

## 11 Ways to Find the Right Agent for You and Your Book

### \* Referrals

The best way to get an agent's attention is if the first two words the agent sees or hears are the name of a client, editor, agent, author, or bookseller who suggested you contact the agent. The more important the person, the more eager the agent will be to hear from you.

### \* Your Networks

You need eleven overlapping, professional, international networks online and off that will be as important to your career as writing and promoting your books: family and friends, speakers, writers, publishing people, professionals in your field, booksellers, fans, suppliers, champions, people around the country, and a promotion network

### \* Writer's Organizations

Members of writing organizations are part of your networks.

### \* The Association of Authors' Representatives (AAR),

[www.publishersweekly.com/aar](http://www.publishersweekly.com/aar).

### \* Directories

*Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents 200X; 200X Guide to Literary Agents; 200X Guide to Literary Agents: A Writer's Guide* by Adam Begley; *Literary Market Place (LMP); The Writer's Handbook*.

### \* The Web

Google literary agents. Visit [authorlink.com](http://authorlink.com), [publisherslunch.com](http://publisherslunch.com), [publishersweekly.reviewsnews.com](http://publishersweekly.reviewsnews.com), [publishersmarketplace.com](http://publishersmarketplace.com).

### \* Literary events

Writing classes, readings, lectures, seminars, book signings, conferences and festivals.

### \* Magazines

*Publishers Weekly, The Writer, Writer's Digest, and Poets & Writers*.

### \* Publishers' catalogs and Web sites

Libraries receive the catalogs, and you can request them free from publishers.

### \* Books

Check the dedications and acknowledgments of competing and complementary books.

### \* The media you get

Get published. Publicize your work and yourself.

Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents / 415-673-0939 / 1029 Jones Street  
San Francisco, California 944109 / [larsenpoma@aol.com](mailto:larsenpoma@aol.com) / [www.larsen-pomada.com](http://www.larsen-pomada.com)

## 9 Options for Getting Your Books Published

You have at least nine options for getting your books published:

- \* You can collaborate with other writers in a co-op venture in which you share the production and marketing costs to create, for example, an anthology of your work.

- \* You can pay for all of the costs to publish your book, but vanity publishing has no credibility in the industry.

- \* You can use subsidy publishing, which means that you pay part of the publishing costs, another option with no credibility.

- \* You can partner with a foundation that will support the writing and promotion of your book because it will further their cause.

- \* You can self-publish your book using one or more of the following options:

- photocopying your manuscript and binding it with tape, or using a three-ring binder, a better alternative because material in a loose leaf binder has a greater perceived value

- publishing one copy at a time using print-on demand (POD)

- using print-quantity-needed (PQN) for short runs

--using offset printing for longer runs

--publishing it online so it can be downloaded onto a computer or personal digital assistant (PDA) with one of the more than 400 e-book publishers, more than 200 of whom will do it for free

\* Publishing it in other media such as CDs, DVDs, a combination CD-DVD, software, and in other forms such as a calendar.

\* You may be able to sell the rights to:

--an on- or offline trade or consumer periodical that will serialize it

--a publisher for a flat fee, as a work for hire

--a small press, niche or specialty publisher, or a regional publisher

--a academic or university press

--a professional publisher that publishes books for a specific field

--a mid-sized house

--one of the six large New York publishers

\* You can work with a packager who provides publishers with a copy-edited manuscript on a disk, a disk ready for the printer or finished books.

\* You can hire an agent to sell your books. 705

**Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents**  
**1029 Jones St. / San Francisco, CA 94109 / 415- 673-0939**  
**[larsenpoma@aol.com](mailto:larsenpoma@aol.com) / [www.larsen-pomada.com](http://www.larsen-pomada.com)**

### **The Six Sisters**

Most industries in the United States are controlled by less than ten corporations. America's literary industrial complex includes six global conglomerates that dominate trade publishing:

- AOL Time Warner, which owns Warner Books, Little Brown & Co. and the Book-of-the-Month Club
- Bertelsmann AG (Germany) which owns The Literary Guild and Random House which has 70 imprints including "Little Random," Knopf, Ballantine, Crown, Pantheon, Vintage, Bantam Dell, Broadway Doubleday, Anchor, and Villard, Dial Press, Del Ray, Fodor's and Fawcett
- Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (created in Australia, now American) which owns HarperCollins including Harper Paperbacks and Harper Paperbacks; Avon; and William Morrow including Quill
- Pearson (United Kingdom) which owns Penguin Putnam whose imprints include Penguin, Putnam, Viking, Berkley, Signet, Plume, Grosset, Ace, Tarcher, Dutton, Penguin Press, Portfolio and Chamberlain
- Holtzbrinck (Germany) which owns Henry Holt & Co.; St. Martin's Press; and Farrar, Straus & Giroux
- Viacom which owns Simon & Schuster including Pocket Books, Free Press, Scribner, Touchstone and Atria

A medium-sized house that is a major player: Hyperion, which includes Miramax Books, is part of Disney, so it has deep pockets. 405

Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents  
1029 Jones St. / San Francisco, CA 94109 / 415-673-0939  
[larsenpoma@aol.com](mailto:larsenpoma@aol.com) / larsen-pomada.com

### The Publishing Process

You write your proposal or manuscript.

V

You or your agent submits your book.

V

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

V

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

V

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

V

Your editor edits your book.

V

You respond to your editor's suggestions.

V

Your editor accepts your manuscript.

V

Your editor sends your book to the production department.

V

The production department outsources the copyediting.

V

You respond to the copyeditor's yellow post-it notes on your manuscript.

V

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

V

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 three seasonal lists

\* Create a trade and consumer marketing strategy

\* Choose the print, broadcast and electronic trade and consumer media to carry it out

\* Prepare sales materials for sales conference

V

Your agent or your publisher's subsidiary-rights department tries to sell movie, book-club, foreign and serial rights throughout the rest of the process.

V

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

V

Sales Reps sell your book to  
on and off-line bookstores, specialty stores, warehouse clubs and  
50,000 mass-market outlets.

V

Your publisher's library sales rep sells books to school, college  
and public libraries.

V

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

V

Your publisher's special-sales department sells books with premium  
and bulk-sales potential.

V

The production department arranges for your book to be printed.

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 pre-publication promotion

- \* Send out copies of your book with a news release or media kit

- \* Carry out their plans

V

Your book is on your publisher's Web site.

V

Book reviewers review your book.

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

Readers love your book.

V

They tell other readers to read it.

V

Reprint meetings decide when to:

- \* Reprint and how many copies

- \* When to sell or remainder part or all of the stock  
if sales are too low

- \* Make your book available in a print-on-demand edition

- \* Put it out of print

at which time you can ask for the rights back

V

You write the proposal for your next book.

**Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents**  
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[larsenpoma@aol.com](mailto:larsenpoma@aol.com) / [larsen-pomada.com](http://larsen-pomada.com)

**Get Paid to Write Your Book: How to Write an Irresistible Book Proposal,  
Sell It Fast for Top Dollar, and Carve a Career Out of It**

"The best proposals are those that elicit the fewest questions. Why? Because you've anticipated and answered them all."

--Jane von Mehren, Executive Editor, Penguin Books, in Editors on Editing

Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs.

--Henry Ford

Although there is no one way to write a proposal, any more than there is to write a book, the following technique has evolved over the last three decades years. It is the fastest, easiest way we know of to make your proposal rejection-proof and get the best editor, publisher and deal for your book. Most proposals range from thirty to fifty pages. Each part of your proposal must convince agents and editors to go on to the next part. Here a list of the three parts of a proposal:

**The Golden Rules for Writing a Proposal**

Strive for impact and brevity and use books and authors you admire as models.

**The Introduction**

**The Golden Rule for Writing Your Introduction**

Create as much excitement as you can about you and your book.

The goals of the Introduction are to prove that you have a solid, marketable, practical idea and that you are the right person to write and promote it. The Introduction has three parts: an Overview, Resources Needed to Complete the Book and About the Author. They give you the opportunity to provide as much ammunition about you and your book as you can muster.

**Overview**

Nine of the thirteen parts of the Overview are optional because you may not need them.

--Your subject hook: the most exciting, compelling thing that you can say in as few words as possible that justifies the existence your book: a quote, event, fact, trend, anecdote, statistic, idea, joke. Your subject could combine an anecdote about someone using your advice to solve a problem that leads to a statistic about the number of people with the problem.

--Your book hook includes three pieces of information: your title, your selling handle and the length of your book:

\* Your title: Unless it's a serious or reference book, your title must tell and sell.

\* Your book's selling handle: a sentence that ideally begins: [Your title] "will be the first book to..." You can also use Hollywood shorthand by comparing your book to one or two successful books: "[Your title] is *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* meets *Chicken Soup for the Soul*."

\* The length of your book (and number of illustrations if you will have them), arrived at by outlining and estimating the length of your manuscript and the back matter

--(Optional) Your book's special features: tone, humor, structure, anecdotes, checklists, exercises, sidebars, and anything you will do to give the text visual appeal. Use competitive books as models.

--(Optional) The name of a well-known authority who will give your book credibility and salability in fifty states two years from now who has agreed to write a foreword. This is essential if you're writing a book about health and you're not a MD, and unnecessary if you're writing *The Encyclopedia of Water Buffaloes*. If you can't get a commitment, write: "The author will contact A, B, C., etc for an introduction."

--(Optional) What you have done to answer technical or legal questions. If your book's on a specialized subject, name the expert who has reviewed it. If your book may present legal problems, name the intellectual property attorney who has reviewed it.

--(Optional) Your back matter. Use comparable books as a guide.

--(Optional) Your book's sub-rights possibilities: Start with the most commercial one.

--(Optional) Spinoffs: If your book can be a series or lends itself to sequels, mention the other books.

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The next four parts of your overview are based on two assumptions:

- You want to sell your book to a large or medium-sized New York publisher.
- Your book will require continuing national promotion by you to succeed.

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One advantage that small and mid-sized houses outside of New York, and university presses have is that they don't need the promotional ammunition big publishers do. So especially at the beginning of your career, you may find them more receptive to your work.

--Markets for your book: the groups of people who will buy your book, and the channels through which your book can be sold. Start with largest ones.

--NEW (Optional) A Mission Statement. If you feel a sense of mission about writing and promoting your book, describe it in one first-person paragraph.

--NEW (Optional) The Author's Platform: a list in descending order of impressiveness of what you have done and are doing to give your work and yourself continuing national visibility.

If you are doing a book that you will promote with talks around the country and you want a big house to publish your book, you already need to have continuing national visibility through talks, the media or a promotional partner: a business or nonprofit that will help you promote your book. Your promotion plan must be a believable extension of what you are already doing.

--Your promotion plan: in descending order of importance, a list of what you will do to promote your book during and after its one-to-three-month launch window on publication. For books with a large nationwide audience that writers want to sell to big publishers, this list is far more important than the content of the book.

--A list of competing books that ends with a list of reasons why your book will be different and better than the competition.

--A list of complementary books proving the interest in the subject.

#### Resources Needed to Complete the Book

A list of out-of-pocket expenses for \$500 or more such as permissions, travel, illustrations or an introduction with a round figure for how much each will cost. Your agent will decide whether to include the costs in the final proposal.

#### About the Author

Everything that you want editors to know about you in descending order of relevance and importance that you don't include in your platform.

### **The Outline**

The Golden Rule of Writing an Outline  
Write about the chapter, not about the subject.

To prove that there's a book's worth of information in your idea and that you have devised the best structure for organizing it, write from a paragraph to a page of prose outlining every chapter. Aim for one line of outline for every page of text you guesstimate, for example, nineteen lines of outline for a nineteen-page chapter.

To help make your outlines enjoyable to read, start each chapter with the strongest anecdote or slice of copy from each chapter, and then do the outline.

### **The Sample Chapter**

The Golden Rule for Writing Your Sample Chapter  
Make your chapter as enjoyable to read as it is enlightening.

Choose the representative chapter that will best show how well you write.

This list is adapted from *How to Write a Book Proposal*, but not a substitute for it.

## A Sample Page of Outline

Here's an outline from what became Literary Agents: What They Do, How They Do It, and How to Find and Work with the Right One for You. Now I would start it with an anecdote.

### Chapter 12

#### Good Fences Make Good Neighbors:

#### How to Handle Agency Agreements

19 Pages

This chapter starts by balancing the pros and cons of agency agreements. Then it covers eleven essential points that should appear in any agreement, as well as clauses for writers to avoid. Four representative agreements follow, including the author's which appears on the next two pages.

The discussion of agreements concludes that since no agreement can encompass every potential contingency, the most important basis for any agreement is the good faith of the people who sign it.

The next part of the chapter presents separate bills of rights for authors and agents stating their responsibilities to each other whether or not the agents have an agreement.

The chapter ends by analyzing the causes for changing agents and the three-step procedure for doing it:

1. Try to find a satisfactory solution to the problem.
2. If that is not possible, notify the agent in writing of the change.
3. Find another agent.

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Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents  
1029 Jones Street / San Francisco, California 94109  
415-673-0939 / [larsenpoma@aol.com](mailto:larsenpoma@aol.com) / [www.Larsen-Pomada.com](http://www.Larsen-Pomada.com)

**Selling Stars to Create a Universe: How to Write and Use a  
Mini-Proposal to Save You Time and Money and Sell Your Book**

If your book is a universe, your mini-proposal for it will be the stars of that universe, the most brilliant ideas, advice and anecdotes from the book that you want to write. You may look at a mini-proposal either as an extended query letter or a miniature proposal. But once you have a full proposal, choose the brightest stars from your universe and condense them into a mini-proposal of five to ten double-spaced pages.

The Seven Parts of a Mini-Proposal

Here are the parts of a mini-proposal:

1. Your Overview

A two-page overview of your book including:

- your subject hook
- your book hook
- special features (optional)
- a celebrity introduction (optional)
- your back matter (optional)
- the markets for your book
- subsidiary-rights potential (optional)
- your spinoff books (optional)
- competing and complementary books

## 2. Your Mission Statement (Optional)

If you feel a sense of mission about writing and promoting your book, describe it in one first-person paragraph.

## 3. Your Platform (Optional)

This is a top-down list of what you have done and are doing to give your work and yourself continuing national visibility.

## 4. Your Promotion Plan (Optional)

List the five or six most impressive things that you will do to promote your book. For books that writers want to sell to big houses, they are usually:

- a matching promotion budget (optional)
- the name of the publicist that you will hire, ideally someone known to the publisher you plan to approach (optional)
- the number of major markets you will go to during your book's one-to-three month launch window (optional)
- the number of talks you will continue to give a year (optional)
- the number of books that you will sell a year, assuming that you sell a book to one out of four listeners (optional)
- anything else of equal promotional power

## 5. Resources Needed to Complete Your Book (Optional)

A list of resources you need to complete your book or just this sentence: "The author will deliver the manuscript X months after receipt of the advance."

## 6. Your Bio

A half-page bio with the most impressive info about you and your accomplishments. Include a head shot at the end of your bio.

## 7. Your Outline

On one to two pages, list your chapter titles and flush right, the number of manuscript pages each will be. Then provide one to three phrases about what's in each chapter. Start each phrase with a verb, varying the verbs as much as you can. After the title of your sample chapter, add the parenthetical phrase (*Available on request*) or provide a link, not if possible, to where you post the chapter).

If you want your book to be enjoyable to read, provide an annotated list of catchy chapter titles explained by subtitles that may start with numbers or gerunds such as using, making and selling or with a number that is the structure of the chapter such as "6 Ways to..."

If you can, create chapter titles that relate to a metaphor in the title of your book. For example, if your title was *The 10 Keys to Success in Sales: Unlocking the Doors to a*

Million-dollar Income, you could have ten chapters about the keys and bookend chapters before and after them.

Alter the lengths of the parts of your mini-proposal as needed to show your book off to best advantage. But as with your full proposal, the criterion for what to include is what will most excite editors about you and your book in as few words as possible.

### Eight Ways to Use Your Mini-proposal

Here are eight ways that you can use your mini-proposal:

- \* If writing a proposal or any part of it seems intimidating, write a mini-version of it first and then expand it.

- \* If your idea is commercial enough, your writing credentials are strong enough, or if you have already had a story or a book published about the subject, you may be able to sell your book with just a mini-proposal.

- \* If you are writing a book that only you can write, and you don't have to worry about people knowing about the information it contains, mail or email your mini-proposal with your query letter. It will be short enough that agents and editors may treat it as a letter that gets immediate attention rather than a full proposal. They go in another pile that editors will get to after they read the work of writers they're already working with, submissions from agents, submissions that are from referrals, and submissions that arrived before yours. Agents or their assistants do screen proposals to see if any merit immediate attention.

Submit your mini-proposal as many copies to agents or editors as you wish, but mention in your one-page covering letter that other people have it and that you also have an XX-page proposal.

- \* Agents and editors reject close to 100 percent of the submissions they receive. Because they are perpetually swamped, they may welcome the chance to read a short proposal. If you have a full and a mini-proposal, give them a choice. But be ready to send your full proposal when you submit your mini-proposal.

- \* Send agents or editors a query letter followed by your mini-proposal through the mail or as an email, but not as an attachment. This will speed up their response time, which may be crucial if your book is about a subject in the news.

- \* You can send both a mini-proposal and a full proposal and let agents or editors decide which to read. An editor may prefer a full proposal. But editors at large houses

have to gather support from other people in the house, and a mini-proposal may be all their colleagues need to see. Place the one they request first, the other one behind it, and mention both in your covering letter.

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**HOT TIP** In *A Writer's Guide to Book Publishing*, AAR member Rick Balkin recommends skipping the query letter and sending your full proposal. If you're not concerned about agents or editors knowing your idea or the information in your proposal, send both proposals to as many agents or editors as you want. Let recipients choose which to read. Put your mini-proposal first. It will be faster to read, and if they're hooked, they will keep turning the pages.

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\* You can put your full and mini-proposal on your Web site at an address that you only share with agents or editors. Then you can email or snailmail editors giving them the email addresses or hotlinks to look at them. You can also make all of the manuscript that is ready to submit available online so editors can read as much as they want to.

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Not all agents and editors accept online submissions so follow the guidelines of the people you approach. Regardless of how they prefer to be approached, they will still respond more quickly to 5 to 10 pages than 35 to 50.

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\* You or your agent may be able to use your mini-proposal to interest foreign publishers or other subsidiary-rights buyers.

\* You can adapt a mini-proposal to approach magazine and newspaper editors about writing articles or about serializing your book.

Your mini-proposal will be a win-win. Time-starved agents and editors will appreciate getting it, and it will speed up the process of getting you the agent or publisher you want.

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**Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents / 1029 Jones St. / San Francisco CA  
94109 415-673-0939 / larsenpoma@aol.com / larsen-pomada.com**

***Guerrilla Marketing for Writers: 100 Weapons for Selling Your Work***

The Most Powerful Weapons in Your Arsenal

1. The Most Powerful Guerrilla Marketing Weapon: You
2. Your Books (Low cost)
3. Your Networks (Low cost)
4. Word of Mouth (Free)

The Most Powerful Weapons for Selling Your Books

5. Your Platform (Free)
6. Your Talks (Free or you get paid!)
7. Your Grand Tours (Free or you get paid!)
8. Your Publicity (Free for all!)

The Most Powerful Weapons Inside You

9. Your Objectives (Free)
10. Nichecraft (Free)
11. Your Ideas (Free)
12. Your Creativity (Free)

The Most Powerful Weapons for Planning Your Campaign

13. Your Promotion Plan: The First Version (Free)
14. Your Promotion Budget (Free)
15. Your Guerrilla Greenbacks (Free)
16. Your Promotion Plan: The Final Version (Free)

Your Next Most Powerful Publicity Weapons

17. Your Elevator Speech (Free)
18. Your Television Interviews (Free)
19. Your Radio Interviews (Free)
20. Your Print Interviews (Free)
21. Your Satellite Tours (\$)

Weapons that Prove You're a Guerrilla

22. Your Press/Speaker's Kit (Low cost)
23. Your Press Releases (Low cost)
24. Your Web Site (Low cost)
25. Your Knowledge of Publishing and Promotion (Low cost)
26. Your Follow-up (Free)
27. Your Evaluation Form (Free)
28. Your Publisher's Publicity Questionnaire (Free)

Fusion Marketing Weapons

29. Your Strategic Alliances (Free)
30. Window and In-store Displays (Free)
31. Fundraisers (Free)
32. Your Annual Awards (Free)

#### Weapons That Use Technology to Help You

33. Your Tip of the Day and Weekly Teaser (\$)
34. Online Booksellers (Free)
35. Your Links and Directory Listings (Free)
36. Your Self-Writing Sequels (You get paid!)
37. Your Webcasts (Low cost)
38. Your Giveaways (Free)
39. Your Surveys (Free)
40. Your Discussion Groups (Free)
41. Your Email Signature (Free)
42. Your E- and Snailmailing lists (Free)

#### Weapons That Involve Your Books

43. Excerpts from Your Books (You get paid!)
44. New Editions of Your Books (You get paid!)
45. Reading Groups (Free)
46. Your Promotional Copies (Free)
47. Your Titles (Free)
48. Your Covers (\$)
49. Your Illustrations (Low cost)
50. Your Acknowledgments (Free)
51. Your Bibliographies (Free and you get paid!)
52. Merchandising (You get paid!)
53. Raffle Prizes (Free or low cost)
54. Your Money-back Guarantee (Low cost)

#### Weapons Made Possible by Your Ability to Write

55. Your Brochure (Low cost)
56. Your Newsletter or 'Zine (Free or you get paid!)
57. Your Articles or Short Stories (Free then you get paid!)
58. Your Column (You get paid!)
59. Your Email Chain Letter (Free)
60. Your Book Reviews (You get paid [very little]!)
61. Your Op-ed pieces and Letters to the Editor (Free)
62. Your Thank-you Notes (Low cost)
63. Your Handouts (Free or low cost)

#### Weapons Made Possible by Your Ability to Enlist Allies

64. Your Book Signings (Free)
65. Book Festivals (Free)
66. Your Special Events (Free)
67. Your Contests (Free)
68. Cooperation (Free)
69. Your Promotion Potlucks (Low cost)
70. Your Broken-in Walking Shoes (Low cost)

#### Weapons that Deliver Free Advertising for Your Books

71. The Last Page of Your Book (Free)
72. Bartering Stories for Space (Free)
73. Per-Order Ads (Free)
74. Catalogs (Free)

#### Weapons that Prove You're a Pro

75. Your Professionalism (Free)
76. Trade Shows (\$)
77. Professional Conferences (\$)
78. Your Memberships in Professional Organizations (Low cost)
79. Your Memberships in Community-service Organizations (Free or low cost)

#### Weapons to Make Part of Your Identity

80. Your Passion for Books (Free and you get paid!)
81. Your Enthusiasm (Free)
82. Your Sense of Humor (Free)
83. Your Sense of Balance (Free)
84. Your Courage (Free)
85. Your Competitiveness (Free)
86. Your Speed (Free)
87. Your Flexibility (Free)
88. Your Smiles (Free)
89. Your Optimism (Free)

#### Weapons for Communicating Your Identity

90. Your Audiocassettes (You get paid!)
91. Your Videocassettes (You get paid!)
92. Your Stationery (Low Cost)
93. Your Business Cards (Low cost)
94. Your Bookmarks (Low cost)

#### Weapons for Building Your Invincible Marketing Machine

95. Your Identity (Free)
96. Your Slogan (Free)
97. Your Logo (Free or low cost)
98. Your Package (Free)
99. Branding Your Books (Free)
100. Your Promotion Calendar (Free)

The Ultimate Weapon: You to the 4th Power—practicing nichecraft, selling everything you create, using as many weapons as possible, and generating multiple income streams

## 21 Ways to Use Your Web Site to Promote Your Books

Your Web site will be a powerful tool for promoting your books. A Web site gives you and your book exposure 24/7 in 200 countries. The rapid growth of the Web makes it an increasingly effective marketing weapon for reaching readers. Your Web site can include

- \* Your media kit, parts of which are listed below
- \* A list of your upcoming appearances
- \* A blog
- \* Your brochure
- \* Podcasting
- \* A list of your products and services
- \* Links from as many search engines and related sites as possible; make them reciprocal if necessary
- \* The opportunity for visitors to buy (an autographed?/gift-wrapped copy of?) your book from you or a link to an on and/or off-line bookseller
- \* A sample chapter, table of contents and/or excerpts from your book; for nonfiction books, 2-3 pages from the beginning of each chapter; check with your publisher
- \* Updates to your book
- \* Quotes from reviews of your book
- \* Quotes from letters from readers about your book
- \* A photo of your book cover
- \* A photo of yourself if it will help sell your book
- \* A place to hold forums to discuss your subject
- \* A place for you to teach classes online
- \* An email address encouraging visitors to email questions and experiences for use in talks, articles and books
- \* A column, newsletter or a tip of the day, week or month that will bring visitors back to your site or which you can deliver electronically for free or as a subscription
- \* A teacher's guide if your book has adoption potential
- \* A reading club guide if your book will be a potential reading-club selection
- \* A frequently asked questions (FAQ) link

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From Guerrilla Marketing for Writers 100 Weapons for Selling Your Work by Jay Conrad Levinson, author of Guerrilla Marketing; Rick Frishman, President, Planned Television Arts; and Michael Larsen, AAR

## **Two Ways to Write Your Promotion Plan**

There are two ways to write your promotion plan:

1. The simple way: If don't have promotion or speaking experience, and you will be approaching small or mid-sized houses about your book, just list what you plan to do to promote your book and mention your eagerness to do what your publisher asks of you.
2. If you are writing a book aimed at a wide national audience that you want published by a major house, you will need a promotion plan that is as long and strong as you can make it. To create one, list in descending order of importance what you will do to promote your book during its one-to-three-month launch window and after.

For most books with a wide potential audience, this list is far more important than the content of your book in determining the editor, publisher and deal you get for your book.

**The four most important commitments in your plan will be a matching promotion budget -- which is optional -- the number of major markets you will go to on publication, the number of talks you'll give a year, and the number of books you will sell a year.**

Here are the parts of a promotion plan:

"The author will match the publisher's consumer promotion budget up to \$XX,000." You can use your advance for promotion, but don't mention it because nobody knows what it will be, and you have to cost out your promotion plan. As important as having a budget is proving that you know the best way to use it.

If it's \$15,000 or less, don't mention the amount, just list what you will do. Making a financial commitment is the best way to justify one from your publisher, but there's a good chance your publisher may not match your budget. If you find a publisher who will, ask them for the plan they will carry out with their budget. Don't mention a budget to a mid-sized or small house; they won't expect it or match it.

If you will hire a publicist to arrange for your publicity, mention who it is and how he or she will help you. If you can, aim for a firm like Planned Television Arts that is well-known to New York editors. Google, *Literary Market Place*, and your networks will lead you to the publicist you need.

Publishers know that most writers can't afford a budget, and that's OK. Publishers won't buy your book because you have a budget or reject it because you don't. It's the next three numbers that are crucial.

\* "On publication, the author will give talks and do publicity in the following XX major markets:..." Follow this with a list of the large cities and their satellite cities that you will get yourself to. If you can't hire a publicist but you can give yourself a national tour, your publisher's publicist may piggyback on your travels.

\* "The author will continue to give XX talks a year."

\* "The author will sell X,XXX books a year." Assume that 25% of your listeners buy a book. A paradox for you to resolve: First-year sales may be higher than those in succeeding years because your book is new, and you're promoting it. If your book is published as a hardcover, sales may be higher after it's published in paperback. Later sales may also be larger as you become well-known or as your future books build the market for your previous books.

\* If you can establish a partnership with a business or nonprofit organization that will commit to buying a large quantity of books, sending you around the country as a spokesperson, or lending its name to the book, make the last page of your proposal a letter from your partner with as long a list as possible of what the organization will do to promote your book.

\* List what your media/speaker's kit will contain.

\* Give round numbers for the lists of media people to whom you will send the media kit. Indicate which of these people will receive a promotional copy of the book. Your publisher will supply a certain number of promotional copies, a number that is negotiated on signing. If possible, say that you will provide those that they can't.

\* List the ways that you will use your Web site for promotion.

\* List trade and consumer conferences and conventions at which you know that you will be able to speak during the first year after publication and, if impressive, the number of people who will attend them.

\* List your contacts at media that will impress publishers who have told you they will do a review, an article or an interview on publication.

\* List opinion-makers whose names will give your book credibility and salability in fifty states two years from now and thereafter who, based on reading your proposal, will give you quotes for your book.

\* Consider doing two promotion plans: one for when and after your book is published and a lifetime plan.

\* Mention special-interest magazines that will trade stories you write for ads.

\* Mention magazines that will do per-order ads for which the magazine supplies the space, your publisher the books, and they share the profits.

\* Mention a commitment to run a column you will write that will give your book as much exposure as possible, online or off, for cash or in exchange for a bio you will write to promote your book and yourself.

End your promotion plan like this: "The author's promotional efforts will be coordinated with those of the publisher."

There are more ways to promote books than ever before. You are only limited by your time, energy and imagination. Keep in mind that you will be carrying out your promotion plan eighteen months to two years from now when your book is published.

The bottom line: the greater the continuing national impact you can give your book, the greater its chances for success.

Adapted from the third edition of *How to Write a Book Proposal* and *Guerrilla Marketing for Writers: 100 Weapons for Selling Your Work* by Jay Conrad Levinson, author of *Guerrilla Marketing*; Rick Frishman, president of Planned Television Arts; and Michael Larsen, AAR.

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## **Making Your Work Rejection-Proof by Sharing It**

Before contacting agents or editors, ensure that every word is right and your proposal or manuscript is as enjoyable to read as you can make it. Share your proposal or manuscript with five kinds of readers who can advise you on how to improve it:

1. Friends and family
2. Potential buyers of the book
3. Literate, objective readers
4. Experts and authors who are knowledgeable about the subject of your book or the kind of novel you're writing
5. And most valuable, a devil's advocate, a mentor who can combine truth and charity, spot everything in your work that can be improved or removed, and show you how to do it

Join or start a critique group--online or off--that gets together once a week and critiques each other's work. An article at <http://www.writermag.com/wrt/pdf/groups.pdf> describes how to start a writer's group.

### **Spare the Reader, Not the Writer**

Write this injunction in large letters on every copy of the proposal or manuscript that you share with your professional networks and include a red pen.

If you can't find anyone else, use your networks or Literary Market Place to locate an experienced freelance editor whose recommendations check out and who has worked on books in your field that have been published by houses that you want to publish your book..

Models to emulate: Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen who share their stories with forty readers, ask them to grade the stories on a scale of one to ten, and use just the 9.5s and 10s in their *Chicken-Soup* series. Follow their example by asking your readers for an overall rating for the writing and impact of your proposal or manuscript, and ratings for anecdotes or scenes in your work that you want to have humorous, dramatic or inspirational impact. And ask them to email you how your book affected their lives.

Adapted from *How to Write a Book Proposal*. 705

Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents  
1029 Jones Street / San Francisco, California 94109  
larsenpoma@aol.com / www.larsen-pomada.com

## Why Networks + Net Speed Net Profit

You need eleven overlapping, international networks online and off that will be as essential to your career as writing and promoting your books because neither will be effective without your networks:

- \* Your personal network: your family and their friends, your relatives, your neighbors, your friends, schoolmates, and the people you work with.

- \* Your writing network: people from whom you can get feedback on your work

- \* Your field network: every key person in the field you are writing about in the media, academia and government as well as professionals working in the field. Every field has its own events, media, organizations and opinion-makers.

- \* Your publishing network: writers, editors, writers' organizations, writing teachers, librarians, reviewers, sales reps and publicists. Go to literary events. Scour the Web for kindred spirits. Collect business cards.

- \* Your promotion network: everyone who can help you promote your book

- \* Your network of booksellers: your own chain of bookstores with booksellers who will welcome you back every time you have a new book

- \* Your speaking network: speakers, audiences, speakers' bureaus, meeting planners, members of speakers' organizations

- \* Your travel network: people around the country who help you to research and promote your books

- \* Your network of fans: the growing number of people who read your books and attend your talks. The better care you take of them, the more they will reciprocate.

- \* Your network of champions: a relatively small group of people who adore you and your work, and promote you, your books and your services online and off, wherever they are, every chance they get. They are the knights of your round table. They can't be bought, but you should do everything you can to justify their praise and reward their efforts.

- \* Your network of suppliers: You should be champions for each other.

You have two sets of networks: direct and indirect. Your direct network is everyone you know, your indirect network is everyone they know. Your professional networks will be powerful, essential allies in your quest for success.

Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents / 1029 Jones Street / San Francisco, California 94109 / 415-673-0939 / larsenpoma@aol.com / www.larsen-pomada.com

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

### **10 Ways to Test-Market Your Book to Guarantee Its Success**

You can guarantee the success of your book by test-marketing it. You can test-market:

- \* the idea for your book, when you have it and at the other steps in its development with your networks
- \* your talk about the book while building your platform, your continuing visibility
- \* your identity to ensure that everything you do and create is an expression of an identity that is authentic, salable, durable, flexible and ideally, original
- \* your literary and financial goals for your book and yourself, goals that motivate you to do your best every day
- \* your promotion plan by sharing it with your networks to ensure that it will enable you to achieve your goals for the book
- \* your book by having your readers grade what you write on a scale of one to ten, both as a reading experience and, if appropriate, its affect on their lives. The more specific you are about the feedback you want, the more helpful your readers will be.
- \* your ability to get endorsements from people whose names or affiliations will give your book credibility and salability with your potential readers
- \* your timeline for putting your promotion plan into action
- \* your plan on a small scale by picking a city to test-market your promotion plan to see if you can generate publicity and if the publicity generates sales. Another approach would be to promote just to the core market for your product or service.
- \* your plan on a larger scale by integrating what you learn from your first city into your promotion plan and then doing a regional campaign, and then a national one. You can ask members of your networks in other cities for publicity contacts and a place to lay your head.
- \* your commitment to your achieving your goals. All of these opportunities for test-marketing your book also test your commitment. The greater your goals, the more committed you have to be to do whatever it takes to reach them. 705

Michael Larsen-Elizabeth Pomada Literary Agents  
1029 Jones Street / San Francisco, California / 415- 673-0939  
www.larsen-pomada.com / larsenpoma@aol.com