




the GOOD AUTHOR

MBA STARTER KIT

an insider's guide to
long-term publishing success:
MINDSET. BRAND. ATTITUDE.

created by
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FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS, I've been a book publicist. I've worked with #1 *New York Times* bestselling authors, first-time authors, aspiring authors, and everything in between. I've booked authors on some of the most popular media outlets in the U.S., including Oprah's *Super Soul Sunday*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *The New York Times*, *NPR*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, *CNN*, *AARP Magazine*, *Reader's Digest*, etc. My primary experience has been with nonfiction authors in the self-help space, which includes mind/body/spirit, health and wellness, business, psychology, and some memoirs. Of the hundreds of authors I've worked with, I've noticed several things that set apart those who are just "releasing a book" from those actually building careers as authors.

If you're reading this, it's likely that you've wondered why it seems like for some authors, things come so easily. They write a new book, land on all the national TV shows and glossy magazines, and sit on the bestsellers' lists for weeks, months, or even years. Meanwhile, you feel like the C-list author waiting in line for the most exclusive club, watching all the popular authors skip past the bouncer and enter through a side door to success. They're inside dancing and celebrating, while you're out there pounding the pavement, knocking on doors, and still feeling like an outsider at the year's biggest party.

Or, maybe you're new to this whole publishing game and you want to put your best foot forward as you go out there with your new baby—your first book. Either way, you're in the right place.

I'm here to tell you that there are many secrets in publishing, and many people who don't want to give away the secret sauce. But I believe in abundance—meaning that there's more than enough attention to go around! In this guide, I'm going to teach you the basic foundational tools you need to become *The Good Author*—that is, one who's set up for a *career* as an author. Why am I doing this, you might ask? Well, because it makes publishing professionals' jobs easier when an author comes to the table prepared, educated in the process, and with the right goals in mind.

Authors normally have to spend years struggling and learning by trial and error before they learn the tools of this guide. I'm giving you a fast pass to the front of the line so we can all get to the fun part: putting great work out into the world.

Let's get started ...

The Good Author MBA = MINDSET. BRAND. ATTITUDE.

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PART 1

THE GOOD AUTHOR MBA: **M**indset

“All overnight success takes about 10 years.”

— Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon

Patience

THE GOOD AUTHOR TAKES THE LONG VIEW— THE *VERY* LONG VIEW.

Publishing a book isn't something that happens overnight—or at least it shouldn't be. It's more like one marathon after another. Writing a book is just the start (and that could take years), then there's producing the book (editing, design, print, distribution, marketing, and promoting, and of course, selling). You might finish your manuscript and feel like you want to sleep for a month; then someone from the next phase (editing or design) grabs you by the shoulders and escorts you to the front of *their* line. Becoming an author is an exhausting accomplishment not meant for the weak. It will likely test you in many ways, but hopefully it will be one of the most rewarding steps in your career. Just brace yourself for the long haul!

10 YEARS IS A THEME

Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, once said, "All overnight success takes about 10 years." And my former publishing-company boss also told new authors, "It takes 10 years to become an overnight success." (That scared some, but was a relief to others.)

More often than not, new authors see the success of others who are in the limelight and only know about what they've done recently to get media attention. They don't realize the

blood, sweat, and tears that likely went into that moment in the spotlight. When you look a little deeper, you'll find that they've been working toward that moment for years—often 10—by serving their audiences. Unless you've survived some miraculous life-altering event (like Immaculée Ilibagiza, who survived the Rwandan Genocide and wrote the book *Left to Tell*, which quickly became a *New York Times* bestseller); or unless you're already a celebrity (which likely took at least 10 years to become), get yourself into the right mindset by taking the long view when it comes to releasing a book. Look at a decade broken down into smaller increments of years, not months or weeks.



BEHIND THE BESTSELLER TRUTH

I was fortunate enough to work with Dr. Wayne Dyer, referred to as “The Godfather of Motivation” and one of the bestselling authors of all time with an estimated 100 million copies sold of just his first book, *Your Erroneous Zones*. People often only saw the results of his success, once he was a regular guest on Oprah, Ellen, PBS, and so on. What they didn't realize is the grassroots approach he took to his author career, relentlessly pursuing bookstore appearances, group lectures, and media appearances to anyone who'd listen; selling books out of the back of his station wagon; and making bestseller lists before the publishing industry even took notice.



BEHIND THE BESTSELLER TRUTH

Author Louise Hay wrote and self-published her first book, *Heal Your Body*, in 1977. Her famous “Hayrides,” which were support groups for gay men in Los Angeles that society had outcast during the AIDS pandemic, started with six men in her living

room and grew to thousands within a year. Ten years later, she started her own publishing company, Hay House, at the age of 55 as a way to publish her second book, *You Can Heal Your Life*. After an appearance on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, her book became a *New York Times* bestseller, and has remained one of the bestselling books of all time. In fact, the publication of *You Can Heal Your Life* is considered the beginning of the self-help movement.

THE GOOD AUTHOR TAKEAWAY

The Good Author looks at their book's publication date as an important milestone for many reasons: it's a "launch date," a point of liftoff and the focus of tons of preparation, but it's only the beginning of an author's journey that could last for many, many more years, or even a lifetime. Maintain a mindset focused on the long game, and you'll begin to measure success in milestones, not moments.

Vision

THE GOOD AUTHOR DREAMS BIG
BUT UNDERSTANDS THAT BIG DREAMS ARE
MADE UP OF A MILLION SMALL STEPS.

BEING AUTHENTIC

Maria Popova, is the editor of *The Marginalian*, a wildly popular newsletter that started as an email to seven friends—it is now read by millions and included in the Library of Congress permanent web archive. After 13 years of dedicating her life to some of the world’s greatest philosophical teachings, she documented her 13 life learnings, one of which is “Do nothing for prestige or status or money or approval alone.” She quotes Paul Graham who observed, “prestige is like a powerful magnet that warps even your beliefs about what you enjoy. It causes you to work not on what you like, but what you’d like to like.”

The Good Author seeks to serve their audience first and foremost. They use publicity to reach more of their audience, not for fame or prestige alone. It’s okay to dream big, but keep in mind your mission and your purpose in terms of who you’re helping – that’s what will keep you motivated and give you a sense of deeper meaning. It’s called Authenticity, and it makes you likable.

DEFINING YOUR VISION

Create a very clear picture in your mind of where you see yourself as an author. Let me save you the time of imagining that you’re sitting across from Oprah, crying your heart out

and becoming an instant success—believe me, you and every other author has this vision, and that’s okay! It’s a great vision, but what is your plan for how to get there? Will you be a speaker? Will you become a regular media expert on your topic of expertise? Will you be on local TV? What is your other dream media outlet? Maybe it’s NPR or MSNBC. There are many paths you can take to get to the national media outlet of your dreams, but the most important thing to keep in mind during your journey is: Who am I helping?

YOUR VISION STATEMENT SHOULD SOUND SOMETHING LIKE THIS

“I want to help all the struggling working moms out there transform their fears into a life of joy and satisfaction. I plan on reaching them in many different ways: speaking at events, workshops, and online support groups; by expanding my email list; and by giving online courses. The media who will take notice are outlets like *Working Mother* and *Entrepreneur*, and when the time is right, the *Today* show. The more women I help, the more the media will have to talk about it.”

A MILLION SMALL STEPS

Remember, in the beginning, no media outlet is too small. Meet your audience where *they* are. If that’s on a podcast with 100 listeners targeting women, talk to them. Get them to become believers in your work. If you do 10 targeted podcasts like that,

you'll reach 1,000 potential followers. Positioning yourself as a go-to expert takes time and practice. When you're ready to approach a national outlet, and when you've built a body of work and media experience and want to pitch Oprah, you'll have tons of history and practice as an interviewee. You'll be a guest who's interesting, dynamic, engaging, and one who knows how to steer the conversation where you want it to go.

Want to be a guest on a specific media outlet? Watch, read, or listen to that program and see who their guests are. Pay attention to their guests' histories, how long they've been doing interviews and at what level, and how they engage with the host. Also, what kind of credentials do they have behind their name? If you're listening to NPR, you'll notice that the experts they often feature have a PhD, MBA, or MD after their name. Be realistic and know what that outlet looks for in terms of expertise. This is not to say you don't have a chance unless you're a doctor, but if you're not, you better have a lot of supporting evidence that your experience makes up for your lack of credentials, and you better have a history of interviews the producer can see to prove it.

THE GOOD AUTHOR TAKEAWAY

Serve your people, build your tribe, and meet them where they are. As your audience grows, and as your media experience grows, you'll attract bigger media outlets. Just keep doing the work, and the media attention will come as a result. It's a process; and it takes time, sustained effort, and

relentless tenacity to get yourself out there. Envision yourself in your dream media outlet, but don't underestimate the legwork it will take to get there. Be a good partner with the media by being a gracious guest who provides excellent content to their audience, and they'll invite you back. Media begets more media. Just keep going.



BEHIND THE BESTSELLER TRUTH

In the same week I would book Wayne Dyer on *Good Morning America*, I'd also book him on a local TV show and five local radio shows in whatever city he was currently traveling through. If someone had a decent-size audience that was engaged and interested, and he had the time, he'd talk to them—no matter how big of a name he became. He knew that all it takes is one person listening to make a BIG impact.

THE GOOD AUTHOR TAKEAWAY

I can't tell you the number of times I've had an author benefit from just one person who saw them at some small event, or heard them on some small podcast, or read their interview in some publication while sitting on the train during a long commute. That one person turned out to be a producer for the *Today* show, a writer for the *New York Times*, or an HR manager at LinkedIn who invited that author to be a speaker. Publicity is about planting a million seeds and not knowing exactly which one will sprout into something incredible.

Audience Awareness

Let's talk for a moment about your target audience. If you say "women" or "It's really for everyone," you just told me that "it's for no one." It is critically important that you define your target audience BEFORE and WHILE you're writing your book—this will determine everything that is to follow, including cover design, website presence, social media, marketing, and PR. Many of the greatest authors of all time (e.g., John Steinbeck, Kurt Vonnegut, and Stephen King) all talked about creating the vision of a single reader in their minds—even going so far as to give that person a name and identity, referring to them throughout the publishing process. For example, "My reader is a young, educated female entrepreneur named Elle, struggling to grow her business." When you get stuck on something, visualize your reader and take a moment to ask, "What would Elle think about this?"

Having a crystal-clear picture of your audience ahead of time—their needs, wants, pain points, and problems that you can solve—is a critically important step. Of course, just because you define it doesn't mean you'll reach it, but how can you aim if you don't even have a target?

When it comes time to promote your book, hopefully through many interviews, you'll still have the single reader in mind and talk to that one person. Want to know how to paralyze a person without ever touching them? Sit them down in front of a large audience or a single TV camera. Nothing will stop you faster than picturing a big wide world staring at you—just focus on your one single reader, "Elle."



Forget your generalized audience. In the first place, the nameless, faceless audience will scare you to death and in the second place, unlike the theater, it doesn't exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person—a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.

— JOHN STEINBECK



PART 2

THE GOOD AUTHOR MBA: **Brand**

“A brand is not a logo or a four-letter word.”

— Carina Sammartino

“Brand” can be a dreaded word among authors. Many don’t like to think of themselves as a brand. They want to be creative, a writer, some esoteric Hunter S. Thompson type who locks themselves away and just writes into the ether without ever having to think about their “brand.” Reality check: it’s not 1982 when authors got to write a book and go on glamorous, all-expenses-paid book tours without anything like a website or social media to pay attention to. Is that a bad thing? Depends who you ask.

The reality is, publishing and becoming an author has never been more accessible. But the ones who do it well, The Good Authors, are the ones who build a clean, concise brand identity that is consistent across all marketing channels—this lays the foundation for a sustainable author platform set up for longevity.

From a publicist’s and publisher’s point of view, a brand is a connection to your target audience—whom you should be able to describe in one sentence. This makes it very easy for your readers to know and identify you, and therefore remember you.

Brand Identity

LOGO, FONTS, COLORS, AND A CONSISTENT
AESTHETIC ACROSS ALL CHANNELS

What do you think of when you think of Apple computers? Probably their logo, but also the modern, sleek look of their stores, their packaging, their website, and their ads. That’s

because wherever you see Apple, it has a consistent brand. Your brand includes a logo if you have one, as well as colors, photos, and typography. Your brand should be visible across your photos, your book cover, your website, and your social media (including your YouTube channel). With simple tools like **Canva**, it's easier than ever to design very professional-looking graphics with almost no tech experience. Spend the time to create a consistent look and feel across all your online channels, and your Good Author status will catapult you to the next level!

Professional Bio

Your bio should read like a short introduction to your life's work and your most recent work—all in a few sentences. Include only the biggest, most important information, like your current profession, business, title of your current book, degrees if they're from a well-known institution, prominent media if you've been featured in something national, places where you've spoken that are worth mentioning (like Apple, Amazon, Omega, TedX, etc.), and of course, your website. You should have a few versions of your bio: very short (50 words), short (150 words), and long (up to 500 words). For anything longer, post a link on the bio page of your website to a PDF download of your CV.

Professional Headshots

Although I'm sure your friend or your boyfriend's sister is a fantastic, budding photographer, you should really consider hiring a professional photographer to take your headshots; and this includes several different poses, at least two different color choices for your clothing, and some sitting and standing headshots and full-length poses. It might seem like you'll never need this many photos of yourself, but once you're a regular in the media, you'll want to have multiple options available to editors and producers so they can choose what fits their format best. You also want to have various shots available for your social media, if you have it.

GOOD AUTHOR PRO TIP

I promise, the best investment you can make for your new brand and your new headshots is professional hair and makeup. Again, this isn't something that your friend who happens to be really good at makeup can do. The quality of cameras today picks up EVERYTHING in our skin. You want someone who has experience with studio photography, who knows how to hide our tired, dark eye circles, make our hair look good from every angle, and make us appear to look like we're not mentally and emotionally exhausted from our daily lives. If you're a supermodel with stunning natural beauty, or your brand calls for a really natural "I'm a nature activist" look, or if you're already a bestselling author many times over with a die-hard loyal audience of millions, do whatever you want. Until then, pay the extra money it costs for professional hair and makeup.

Media Personality

(i.e. Media Training)

Do you know what producers look for when they're considering potential guests? Do you know how to turn an awkward and uncomfortable question into an opportunity to shine? Do you know how to get your message across, clearly and concisely, in 15 seconds? Even the best speakers and workshop hosts can freeze in front of a camera! It's not easy, and for most people, it is a learned skill that takes practice. There are many resources for media training: working with a professional or learning from some DIY courses. But don't wait until you can afford a professional trainer—get started right away by watching the pros. See how some of your favorite authors engage with hosts, how they field questions, and how they make sure to get their points across. That is, observe their “media personality.”

A professional media trainer will take you through many trial runs in front of a camera, coaching you and giving you feedback along the way. They will teach you how to be composed, dynamic, and engaging; and how to become a guest that producers LOVE! Until you're ready to make the investment in training, you can do some practice runs on your own via Zoom with a friend; then go back and watch the recording.

Pay attention to the following: What are you doing with your hands? Are you looking into the camera or at the host? Do you use a lot of filler words like “um” or “like”? Do you have some sound bites planned to make sure you convey your most

important points? PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Record yourself, watch yourself, and start small. Do some video podcasts, local TV, and the like.

GOOD AUTHOR PRO TIP

The best interviews feel like a conversation between friends over coffee. They don't feel rehearsed, they don't feel like a one-sided speech, and they certainly don't feel like a sales pitch. Interviews are not the time to shamelessly promote yourself. Come at them from a place of service—you're partnering with the media to provide valuable content to their audience (also your audience).

Interviewing is like a tennis match where you field the host's questions and toss the conversation back and forth in a natural rhythm. Not every interviewer is going to be as skilled as the next: you have to know how to accommodate for bad questions, awkward moments, hosts who definitely HAVE NOT read your book, and unplanned events (like getting cut off or interrupted). NEVER get frustrated or angry with a host or producer because of last-minute changes—that's just the nature of media. The Good Author rolls with the punches and is gracious at every turn.

Website

A professional website doesn't have to be fancy, and luckily today, there are so many affordable options that make it easy to accomplish a clean, polished presence online. Of course, if you have the budget and time, working with a skilled web designer who takes the time to develop your brand and translate the functionality of your business to an online workflow, that's always best. Look at other authors' websites and often at the bottom they list the designer. Just know that a good web designer usually starts at around \$3,000-\$10,000.

If you're on a smaller budget, WIX and Squarespace are two popular choices for the DIY crowd because their templates are easy to use without possessing much technology experience. (I've hosted my **PR agency's** website on WIX for ten years). You can do a search for "WIX designers" or "Squarespace designers for coaches" and find excellent, professional help—often starting from templates which saves a lot of money up front. Etsy can also be a valuable resource to find creative professionals who have created templates you can easily adapt to your needs and hire the designer to help you—some are international, and some local to the US. Just be sure to read reviews and make sure they have a positive history.

At a minimum, you should own your own domain—ideally, you'll own yourname.com, but if that's not available or you have a terribly difficult name to spell, you should have a domain that represents you in some way. For example, therelationshipexpert.com, or lifecoachonamission.com, or something like that related

to your work. Do a search on GoDaddy for available domains—you can get creative and do something like author Tim Ferriss did, who uses Tim.blog, or there are many other combinations that might work. Just try to keep it as simple as possible.

YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD INCLUDE ELEMENTS SUCH AS:

- ❑ Your bio, a short (250 words) and longer (up to 700 words) version (or you could link to a CV).
- ❑ A professional headshot. This needs to be a high-resolution photo of you (300 dpi), clear quality, taken within the last 10 years.
- ❑ Info about what you do and who your audience is. If you're a relationship expert with a PhD working primarily with married couples, say that right away. Or if you're a pet psychic who has worked with celebrity pets, say that!
- ❑ Book info: If you're about to release a new book, that should be front and center! Book cover (high-resolution), description, maybe a downloadable excerpt (PDF), and a link to purchase.
- ❑ Testimonials—what other people (real, reputable individuals) say about your book. Ideally, you will have collected several testimonials or reviews from colleagues, influencers, or other professionals in your subject area. These are not just customer reviews; these are peer reviews and testimonials.
- ❑ Links to social media, if you have any.

Content

You don't have to wait for the media to come to you to get valuable information out to your target audience. Create your own content through blogs, videos, a podcast, newsletter, and so on. Not only is this excellent practice, but it's another way to show producers and editors that you're an expert who's already skilled in reaching your audience.

GOOD AUTHOR PRO TIP

As you get ready to launch your book, it would also be wise to have three or four prewritten, unpublished articles on the same subject as your book that are ready to go. Your publicist will love you.

Social Media

This is a tricky area, because although social media can be very important, it can also do more damage than good if it's not done well and not ready for the professional spotlight. This means that you should have a professional page (not a personal Facebook page, but a business page as an author or expert). You should also clean up your personal pages—unless you're a political author, no one needs to see all your funny memes among like-minded friends.

On your professional social media pages, you should have a professional-looking photo, banners, bio, and links to your website. Free or almost free services like **Canva** are another incredible resource for design tools—you can use professionally designed templates with almost zero tech skills required and look like a rock star online.

Occasionally, I feel it's important to let you in on some deep, dark secrets from the publishing world, especially publicity. Subscribe to my monthly newsletter, **SMOKE & MIRRORS**, for eye-opening, behind-the-scenes stories, and interviews with bestselling authors who share their best tips and tricks for success.

THE HARSH TRUTH: This does not mean you **HAVE** to have social media. If you're not going to use it, ever, or put any effort into it, it's better not to have it at all. It's better to have *no* presence and be a bit of a mystery than to have 40 followers and bad posts with no engagement.

THE GOOD AUTHOR TAKEAWAY

If you want to have social media but aren't super skilled in this area, focus on one or two platforms and do those well (maybe it's just LinkedIn and Facebook, or Instagram and Twitter). Social media is an art and skill all its own. It can have tremendous value for the right audience, but you should hire

a professional or take some courses online if you want to do it yourself. In the beginning, it's best to keep it simple and clean or not use it at all and remain a bit of a mystery until you're ready to jump into the very public social media universe.

Email List

HE WHO OWNS HIS AUDIENCE, WINS!
IF THERE'S ONE PIECE OF WISDOM I CAN
IMPART TO YOU, IT'S THIS:
EMAIL LISTS ARE GOLD. PURE GOLD.

Social media is great, but having an engaged email list is so much better. Why? Because social media companies control access to your followers; they could block your account, get hacked, get shut down, or just disappear one day, and with them go all of your followers! Plus, they charge an enormous amount of money to even *reach* your followers, and **there's no guarantee that your followers are buyers**. On the other hand, building your own email list is the most powerful thing you can do to create a direct connection to your audience. Agents and publishers would love to hear that you have 10,000 people on your email list, but keep in mind that it's better to have 5,000 highly engaged, loyal followers than 30,000 who never open your emails or engage in any way (i.e., don't buy a bunch of lists just to bump up your numbers).

You'll need a way to manage your email list. There are many email service providers out there, and some like MailChimp are even free up to a certain point, then offer various plans that

are pretty affordable. Other top contenders to consider include **Active Campaign** and **ConvertKit**—both of which are fantastic options. I personally chose ConvertKit, but Active Campaign has many great features and benefits too. Do your research and choose one that you can grow with for a while.

Getting people to sign up for your email list should have some thought behind it. Everyone is spammed to death, but they're willing to give their email for something they think will bring them value. Tell them what they're getting if they sign up. Make it very easy to sign up and offer some free incentive (like The Good Author MBA Starter Kit you're reading now—this is called a Lead Magnet). Then spell out exactly what they're committing to when they sign up—that is, weekly emails, a monthly newsletter, sporadic updates, and so on. Whatever you choose to commit to in terms of content, be consistent and offer VALUE. Nurture your email list like you would a child—and watch it grow! (Again, this takes time, and that's okay!)

GOOD AUTHOR TAKEAWAY

Don't wait! You don't have to have a book to do all of these things, and in fact, you should not wait. Start right away. An agent and publisher would love to see that you already have a good brand and platform in place. In fact, this could determine if they'll publish your book, and if so, what size advance they'll offer.



PART 3

THE GOOD AUTHOR MBA: **Attitude**

**“Letting go will be the most useful, most rewarding,
and most difficult concept you will have
to grasp as an author.”**

— Carina Sammartino

Be a Partner

When I was an in-house publicist at Hay House, we'd always have an intro call with a new author about three to six months before their book's release. This was meant to be an opportunity to learn the author's marketing and PR plans—their vision for their audience and how they intended to reach them. In other words, what THEY were doing to promote their book. I'll never forget the calls when we'd ask a new author (who the publisher had signed because they were good at marketing themselves) what they'd planned around the book launch, and they'd look surprised. I recall one gentleman who said, "NOTHING! I've cleared my schedule for the next six months so that I can be ready for whatever you bring my way!" We almost died. When I picked my mouth up off the floor, and suppressed my inner desire to say "NOOOOOOOOOOOOO" out loud, I calmly suggested that he get on the phone and start booking some speaking gigs, events, workshops, media opportunities—anything he'd done in the past—anything!

THE HARSH TRUTH: The Good Author understands that they're a partner with their publishing team, including their marketing and PR team. Don't expect that they're going to take over completely and do everything for you. First, they don't have the staff to do that; and second, *you* know how to reach your people better than anyone! The publishing team is there to support you and help you expand your reach. Well, unless of course you're a celebrity author, in which case they'll bend over backward and do a salsa dance for you, moving heaven and earth to make things happen. But celebrity authors aren't reading this, so let's move on.

Be a partner by understanding that your book is just a new part of your work. It's not a stopping point or a *pause* in that work, it is merely another tool in your efforts to serve your audience. Look at your book as the launch of a new business, and adopt an entrepreneurial mindset.

Remember before when I explained that publishing a book is like going from one marathon to the next? The point where you GET to start promoting your book is the beginning of another marathon, one that should last for at least 7 to 10 years.

GOOD AUTHOR PRO TIP

What can you do to be a good partner? Reading this guide is an excellent beginning. But take it another step and start thinking about how you can help your team. My favorite authors are the ones who see a good news story and send me a quick email that says, "Hey, I saw this in the news. Here are a few bullet points about how I'd address this issue differently in an interview." Or, "Here are three or four topic ideas I could quickly produce a 700-word article on."

Be Realistic

The US market is much too big for any one person to tackle. It takes a team, and it takes time. Be realistic with your expectations, and be appreciative of every success. Celebrate every win, no matter how big or small. Remember, your

entire team wants to see you on TV, but maintain realistic expectations about what's happening right now, and about what it takes to get to that point in your career. But most of all, enjoy the journey!

Being realistic means understanding the competitive nature of getting media coverage, the increasingly celebrity-driven media market, and shrinking opportunities for “regular folk.”

Producers, editors, and journalists are under immense pressure to produce content that drives audience engagement. At the same time, traditional outlets within print, radio, and TV have shrunk or disappeared altogether, while the number of books published has increased substantially, leaving fewer open slots. The Good Author realizes what their publicity and marketing teams are up against, but appreciates and supports how much there is to accomplish.

THE HARSH TRUTH: I had a first-time author who kept telling us (her PR team) that she should be on *Oprah*, and that she knew her work was very relevant to her audience, and despite the many kind ways we tried to say yes, we'd send a copy of the book to the show, she brought it up on nearly every call. This author had ZERO TV experience, was under the age of 40, and had a book like a million others—good content, but not life-changing or remarkable in any way. Keep in mind that Oprah had long stopped her daily show and was only doing her big celebrity sit-down show, *Super Soul Sunday*, about once a month or less at that time. I asked the author if she'd seen who the last few guests were on the show: Prince Harry and Meghan

Markle, Michelle Obama, Dolly Parton, Melinda Gates, Tom Brady. She had not. I very nicely suggested that she be a little more patient with her PR team in achieving this goal.

Be Nice

Most people in publishing are in it because they love books, and book publicists are no different. They could be doing publicity for any other type of product, but they likely chose books because they're smart, curious, passionate about learning, and genuinely interested in seeing authors succeed! Your marketing and PR team is a representation of your brand out in the world—so wouldn't you want them to like you and think of you and your book in a positive way? You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, as the saying goes, and The Good Author recognizes that you want the people pouring their heart and soul into your book to feel good when they think of you. You WANT them to WANT to help you succeed!

The same sentiment applies to dealing with anyone in the media! They're doing you a FAVOR by featuring you and your book. It is *your* job to make their job easier by being available, being prepared, being gracious, and being a good guest! Unless you're an A-list celeb who gets to call the shots, it is not appropriate to criticize, make demands, or require final approval. Sending handwritten thank-you cards goes a long way in leaving a positive memory in the minds of media pros who are totally overworked, underappreciated, and bombarded with challenging people on a daily basis.



BEHIND THE BESTSELLER TRUTH

When I was first starting out as a book publicist at age 26, I was at a big conference featuring all of our bestselling authors as speakers. I had to attend a meeting with the top publishing execs and a renowned *New York Times* bestselling author I had just been assigned to work with—she was a well-known speaker beloved by her millions of fans. Nervous and a bit terrified because I'd heard she was tough, I prepared for that moment by having a question in mind ahead of time. When it came time for me to talk, I asked her what media she wanted me to focus on first—that is, if there was an outlet that was her top priority. She turned her chair slightly toward me, glared at me across the table, and said, “Don’t waste my time. I’ll waste your time, but don’t waste mine.” Then she turned away.

I was floored. Mortified. And really pissed off. The hypocrisy! Her manager came up to me later that night at our author dinner and tried to make amends, but it was too late. I had a bad impression and had lost all respect. Did I still do my job and promote her book? Yes, of course. But did I think of her when I came across every new opportunity? No. I thought of the authors who were nice.

THE GOOD AUTHOR TAKEAWAY

There’s a saying to treat the janitor with the same respect as the CEO. The Good Author treats everyone they come into contact with on their journey as a potential reader and book buyer—no matter who they are. Remember that publicists get promoted to publicity director, editorial assistants

become editorial directors, bookstore clerks become store owners, and start-up podcasts get purchased by NPR. Common decency goes a long way.

Be Willing to Learn (or Hire Experts)

By now, you may be feeling a little overwhelmed and thinking, *So, what you're telling me is that in addition to writing a whole freaking book, I have to learn how to market and promote myself, build a massive online empire, and become the Tony freaking Robbins of public personas?! Well, no, not exactly. First, you don't HAVE to do it all yourself! And you probably shouldn't. Hire professionals to help you—and listen to them!*

Depending on which publishing path you're on—traditional publisher, self-publishing, hybrid publishing—you should strongly consider hiring professionals to fill in any gaps where you're not an expert and where one isn't provided for you.

SELF-PUBLISHING?

You'll likely need to hire people to perform most aspects of the publishing process. The most important job roles you should consider professional help with are:

Editorial

First and foremost, do not underestimate the importance of a skilled editor. That doesn't mean just

hiring someone to copyedit or proofread your entire manuscript. That means that you hire a skilled and experienced *developmental* editor. No matter how much money you throw at a book down the road in terms of marketing and PR, you can't dress up bad content. Well, you can, and people do it all the time. But you'll limit the book's (and your own) potential. The literary world is a bit particular, and content is king. Don't skimp on this step.

Design

There's nothing more telling of a self-published book than a bad cover. Luckily, there are many options for graphic design today. You can use services like **Canva** to customize templates for book covers, or Fiver to find inexpensive designers from around the world, or **99designs** for custom illustration work. Of course, there are many incredible freelance graphic designers who specialize in book design—and you *should* get someone with book design experience, as there are particular formatting issues to be aware of. Again, this is not an area to rush through. A book truly is judged by its cover, so take the time to do it well.

Marketing/PR

Obviously, you're reading this because you want to be prepared for this stage of your author journey! Many authors are entrepreneurs who already know how to market and promote themselves. But many are clueless when it comes to this part. Doing a search for "book

marketing agency” or “book publicist” is a way to start your search, but even better is to ask around among other authors you may know. Marketing and PR is not a small investment, so it’s best to figure out the parts you feel you can do yourself, or the parts you will need to hire support for. Maybe you need someone to help you book speaking engagements, and someone to manage your social media. Or maybe you’re a pro at social media and digital marketing but don’t know where to start when it comes to publicity. There are so many great professionals out there, so do some research and talk to them on the phone or meet them in person if you can. It’s important to find people who resonate with your work, and whom you feel comfortable working with. Again, these people will be the outward-facing representation of your book and your brand—they should feel like an extension of your style.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHER?

Lucky you! You won’t have to worry about an editor or designer, as those services will be provided by the publisher. However, you should still strongly consider learning more about how to do your own publicity, or hire a publicist. The reality is that unless you’re a mid- to high-ranking author at your publishing house, the in-house publicity team will have little time to devote specifically to your book. They’ll do the basics, which is great, and just having their support is a huge help! But if you want someone dedicated to promoting your book and giving it full attention, you’ll want to consider hiring a publicist directly.

THE HARSH TRUTH: When I was an in-house publicist, I had 20 active book campaigns at one time, and that didn't include a backlist of 30-plus books that still needed love and attention from time to time. For many first-time authors, their books got sent to the trade publications (*Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, etc.), a press release blasted out to our email media list, mentioned in the publisher's newsletter and social media, and while that was great, it was less than the author envisioned.

Understand That PR is an Intangible

PR includes intangible assets like reputation, brand, awareness, and relationships. Unlike advertising, where you can buy a full-page ad in a magazine and calculate your ROI based on the publication's readership, the same cannot be measured when it comes to PR. You should not expect to see a one-for-one return on each publicity dollar in terms of sales.

For example, let's say your book gets reviewed in a major media outlet like the *New York Times* (every author's dream). The review appears in print and online. Would you calculate ROI based on readership? Now how do you account for the tone of that review? Was it neutral? Or was it a glowing recommendation? And how do you measure the fact that a producer from *The Today Show* saw that review and booked you for a segment? Now what if the HR director from a major corporation with hundreds of thousands of employees saw

the review and invites you to come present to the company, including the purchase of 1,000 books? What if someone at that corporation hears you speak, reads the book, and sends it to their friend who's a writer for *The Atlantic*? Of course, this whole sequence is a publicist's and author's dream, but how do you measure ROI from that one review? This would be a good problem to have.

GOOD AUTHOR PRO TIP

PUBLICITY IS NOT MEASURED BY SALES

Relationships, reputation, and your brand may or may not be directly connected to the sales of your book—I REPEAT: **PUBLICITY IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE SALES OF YOUR BOOK!** Some authors have a hard time hearing that, especially those who come from a business or sales background without any exposure to PR. Is it possible that you make an appearance on *Good Morning America* and your book becomes an instant bestseller? Yes. Is it also possible that you appear on *GMA* and sell fewer than 500 copies within that week? Yes.

Good publicists use their relationships to make connections for you, the author. However, what you do with those connections is partly out of the publicist's control. If you bomb the interview, are rude to the journalist, or if breaking news bumps your segment so far out that it never airs, these are all factors out of the publicist's control. There are no guarantees in publicity, but you also never know when something BIG is

going to hit. The only guarantees in publicity are outreach, effort, and exposure to media.

The Good Author understands that publicity is about planting seeds in as many places as possible, watering them, nurturing them, and seeing which ones grow.

Does this mean that you have no way of measuring your publicity results? No, of course not. Ask yourself things like: *Am I farther along than when I started in terms of brand, reputation, and relationships? Have I grown my audience? Do I get invited by media outlets to contribute or offer my expertise? Has my platform grown? If I Google my name, do any third-party websites mention me as an expert? Am I more comfortable and more impactful with media?* These are important forms of measurement.

If you're answering yes to these questions, sales will come as a result. But remember, it takes time, lots of time. My suggestion: Don't even look at sales during the first six months to a year of your book's release. Just keep doing the work!



BEHIND THE BESTSELLER TRUTH

I once had a client—a brilliant and successful author of many books over at least a couple decades—who was invited to speak to the staff of a major national newspaper, including all of the editors, reporters, and journalists. They could afford to pay his speaking fee but could not buy books. Being the wise and experienced author that he was, he asked me if I thought it was more important to get them to buy books instead of pay him—to which I responded, *YES!* The speaking fee was about

the same as what it would have cost him to buy 500 copies of his book at his author discount, so he proposed that they forgo paying the fee and instead purchase everyone in attendance a copy of the book. The result: he got a large bulk order of books on his sales record, *and* got a copy of his book in the hands of every single journalist at one of the top newspapers in the country, while they were a captive audience. **The win?** One of the most popular columnists at the paper loved his presentation, loved his book, felt a personal connection to his work, and featured him at length in her next story. It was a moment of gold in terms of ROI.

THE HARSH TRUTH: Publicists rarely have insight into book sales. The reality is, book sales are a bit vague in the immediate term—there are reporting methods like Bookscan that measure bookstore sales, but that doesn't account for direct sales through the publisher's website, the author's website, events, and so on. And don't forget, bookstores are allowed to return unsold stock. All of these factors are why I suggest that you don't focus on sales for the first year following your book's release. If you really must measure something, the number of copies in print can be an okay indicator of how well sales are doing. But your best bet is to LET GO!

*Which brings me to the final
and most important trait of The Good Author...*

Letting Go

It's not often that you get to work with one of the most successful and beloved authors of all time, so forgive me if I reference Dr. Wayne Dyer a lot, but he was a pro in every sense of the word, and he set the standard for what I now call "The Good Author." I'll never forget being a young publicist (in my late 20s), and feeling so fiercely determined to land a big national TV show for the release of Dr. Dyer's book *Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life* (2007). After weeks of pitching and pitching, I felt like the world's biggest failure when I had to call him and tell him that we hadn't yet heard anything from *Good Morning America* or *The Today Show*. His response forever changed my perspective: very calmly, as if he barely acknowledged the response, he said, "It's fine. It's not the right time yet. They'll call when it's right." Then he moved on to the next topic.

I was floored. Was he messing with me? Was he actually going to call my boss and have me fired? I can't tell you the number of harsh responses I would get from barely known authors in response to that same news. Because he walked his talk, however, Wayne taught me to LET GO. Let Go of the outcome. Let Go of expectations. Let Go of ego.

Letting go will be the most useful, most rewarding, and most difficult concept you will have to grasp as an author. Even the most seasoned authors struggle with this! And who can blame them? You've poured your heart, soul, blood, sweat, and tears into completing your book. You've waited your whole life to become a part of this elite author club, and you want it to be a success!

Learning to let go is a practice. It takes work but is the ultimate path to contentment—as an author, and as human.

Imagine trying to contain rushing water by planning every single path it will take around objects, through waterways, back out to the ocean? Or trying to grip a handful of sand—the harder you squeeze, the less you actually hold on to.

Becoming an author is a journey, not a destination. Learn to let go, and let your book find its way. Let the good people around you help you guide it on its path. Let go of the specifics of how and when you'll become a bestselling author. Just keep showing up for your book, keep putting good work out into the world, keep serving your tribe, keep writing, and keep being your authentic self.

Let Go of attachment to status and make room for opportunities you may have never imagined.

THE GOOD AUTHOR FINAL TAKEAWAY

ALLOW THINGS TO COME TO YOU.

LET GO.



There is a difference between motivation and inspiration. Motivation is when you get hold of an idea and don't let go of it until you make it a reality. Inspiration is the reverse—when an idea gets hold of you and you feel compelled to let that impulse or energy carry you along. You get to a point where you realize that you're no longer in charge, that there's a driving force inside you that can't be stopped.

— DR. WAYNE DYER

NEED MORE HELP? CONTACT US

Book an hour consultation call with Carina Sammartino to discuss your publishing and book publicity needs.

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Substack for exclusive author
interviews, articles, industry
insight, and more.



Carina Sammartino is the publicist behind several New York Times bestselling authors who've sold millions of books and appeared on respected media outlets such as Oprah, Ellen, NPR, and hundreds more.

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