

Positive Publishing Perspectives

Your Guide to Getting the Most Out of Your Publishing Business

©2007 Bards and Sages

Volume I, Issue I

Change Your Vocabulary, Change Your Reality

Words have power. As writers, we instinctively know this. That is one of the reasons why we write. But sometimes we lose track of just how much of an impact our word choice has on our perception of both others and ourselves.

Those who don't appreciate the importance of a rich language often claim that those who do are elitists or somehow "holding down" others. This is shortsightedness on the part of those professing it. It is not elitist to use the right word at the right time for the right effect. It is common sense and good communication.

In the book [1984](#), George Orwell presents a world where language is constantly reduced to the point of stagnating the ability to think. For those who think a solid vocabulary is unnecessary or elitist, I strongly recommend that you read this book.

Words exist to create clear images or provoke ideas in the mind. Using the right phrase or word at the right time allows you to clearly project your ideas to the listener or reader. It is not the job of the listener or reader to have to figure out what you are trying to say. It is your job to insure that you communicate your point clearly.

So what does all this have to do with marketing your book? Plenty. Using the right words to present yourself to the public allows you to shape the image you project. Remember, you are about to ask them to spend \$10, \$20, or more on YOUR BOOK.

Some would argue that so long as you have a good story, readers should not be "snobby" and they

should give you a chance. In truth, the snobbery comes from the writer who thinks she is so special, so brilliant, that readers should just fork over their money without her having to prove she is worth it.

Publishing is not a charity. Nobody owes you anything. You are competing with thousands of other writers, all with the same dream of seeing their works in print and having them read by the masses.

As Tyler Durden said in [Fight Club](#), "You are not a beautiful or unique snowflake."

So it's time to come down off the high horse and acknowledge your responsibility as a publisher. You have to prove that your products are worthwhile. You have to give the reader a reason to take a chance on you. You have to position yourself so that you leave a positive impact on the readers in order to earn their trust.

Support Bards and Sages

We hope you enjoy this free publication. Feel free to distribute copies of this publication to others that you believe would be interested. We also invite you to use the articles in this publication, in their entirety, in your own newsletters, websites, or periodicals. The only requirements are that it cannot be a for-profit publication, and you must include ©2007 Bards and Sages, used with permission along with a link to our site (<http://www.bardsandsages.com>) where the article appears.

You can further support Bards and Sages by making your online purchase through our [Amazon aStore](#).

(Self) Image Is Everything

Some maintain that appearances aren't everything. Often, people point to contrived situations where the first impression of a person turned out to be false. "People shouldn't have to pretend to be something they are not!" The statement is normally made whenever someone says something about appearing professional.

Think about that for a second. "People shouldn't have to pretend to be something they are not." The statement implies that the person does not know how to be professional. It implies that it is acceptable to be sub-par, amateurish, and sloppy. In short, the statement implies a poor self-image. The person proclaiming it often feels attacked and unable to live up to some standard. And so the person lashes out at the ones pointed out the failure they see in themselves.

Someone once responded snidely with the statement "It looks amateur because I AM an amateur." As if somehow not having the basic knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and style was some perverse badge of honor to be flaunted before the elitist (there's that word again) snobs trying to hold him back. But the comment also says something else. It says that the person sees himself as an amateur, and doesn't believe he CAN perform on a professional level.

There is nothing wrong with being an amateur. Everyone starts somewhere. But when you flaunt that status in front of others who offer advice or point out problems with your work, what you are in fact saying is that you don't believe you can get better, nor do you care to try.

So presenting a positive, professional image is not about pretending to be something you aren't. It's about demonstrating an awareness of your own potential. It is about setting a goal, and then training your mind to reach for it.

A successful businessperson I know has a mantra, "fake it until you make it." He doesn't mean that you should lie or pretend to be something you aren't. He means that if you want to be successful, you need to act like you are successful in the here and now. If you want people to take you seriously as a writer, you need to act as if you *are* serious about being a writer. If you want people to look at your book as if it has just as much value as a traditionally published book, you have to present your book as if it has just as much value as a traditionally published book.

Contradictions

"Wait a minute. One minute you're telling me I am not a unique snowflake, and the next you are telling me I should act like one?"

Exactly.

There is nothing unique, exciting, or different about yet another self-published writer uploading a document, slapping a generic cover on it, and calling it a book. It is not newsworthy. It does not deserve of anyone's attention in and of itself. There is nothing hard about it. A ten year old with a cable connection can do it. Considering the high computer literacy among modern ten year olds, the ten year old might be more efficient at it.

But there *is* something unique about an individual launching his own business to follow his dreams. There is something unique about a person who can translate his life experiences, knowledge, and skills into a finished work to help or entertain others.

See the difference?

What to Say, and When to Say It

You just finished your book. You have final copies in your grubby little hands. You want to share them with others (and hopefully sell them). But what do you say?

"Hey, I just self-published my book all by myself using this free service that let's anyone publish. Wanna buy one?"

The above sounds harmless. But do you want to know what the listener actually heard?

"Hey, I can't find a real publisher. So I paid somebody to print these books for me. Wanna buy one?"

So if you aren't supposed to just blurt out that you self-published, what are you suppose to say?

Talk Like A Publisher

Catalog: A body of published materials available from a publisher.

Independent Publisher: a person or collective of individuals dedicated to offering readers quality publications without working under the confines of traditional publishing houses.

Galley (or Galley Proof): A finished version of a publication used to check for typos or errors before a final printing is ordered. Can be bound or unbound.

Print on demand (POD): A method of producing publications that relies of digital imagery instead of offset presses. The process allows independent publishers to produce professional quality publications without the need to maintain an inventory or incur warehousing expenses.

Publishing Partner: A service-based company that facilitates the production of a publisher's print and/or digital materials and supports distribution efforts.

Example One: What Not to Say:

"Jane, I heard you just published a book! Congratulations! What's your book about?"

"It's a murder mystery set in the Victorian Era."

"That's great, Jane! I'm so excited for you. Who's the publisher?"

"Oh, I self-published it with lulu.com."

"Self-published? Oh, you don't have a regular publisher?"

"Those people don't publish new writers. They only want bestsellers."

" Oh. I see. Wasn't that expensive?"

"No! It didn't cost me anything! I just uploaded my file and they do all the rest!"

"Hmm, is it available in regular stores?"

"No. Those people won't stock self-published books because they are all tied in with the big publishers to keep new writers out of the business. But you can buy it directly from Lulu! Do you want to get one?"

"Um, no thanks, Jane. I don't have any money right now. But good luck with that!"

Does the above sound a little familiar? Maybe not the exact conversation, but have you ever found yourself "defending" your decision to self publish instead of promoting your book? The reason is that you weren't talking like a publisher. Instead, you were talking like someone who self-published.

"But I AM self-published," you say. If you are going to insist on calling yourself self-published, you just as well make copies at the local Kinko's™, put them in a binder, and try to sell them. Because that is what people are going to think you did.

Example Two: How to Say It:

“Jane, I heard you just published a book! Congratulations! What’s your book about?”

“It’s a murder mystery set in the Victorian Era.”

“That’s great, Jane! I’m so excited for you. Who’s the publisher?”

“Actually, I started my own independent publishing company. I’m using my book as the premiere title.”

“Wait, you’re a publisher now? How did you manage that?”

“Well, I found a publishing partner to handle my printing and distribution. It’s called Lulu.com. Instead of using old-fashion offset presses, they use print on demand digital technology. So I don’t have to worry about warehousing or inventory issues.”

“So will your book be available in stores?”

“I’m still working on developing distribution channels. For now I’ve made the book available exclusively on my own online storefront.”

“So I could go to your store and get a copy of the book?”

“Sure! I happen to have a galley proof with me if you wanted to take a look. I’d be happy to talk about the book with you.”

By changing your language, you change the listener’s perspective. The circumstances and the facts are the same. But by talking like a publisher, the listener doesn’t develop the impression that you spent all day Saturday at the Staples™ Copy Center.

“Typo” Free Reviews

Ever notice how reviewers never mention typos and slight grammar errors in traditionally published books, but flag them with bright red ink in self-published titles? No, it is not part of some grand conspiracy. Traditional publishers often have just as many typos as independent publishers. The difference is that they admit them going into the review.

Traditional publishers send out review copies before the book has been finalized for publication. Instead of finished books, they send out a galley, or galley proof. Reviewers know that a galley is rarely the finished document, and therefore ignore typos and slight grammar errors. They assume these things will not be in the finished book, and therefore don’t feel the need to discuss them.

So when sending out a book to a reviewer, make sure to inform them that you are sending out a Galley. That way, they generally won’t feel obligated to mention any minor typographical or grammar errors in your work.

Your Publisher Identity

Your friend invites you to a game of basketball. You throw on your sweatpants and head over. An hour later, you are drenched in sweat. Your cell phone rings, and your wife tells you that the job you really wanted just called and they want you to come in for an interview. Do you:

- A. Tell your wife to let them know you’ll be right over, and drive directly from your basketball game to the corporate offices?
- B. Set up a later time for the interview so you can shower, shave, and change?

We don’t think twice about dressing up for an interview. It’s common sense.

You are having legal problems, and need to talk to an attorney for help. You drive to the location to find the attorney’s office is a row house in a bad part of town. When you go inside, the secretary has a pierced lip, a tattoo of a teardrop next to her eye, and a tank top. The attorney greets you in a pair of dirty blue jeans and a torn t-shirt. You:

- A. Sit down and trust this person to help you out of your legal troubles.
- B. Leave and go find another attorney.

We expect a person’s business identity to be different from his personal identity. This is not being judgmental. Your ability to present yourself in a positive light points to your ability to actually do what you say you are going to do. Customers have a right to expect a certain level of commitment from someone asking them to spend money. And that commitment comes in the form of presenting a positive image.

By pretending that your image is not important, or by complaining that people should not judge you, you are basically saying you really don’t care about your readers. You are placing your own wants above those of the reader. And this breeds mistrust. You are saying, “You should spend your hard earned money because I want you to do it, and I don’t care what you think about me.”

Your Publisher Identity is the face you present to the reader. It is how you say, “I care about your opinion, and I want you to enjoy my work.”

How do you create a publisher identity?

1. Select a Name. It can be Jane Doe Services. It doesn’t have to be complicated. But make sure it is something you can live with, and that it is easy to remember. We won’t discuss actual things like incorporation and such.

You are only creating a Doing Business As (DBA) identity.

2. Get a domain. Free sites are all well and good. But they are also amateurish, and really there is no reason for them. Who wants to make their customers type in <http://freesiteservice.com/m/s/coding/yoursitename/>? If they can't easily remember it, chances are they won't visit it. Your domain name should be the name of your DBA, so that when people enter the name in a search engine, your site will quickly appear.
3. Be consistent. Customers remember you by repetition, not by constantly changing your looks. Keep a uniform appearance between your site, stationary, and storefronts when possible. Consistency helps build identity.
4. Talk in terms of the DBA name, not yours. When sending out press releases or media kits, your publisher identity, not your personal identity, should be identified as the sender. Author Jane Doe doesn't announce anything. *Jane Doe Services* announces a new book.

But I Only Have One Book!

It may seem a bit of hubris to promote yourself as a publisher when you only have one title, and you wrote that title. But all publishers have to start somewhere, and this is where you are starting.

Besides, you ARE going to publish more books, right? You aren't going to stop writing now that you finished your first book, are you? Creating a publisher identity will put a fire under your butt, because you are going to want to fill up your catalog with more books.

Low Cost Advertising

Few independent publishers can afford to run ads in the New York Times. They can't afford to have displays created and set up in every Barnes and Noble across the country. They can't afford to attend book fairs. So how do you promote your book on a shoestring budget?

1. Get reviews: Even a bad review will do more for you than a banner ad. Many folks tend to block out banners and ads anymore. But people read book reviews. For the cost of a copy of your book and postage, your book will be listed on a book review website for months...if not years. Not sure how to find a reviewer? [We have a list of reviewers interested in POD/Self-published titles.](#)
2. Giveaways: Many book sites build their mailing lists by doing book giveaways. How this works is that you pledge two or three copies of your book for the drawing. The website then promotes the drawing, giving away copies of the book to random winners who performed some task (usually signing up for a newsletter.) You then mail out the books. Again, you get a month or more of front-page publicity for the cost of two or three print copies and postage.
3. Write informational press releases. Have you ever read an article such as "Ten Steps to Weight Loss," or "Five Signs Your Spouse is Cheating"? Few of these types of articles are actually written by staff writers or freelancers. Instead, they are informational press releases sent out by companies or individuals.

For example, I once wrote an informational release on

the importance of [following publisher guidelines](#).

Throughout the release, I included examples of situations where writers disqualified themselves from consideration by not following directions. It was distributed using Prweb.com for only \$30. The release was picked up by dozens of writer websites and printed verbatim. The articles are still on most of those sites over a year later, and still being read.

4. Door Prizes: Just because you can't attend every book fair, doesn't mean your books can't. Many book fairs and conventions have silent auctions and raffles. Donating free books for these activities gets your book in front of people.

The key is to support the smaller, regional fairs and conventions that are often ignored by the big presses. \$25-50 in free books to a small convention can get you listed as a sponsor on their website and often include free ad space in their programs. In fact, many sell ad space in exchange for merchandise, using the retail price as the method of calculation. So if an ad costs \$50, it may only cost you \$20 depending on your printing costs.

5. Community involvement: there is a difference between spamming a forum with "BUY MY BOOK" posts and being an active member of the community. Add a link to your book in your signature, and proceed to be involved in your particular online community. People like to learn about the folks they interact with online, and will follow links by those people they see as "real" people.