



News & Views

▶ Empowering authors and publishers to create and market books

JULY 2011

July 13 meeting at Brentwood Community Center Aiming for an agent/publisher: The query letter story

Your writing is you. You have put your heart and soul into it; days, weeks, years perhaps. Now you feel the time has arrived to take the leap into becoming published. You have heard that getting the attention of an agent or publisher can be a monumental challenge; a challenge so daunting that many writers stop at this point. The thought of crafting a one page perfect pitch letter is just too big to tackle and so your manuscript sits untouched, unread, and unpublished.

Writing a compelling query letter is a key step to attracting the attention of a mainstream publisher or agent. Join us as we discover the many formats used in crafting a query letter that tells and sells, regardless of the writing genre.



Our speaker: Jennifer Tobias is a published author, CTA (Certified Training Alliance) certified coach and business strategist. She is founder of STL Writers Connect, a dynamic educational and networking source for the serious minded writer looking to publish, promote, and profit in their work. Jennifer's life accomplishments include: writer/

publisher, professional speaker, radio program host, and CEO-owner of the Diabetes Wellness Center St. Louis. She has personally worked with multi-best-selling author Laurie Beth Jones. Jennifer recently relocated to St. Louis and works with clients in the areas of writing, business, and health. You can contact her by email at Jennifer@jennifertobias.com, or visit her website: www.jennifertobias.com.

**SLPA meets on the second Wednesday of the month at:
Brentwood Community Center
2505 S. Brentwood Boulevard, Brentwood, MO 63144**

Doors open for networking at 6:30 P.M. and meeting begins at 7:00 P.M. The formal meeting concludes at about 8:30 with networking continuing after the meeting.

Our regular meetings are free to members.
Guests – \$10.00 at the door, cash or check only.

Show me the blog St. Louis

by Kim Wolterman

On October 21-22, 2011 a very exciting event will be taking place in St. Louis at Hotel Lumiere. Show Me the Blog St. Louis is an opportunity for you to learn from the best social media and blogging experts in the area. I attended the first ever Show Me the Blog St. Louis event last fall, and can honestly say it was one of the most informative workshops I have ever attended. This year's conference is bigger and better, with day one offering information on social media and day two being dedicated to making a success of your blog. Visit www.showmetheblog.com for more information about the conference.

"Hell hath no fury like
a hustler with a literary agent."



— Frank Sinatra, American Actor and Singer, 1915-1998



We're on LinkedIn
and Facebook...
are you?



In This Issue

1. Aiming for an agent/publisher: The query letter story
1. Show me the blog St. Louis
2. Tough love: Things no one is brave enough to tell self-published authors by M.J. Rose and Amy Edelman
3. Speaking engagements: Be prepared by L. Diane Wolfe
3. Book learning
4. Now is the time to Facebook by Tony Eldridge
4. What's ahead?

Tough love: Things no one is brave enough to tell self-published authors

by M.J. Rose and Amy Edelman

Part 2 of a 3-part series

Part two in a series about what authors who are self-publishing need to know—not sugar coated and not exaggerated. (Part one: you need to write a great book and self publish for the right reasons, see *SLPA News & Views June 2011*.)

So what's next?

Damn it, learn the business.

Writing may be an art, but publishing is a business. And once your book is finished, you essentially need to trade your writer's identity for that of a "publisher."

In every business you need to spend money to make money. And since in your case it's your money at stake you need to spend it wisely and protect your investments.

And as a publisher there are certain things you're going to want to consider doing.

The most important is making sure potential readers know your book exists. No one can buy a book they have never heard of.

Traditional publishers achieve this with advertising and PR and co-op placement in stores. Of course different budgets for different books. But every book does get something—even if many believe its not enough.

Publishers typically make advanced reading copies and send them to a host of media contacts and reviewers. They buy ads online and off—from small blogs to big sites like *The New York Times* or *USA Today*. They also advertise at trade outlets like *Shelf-Awareness*, *Library Journal* and *Publisher's Weekly*—the very vehicles where their books are reviewed. While those ads don't guarantee reviews, publishers know if they don't support the outlets, the outlets can't afford to hire reviewers.

In addition, they use part of the marketing budget to place titles in the "Recommended" sections at the front of your local Barnes & Noble, in the form of co-op fees or pay for programs aimed at independent bookstores.

Nothing in the world happens for traditional publishers for free. And it won't for you either.

Give away promotional copies. Seek out affordable advertising and PR opportunities. Hire pros who you can afford. Get your book in front of important audiences like librarians, book clubs and book buyers.

Today there is a huge amount of information available to self-published authors but sadly, you can't just learn everything you

need to know from one self-published author's blog. What you can do is Google the subject. Join SheWrites.com and Backspace (BKSP.org). Subscribe to Shelf-Awareness.com and Publisher's Lunch (Publishersmarketplace.com).

Read the maverick's blogs—Seth Godin for one. Investigate the authors and books in your genre and find what writer's organizations they belong to. Even if you can't become a full member yet—join as an associate, go the conferences and talk to the other writers. Especially talk to the other writers. You'll find that the ones published by the big six in New York will have a lot to teach you—about your craft and the realities of the business.

Watch For Pickpockets

The minute you step out into the world—manuscript in hand—you stop being a writer and become a consumer to an entire industry that has sprung up in the last dozen years. Some of these companies are respectable and can offer you services that will help your chances of making your book a success. But many of them—from publicists who promise to get you on Oprah for \$1,000 to companies suggesting that a \$25,000 book trailer will get you on the *NYTimes* Bestseller list—are promising more than they can deliver.

If it was so easy there would be nothing but bestsellers in the world instead of less than 1 percent of all books hitting that status, so it's up to you to figure out who to hire and who to avoid.

How to do that?

IndieReader.com is in the process of compiling the first-ever graded list of services for self-published authors. Check there.

What else? Read the fine print of contracts, ask around and figure out which services are good and which are just designed to take your money. Find bestselling authors in your genre and ask them what worked for them.

Most important—before you hire anyone, ask for references and then contact them. Make sure not only that the company is legit, but also that they have a history of doing what they say they're going to do. If it sounds too good to be true—it's usually too good to be true. 

M.J. Rose is the internationally bestselling author of 11 traditionally published novels, one self-published novel and one self-published nonfiction book—*Buzz Your Book*. In 1999, Rose's novel, *Lip Service*, was the first self-published book (e and print) to be discovered online and bought by a traditional publishing house. Rose is also the founder of the first marketing company for authors—**AuthorBuzz.com**—and one of the founding board members of ITW (International Thriller Writers). She can be reached at AuthorBuzco@gmail.com.

Amy Edelman is the author of two traditionally published books and one indie that she sold to a traditional publisher. She has been a publicist for two decades and is the founder of **IndieReader.com**. She can be reached at Amy@indiereader.com

Speaking engagements: Be prepared

by L. Diane Wolfe, professional speaker and author



Speaking is the next step in the evolution of an author. From casual gatherings of writers and readers to professional meetings of organizations and businesses, opportunities will arise. While the atmosphere and settings may all be different, one thing remains the same—an author needs to prepare!

Here's a checklist for the next time you acquire a speaking gig:

- Market the event. Don't rely on your host to do it all. List the event in all media sources, do interviews, send out a media release, send out invitations—whatever it takes.
- Be sure you and the host are on the same page. Confirm the topic, the angle of your talk, and the length. If it's a paid speaking engagement, be sure you both agree on the fee and take an invoice.
- Know the group to whom you are speaking. Do some research. You'll feel more comfortable speaking if you know a little of the group's history and can relate on some level.
- Be sure your host can accommodate if you have a display or require technical equipment. Nothing worse than arriving with a PowerPoint presentation and no way to show it!
- Practice your talk. You'll be less nervous if you're familiar with your words. Remember to infuse enthusiasm into your talk.
- Confirm time and location. You don't want to arrive late. Or at the wrong venue. Or on the wrong date!
- Prepare your visuals and props. Remember to take bookmarks, business cards, books, and change for those who purchase a book. Don't forget your notes! Or a change of clothing if you tend to be klutzy.
- Arrive at least thirty minutes early. This gives you time to meet the host, set up your material, and test equipment. (Would you rather discover your PowerPoint doesn't work before or during your talk?)
- Smile! Whether you're socializing with attendees or sitting and gathering your thoughts, don't forget to smile. You can't be worried while smiling.

- During your talk, be prepared for anything! You might be asked to speak longer or shorter than originally planned. If you lose your place, just skip ahead and keep going. (After all, the audience doesn't have your notes—they won't know!) If someone interrupts, get back on track quickly. Be prepared for questions and only provide answers that feel comfortable.
- Finally, thank the host before leaving and send a written thank you card when you get home.

If you follow this checklist, you'll approach all speaking engagements with confidence. And you'll be prepared! 📖

Known as "Spunk On A Stick," L. Diane Wolfe is a member of the National Speakers Association. **"Overcoming Obstacles With SPUNK! The Keys to Leadership & Goal-Setting,"** ties all of her goal-setting and leadership seminar's information together into one complete, enthusiastic package. She also conducts seminars on book publishing and promoting, and assists writers through her author services. Her YA series, *The Circle of Friends*, features morally grounded, positive stories that appeal to both teens and concerned parents. Ten years associating with a motivation training system and experience as a foster parent gave her the in-depth knowledge of relationships, personality traits and success principles. Wolfe travels extensively for media interviews and speaking engagements, maintains a dozen websites & blogs, and contributes to several other sites and newsletters. www.spunkonastick.net, www.thecircleoffriends.net and www.circleoffriendsbooks.blogspot.com

Book learning

"What will you take away from tonight's meeting?"

Members and guests of SLPA were asked this question following the June presentation ***You can write, but can you communicate?*** Here's what a few folks had to say:



"This was a really great presentation and I thought the things he said not to do were particularly important."
—Richard Tichenor



"What I am taking away is how to capture and maintain an audience's attention, and understand that there has to be a factor of entertainment in speech writing. You need to connect with your audience emotionally."
—Carol Aft

Now is the time to Facebook

by Tony Eldridge, creator of *Marketing Tips for Authors*



There is not a shortage of tools authors can use to help promote their books and build a platform, but Facebook is one that we need to pay special attention to as we develop our book marketing plan. In fact, my big focus for 2011 is on developing my Facebook presence and make it more efficient. I do

have a Facebook presence, but I'm not utilizing it nearly as well as I could be. Here's what led me to the decision to focus on my Facebook presence in 2011:

- 1. Facebook is mainstream:** Facebook is no longer a niche platform for marketers. You'd be hard pressed to find a company who does not have a Facebook page or a consumer who does not have a Facebook presence. This tells me that jumping in and optimizing Facebook will more likely yield positive results than focusing on many other marketing activities.
- 2. Facebook is marketing savvy:** What I mean is that a professional or a company has easy to use tools to create a practical and productive presence on Facebook. You no longer have to be an IT professional to have a great looking page that positively impacts your marketing plan.
- 3. Facebook is very social:** Few platforms allow you to interact with your client or prospect base like Facebook. You can like and comment, you can invite people to events or invite them to sign up to a newsletter. You can interact with videos, pictures or timely text. Facebook makes it easy for you to engage in a rich, diverse conversation that will appeal to a broad base of followers.
- 4. Facebook is marketable:** You can tell people about your Facebook page on your blog with widgets and gadgets. You can link to your Facebook page from your e-mail or your newsletter. No matter what your communication medium is, you'll find a ready-made app to use that will make it easy for your followers to connect with you on Facebook.
- 5. Facebook is here to stay:** I recently read that Facebook is bigger than the biggest media companies. It has no problem laying its hands on billions of dollars when needed. It has the commitment to live and grow which means that it should continue to make it easy for you to market your book. Whether you want to travel the free road or dip your toes into paid advertisements, you will have no shortage of ways you can use Facebook to get your message out.

Because all of this is true about Facebook, authors have an abundance of resources to help them use Facebook to their potential. Companies continue to create tools to help you use

Facebook better. People make videos to walk you through the steps you need to go through to adapt Facebook to your marketing plans. Authors write "how-to" books, e-books, and reports to guide you down the path to better book marketing.

If you have not decided to jump into Facebook yet, then take comfort that you are living in a great time. Whether it's resources like BookBuzzr that bring together experts to help you improve your Facebook presence or the plethora of resources you can find with a simple Google search, you'll quickly find people to hold your hand and help you create a productive Facebook presence.

In my humble opinion, Facebook is one of those platforms that has proven its value. So whether you are contemplating your first step into the Facebook world or whether you are like me and are looking to take your Facebook presence to a whole new, exciting level, listen to the experts that BookBuzzr has brought together for you this month. They will help you develop the Facebook presence that can really help get your book noticed.

Tony Eldridge is the author of the action/adventure novel, *The Samson Effect*, that Clive Cussler calls a "first rate thriller brimming with intrigue and adventure." He also launched his first non-fiction title, *Conducting Effective Twitter Contests*. He shares his book marketing tips with fellow authors through his blog, <http://blog.marketingtipsforauthors.com/> and through his free video marketing tips for authors newsletter.

What's ahead?

August 10 – field trip: to be announced soon!*

Each August we typically conduct our monthly meeting onsite at a local company to provide our members and guests the opportunity to see firsthand some aspect of the publishing industry. Whether it be printing, graphic design, marketing, distributing, independent or large network booksellers, we get a better understanding of how a book goes from design to a finished product. The tour is followed by dinner and discussion. **Meeting topics are subject to change.**

***Check our home page and blog for up-to-date information.** 

Questions about SLPA?

Contact **Membership Chairman:**
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