

Find Your Readers

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/find-your-readers/>

*I've often had talks with other writers about something I think bothers a lot of us. Being a published author isn't just about the gratification of selling your stories. It's more basic than that. It's really about identity, our identity as writers or as authors - and how worthy we believe we are. **You cannot find your readers if you don't feel like you deserve them.***

Surprisingly, many writers sabotage their writing career by either not following through with a marketing plan, or worse, never really submitting their manuscripts anywhere in the first place.

To find your readers, you must first have the right mindset to do that. So what does that mean? Let's punch it out.

If you want to find your readers, you have to stop hiding. Really.

A lot of writers are shy or socially awkward, or just timid. Notice I say "writers" and not "award winning, NYT Best-selling novelists" or something like that. Big difference. The difference isn't just one of income, or even recognition. It's a difference of self identity.

Some would say (especially those who have met best-selling authors) that it's a matter of ego. Of course it is. But you don't have to have a big ego to be successful, and you don't have to become narcissistic once you get there.

If you want to be a best selling novelist (or whatever it is that will make you feel you've arrived), you need to have the right mindset. You have to be able to find your readers.

For a lot of writers, this seems an impossible - if not downright futile - aspect of the job. But it is possible to do right, and you don't need to transform yourself into a sleazy salesperson. You can sell with integrity. [Go here for my Book Marketing Checklist for authors. You'll need this *no matter how you get published.*](#)

When am I really a writer?

A lot of writers aren't even sure if they can really claim to be a writer or not. Before you find your readers, you have to identify yourself as a writer. So let's do that first.

Are you an author if you self-publish?

Yes. It doesn't really matter if you're traditionally published or self-published, so long as the product you put out there is top quality. Don't settle for less than perfection, because your readers will not return if you sell them a subpar read.

I'm a big proponent of Hybrid Authorship, meaning those writers who do the hard work of winning an agent and getting traditionally published, but who also pursue publishing their own work sometimes.

[For more detail on Hybrid Authorship, go HERE.](#)

It's really the only way for an author to have complete creative autonomy, and it's also the best form of self-education – doing it yourself will teach you about what it takes to get a book on the market. It's autodidacticism for authors.

When are you *not* a writer?

If you don't write, you're not a writer. I think we all know that.

But I would add something more to that, and it's this: *if you don't share what you write and have no plans to ever share it*, you're not really a writer. You're someone who writes, but that isn't really enough to make you a writer.

When you have the chops to let others read your stuff, that makes you a writer.

It means you're ready to go find your readers.

That's a huge and vitally important step, because it also means you're past the point of pretending that you *really only write for yourself* and *don't really care if you never get published*. Right.

You cannot save face by not trying hard enough.

You must fail over and over until you get it right. That's what every professional writer has learned the hard way. There is absolutely no shame in rejection, no shame in failing. That's just part of the deal, and it's how we learn to become seriously awesome.

Writers Should *Not* Starve

How you make money as a writer is really about having the right frame of mind about it. If you feel guilt-ridden asking people to purchase your book, then there's a disconnect between what you want (to sell copies of your book) and what you feel.

Guilt should not play a part in this at all – because writers need to eat too. Do you feel guilty when you post about your writing? Why? You need to ask yourself this and really think about it. Only you can determine your source of guilty feelings.

Many writers I think subconsciously create author websites that sabotage their career. You might wonder why I would ever say this. Well... if I have to search the entire website just to find a Buy Here Button, there is a big problem. Most people will not go to all that trouble, and they shouldn't have to.

Also, don't sabotage your success by self publishing and then asking for critiques about it. [When you do](#)

[that, it's too late.](#)

Why Agents Matter SO Much

I've read and heard a lot of debate about whether or not writers need agents. Here's the thing: whether you need an agent or not depends solely on what it is you want to achieve as a writer. Essentially, you've got three ways to get your work published.

DIY

If you simply want to get your books on the market, in your way (as you envision it), and selling in a grassroots manner, then you can simply self-publish. There's no reason you shouldn't these days now that the social stigma is lifted - and if your product is high quality and you understand [how to market your work using social media](#), you can even make a living from it. Before you jump into this, I highly recommend a couple of articles:

[Self-Publishing: Design for Success](#) explains all the design factors you need to consider for the exterior and interior of your book. Includes everything you need to make a book feel like a book.

[How to Publish](#) is about all the ways we can get our books published. If you're not sure about where the line is drawn between a self-published title and a vanity press project, this is where you find out.

Local

If you want your work to be available in local shops, you still don't need an agent for that. You need to get your book published by a small or independent publisher - one who probably focuses their efforts on local or sub-culture interests.

For a listing of this kind of publisher, go to the [New Pages list of Indie Book Publishers](#).

World

If you want your work to be stocked in airport bookshops, bookstore chains, toy stores, boutiques and libraries all around the world - well, [you need an agent](#). Same thing goes if you want to sell film rights, or see stuffed toys made of your protagonist.

Attend any major book event and speak with any [Acquisitions Editor](#) of any major publishing house, and you'll quickly find that they expect you to have an agent. You will not be considered if you don't have one. And really, how could it be otherwise, given the prevalence of self-publishing and POD books?

NOTE: Even if you are an entrepreneur and have enough business savvy to do everything an agent and publishing house would normally do for you, you will need to work with a lot of other people to help you get toys made and books distributed world wide. You'll at the very least need a literary attorney. If you're not sure of the [difference between a literary agent and a literary attorney, go HERE](#).

Writing as a Business

To make money as a writer, you need to fully embrace the idea that *writing is your business*. It's what I call the [business of authorship](#). This is really hard for a lot of people – but especially for people who express themselves creatively. Take your writing seriously and it will become a source of income for you.

That means you'll need to do certain things – *the same things any businessperson would be expected to do.*

- [Go to Book Events](#)
- [Use Social Media](#)
- [Continuously improve writing ability](#)
- [Strengthen market savvy](#)
- [Create a Website](#)
- [Be accessible](#)
- [Network](#)

Do Authors *Really* Need Websites?

Yes. So do illustrators. It is no longer optional.

If you're not sure [what an author's website should do for you, go HERE for details](#).

Do Authors Really Need to Network?

Yes. It isn't just that no one is an island – though that's certainly true. You cannot achieve anything without other people involved in your life.

Don't confuse networking with being socially fraudulent. There are socially fraudulent people who are brilliant at networking – but these *aren't synonymous*.

[Networking is about community](#). Allow yourself to meet other writers, illustrators, editors, agents, publishers, distributors and printers – and you will find yourself a richer person for it. You will be happier, in fact, for knowing *all of these interesting people doing creative things that are of importance to you because you want to be part of their community*.

I invite you to join my [GreatStorybook Group on Facebook](#). It's a nice group of very creative and supportive people.

Publishers Don't Bite

There are a lot of great people in the publishing industry. There is no reason to fear them. The sense of exclusivity – the feeling that you maybe can't get into the club – it isn't real. You just have to get out of your digs and go to book events. And then go talk to people.

It doesn't matter where you live, or what you believe, or what color your skin, or what gender or what

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your bank statement says. None of that matters one bit.

If you can write a great story, no one will care about any of that. So approach people. Talk to people about their stories; if asked, tell them about yours. That's how you find someone who might champion you and your work. If nothing else, it's how you find a new friend.

Keep creating, no matter what.
