)

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