Getting to Yes
By Jody Feldman

writing from here (imagine me holding my hand above my eyebrows) to here (imagine me moving it just over my head), it will make all the difference between no thanks and yes please. The last push of that learning curve is like losing the last three nagging pounds of a diet.

How did I navigate those final few inches? I wish I could offer step-by-step, no-fail instructions. I can tell you this: from working as a mentor to other writers and participating in critique groups over the years, I’ve found the process is as unique as the works we create. No help at all, right? Essentially, though, it means taking a hard look at what we’ve been doing—right and not so right. For me, that came through workshops, writing retreats, and also with the no-cost approach of reading like a writer. I picked up books in my preferred lane, those that had succeeded either monetarily, critically, or both. These were books I’d already read, so I wouldn’t get lost in their stories. I looked at the pacing, chapter breaks, amount of detail, dialogue, and how the author developed the characters, main through tertiary. Yes, all those things.

Then I asked myself: Could readers find the same professional qualities in my books? Sometimes the answer was positive. My pacing was there. My chapters, for the most part, ended with cliffhangers. My backstories had an abundance of colorful details. The overall plot held. But the emotional arcs? The thematic choices? The superfluous dialogue? I had room to grow.

To do that included getting qualified critique partners on board to tell me when I’d become so comfortable with the vision inside my head, that the qualities required to propel my writing from there to here were not fully realized on the page. It’s with this kind of specific feedback that you’ll understand your own mendable shortcomings. Then it’s up to you to get out of your own way to write the book, the poem, the story, the essay that makes someone say YES. Just don’t swerve off the highway in the driving rain.

Jody Feldman, award-winning author of The Gollywhopper Games series and The Seventh Level, is the featured speaker for our February 12 meeting. Visit her at jodyfeldman.com, or follow her on Twitter and Instagram @jodyfeldman

Tell Us What You Want to Know!

Last month we handed out comment sheets for you to share your thoughts and ask questions. You’ll have another opportunity to submit them again during our February 12 meeting. We’ll feature your responses during “Your SLPA: Members Get More!” on March 11. Board members will share the benefits of annual membership, including listing books and related businesses onto the website, event archives, networking, services from vendor partners, and more. We’ll use your comments as a guide to answer questions.

We want to hear from you, so tell us: what you enjoyed, topics you’d like to see covered this year, and how we can help you accomplish your goals as an author and self-publisher. Whether you’ve been a member for years, recently joined, or just heard about the SLPA today, don’t miss this opportunity to have your questions answered. Come find out what’s available to help you reach your goals!
Special thanks to Fred Miller of NO SWEAT! Public Speaking for his excellent presentation. It was definitely a popular topic as the room quickly filled to capacity, even after we set out extra chairs. He showed how to maximize speaking, writing, and promotion through his Three-Legged EXPERT Stool, and also reviewed proven methods of engagement when telling others about your book. Visit Fred at nosweatpublicspeaking.com.

First Things First

Begin with your platform. Use your book as the foundation. Your Amazon author’s page is a valuable resource, take full advantage (update posts, seek reviews, share video clips). Don’t have a completed book yet? Use your blog posts, website, social media and email lists to get the word out and make connections.

Writing

Content is King.
Build from what you already have or start with one thing and continually expand from there.

Speaking

Reach out to local news outlets on topics related to your book and offer to give a brief interview. Attend local trade associations, chambers of commerce and toastmaster’s groups. It’s a great way to gain exposure, plus you can practice honing the “elevator pitch” for your book.

Marketing

Social media is an effective way to spread the word about your book and upcoming events, while connecting to fans and future supporters. You don’t need to be active on every service available. Start with one or two and maintain a regular presence. Whichever ones you choose, be sure to publicize each of your events across all your platforms, before and after the event (and post plenty of pictures).

NOTICE: Starting this month, all member payments submitted on our website (annual dues, special events, etc.) will process through AffiniPay instead of PayPal. You will incur no additional fees because of this switch. The change is required by our hosting service, Wild Apricot. We appreciate your support.