



WEDNESDAY, January 9, 2013, 7pm

## ▶ How to Plan and Organize a Successful Book Launch Event

When a new book comes out, every author wants to make a splash. Preferably, a BIG splash. Presenting a live book launch event is one way to do that. But there are right ways and wrong ways to plan one. At the January 9 meeting, you'll learn the key components to planning a successful book event.

Nancy L. Baumann of Stonebrook Publishing will share her experience from a recent book launch event that drew more than 300 people and garnered media attention.

Here are a few things you will learn:

- Is a book launch ALWAYS the right thing to do? How do you decide?
- When should you start planning your book launch; i.e. should book content dovetail into your marketing plan?
- How to launch a book on a shoestring budget
- A simple 5-step plan for a successful book launch

Nancy Baumann is the owner of Stonebrook Publishing ([www.StonebrookPublishing.net](http://www.StonebrookPublishing.net)), an independent press dedicated to publishing high-impact nonfiction works that will either save lives, change lives, or have a positive impact on society.

## ▶ SLPA Meetings

SLPA meets on the second Wednesday of the month:

Brentwood Community Center  
2505 S. Brentwood Blvd., Room 101  
Brentwood, MO 63144

Doors open for networking at 6:30pm and meeting begins at 7pm.

Our regular meetings are free to members. Guests – \$10 at the door, cash or check only.

## ▶ Questions about SLPA?

### Contact Membership Chair:

Kim Wolterman, [membership@stlouispublishers.org](mailto:membership@stlouispublishers.org)

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**Members:** Get your article featured in the SLPA newsletter and posted on our blog. E-mail Jackie Trottmann at [communications@stlouispublishers.org](mailto:communications@stlouispublishers.org) for more information.

## ▶ Ten Fatal Mistakes That Amateur Authors Make

by Nancy L. Baumann

I own a professional publishing company and receive numerous submissions each year from writers who want to be published. I only work with nonfiction, so the manuscripts are usually from nonprofessional writers who have experienced or learned something that will either save lives, change lives, or have a positive impact on society. Because the writers are amateurs, their writing is usually substandard, and I rarely find a manuscript I can publish. Here are ten common mistakes that send their work to my recycling bin:



1. **They think they have a great idea.** Before you start writing, make sure you have an original idea. How do you do that? Research, research, research! Read other books in the same genre and on the same topic, and if you find that your message has already been delivered, then save yourself the time and aggravation of writing a book. Better yet, find a unique angle about that topic and write to that perspective.
2. **They love their own writing.** Seasoned authors know the value of outside criticism and will seek it at every opportunity. Amateur writers think that if they scored well in high school English, that they write well and don't need any feedback. That's a big mistake. You're probably not as good as you think you are, and neither am I. An overconfident attitude produces the kind of sloppy writing I toss aside.
3. **They think writing will be easy.** Writing isn't easy and it never has been. It's a hard discipline and very few can hack it. If it were easy, you would have already written your book! No one has ever accidentally written a book, and neither will you. You must create disciplined deadlines and be accountable to them. Write all the time; practice makes perfect. As Agatha Christie said, "Write even when you don't want to, don't much like what you are writing, and aren't writing particularly well."
4. **They don't know how to start a book.** Think about how you would start any multi-layered project, like building a house. You'd start with a plan wouldn't you? Your book project should also begin with a plan that you can execute, which will carry you from concept to cover. You must know what you're trying to accomplish in order to hit the goal. Begin by answering these foundational questions, then write a book that is targeted to your answers.

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- What purpose will the book serve? How is it different from other books published on this same subject? What is the main theme of your story? Secondary themes?
  - What new information or angle does your story present that hasn't already been heard?
  - Why will people want to read this story?
  - Who is your audience? Define your primary and secondary markets.
  - How will this work impact that audience?
  - What change do you want to invoke in the reader?
  - Why would other recommend this book to others?
  - Finish the sentence: "The purpose of this book is to \_\_\_\_\_."
  - Who would you like to endorse your book? Another expert in the field? A celebrity? Figure that out, then write the kind of book that person would endorse.
5. **They don't exhaust the language or expand their style.** Readers appreciate a varied vocabulary, but are impatient with the repetition of words, phrases, and sentence structure. Be sure that your writing is interesting, that there's a mixture of sentence styles, that you've employed active language, and that your verbs are sharp and distinctive. Language matters.
  6. **They don't understand grammar and punctuation.** You may not understand the rules of grammar and punctuation, but that doesn't mean that others don't. They do, and they'll spot your mistakes in a flash. There are strict rules for both grammar and punctuation, and you better sharpen those skills if you don't want to be dismissed.
  7. **They won't invest.** So maybe you're not good at grammar and punctuation? Hire an editor. Not sure if there are mistakes in your manuscript? Hire a proofreader. If you want to self-publish, then hire a professional cover designer and interior designer. Just because you can do everything yourself, that doesn't mean you should. This is a specialized, professional industry, and you should work with professionals.
  8. **They trust the opinions of their friends.** Friends and family are great, but they have limitations when it comes to offering you objective feedback. When it comes to writing a book, their opinion doesn't count. They are inexperienced, care too much about your feelings, and may only tell you what you want to hear. Seek an outside opinion from a professional editor who is trained to critique writing. But brace yourself—this could hurt! Be eager to make the necessary changes to meet professional standards.
  9. **They don't know how to end the book.** Your opening line is important, but the ending can make or break a book. How and where do you stop? Decide if you want to tie your story in a neat bow or allow it to continue. Write three or four endings, then choose the one that is most satisfying. Moreover, be sure to tie up loose strings on all subplots, and revisit those foundational questions to be sure you've accomplished your stated goals.
  10. **They are in a hurry.** Amateur authors often set unreasonable deadlines, then latch onto them for dear life. Come hell or high water, they're going to get their book finished by Christmas, or their birthday, or by any other manufactured deadline that has nothing to do with the book itself. Know this: by the time you're in the home stretch, you're going to be sick of your book. You may even hate it. But that doesn't mean that you push it out the door just to get rid of it. Pull back and be thorough with every edit,

with every research item, with every jot and tittle. Exercise a firm discipline and slow down, so you can produce professional and polished manuscript and become an author, not merely a writer.

*Nancy L. Baumann is the new Vice President of the SLPA, and you may reach her through these contact methods:*

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## ► News You Can Use

The following is a selection of articles, resources, and information to help you CREATE, PRODUCE, and MARKET your books.

### CREATING

#### How to Never Run Out of Ideas

January 3, 2013

*Brian Klems*

"Developing the habit of paying attention to the world around me, capturing the weird and wonderful ideas that I bump into, and then using them later as imagination fuel have changed my writing process completely."

Read more: <http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/how-to-never-run-out-of-ideas>

### PRODUCING

#### How to Impress an Editor

December 2012

*Lee Masterson*

"...a writer should be a professional business person, in the business of selling a product (your writing or your book) to a buyer (the publisher). Treat your words as though they are the foundation of your growing business enterprise, and you really will see the rewards."

Read more: <http://www.fictionfactor.com/articles/impress.html>

### MARKETING

#### How Authors and Writers Can Build an Email List for Marketing

September 25, 2012

*Joanna Penn*

"Imagine how powerful it is to have a list of 10,000 people and to send an email saying "My book is available now. Click here to buy". This is the basis of all the Amazon bestseller campaigns which generally use other people's lists."

Read more: <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/2010/09/25/how-authors-and-writers-can-build-an-email-list-for-marketing/>

## ► The SLPA Mission

The St. Louis Publishers Association empowers authors and publishers to create and market quality products and books. A nationally recognized organization, the SLPA provides educational, informational resources on publishing. Through its monthly meetings, the organization provides networking opportunities for people involved in all aspects of the publishing industry.

Visit the SLPA website at [www.stlouispublishers.org](http://www.stlouispublishers.org).