

**How to Become a Published Author**  
**Brian Tracy Teleseminar Notes**  
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There are 400,000 books published each year and yours might as well be one of them.

Before I wrote my first book, I read several books about how to write a book written by professional writers with many years of experience. This knowledge helped me enormously in every book I have written since then.

When I went out to get published, no one would even return my phone calls or letters. I soon realized that I didn't know what I was doing.

I began buying books and articles about how to get published. I found that it is a fiercely competitive business. As many as 99 out of 100 books are never published, or even seriously considered by publishers or literary agents.

Today, I have written and published 70 books in 38 languages and 53 countries. I write and publish four or five books each year, and work with eight U.S. publishers alone, plus many others all over the world.

Not long ago, a woman contacted me through a friend and asked me to review her manuscript and help her get a publisher. Because of my friend, I agreed to do whatever I could. What I got from her however, was a stream-of-consciousness narrative that she had dictated and had typed. It lurched all over the subject like a drunk going from lamppost to lamppost.

What was most surprising that she expected me to find her a publisher who would take her confusing material and re-write it into a book for publication. She was convinced that all she needed was an idea and a bunch of words of paper and someone else would not only do all the work, but pay her a big advance as well.

Because I am always open to helping writers, I have had this experience several times. People send me the most awful stuff and want me to give a line-by-line critique, helping them to re-write it and turn it into a book. This is simply not the way the world works.

Let us begin with what you have to do to get published.

### **Be publishable!**

First of all, you must be “publishable.” This is a cutthroat business where 80% of books fail to sell out their first run of 2,500 copies, leaving the publisher stuck and in a money losing situation.

Not long ago a publisher told me about a business book another publisher had paid a \$200,000 advance for, plus spent \$50,000 advertising it. It was by a well-known executive, and at the end of the day, it only sold 1,250 copies. The publisher lost more than a quarter million dollars on this project.

Publishers hate losing money. They hate returns as well. As it happens, all books are sold on consignment to book stores, and if they don't sell, the publisher has to take them back, credit the bookstore, and often throw the remaining books away.

Only 20% of books make money. Sales of 10,000 copies or more are considered respectable. Only 5% of books are really profitable, and less than 10% become a best seller, and sometimes only for a week.

I have personally sold as many as two million copies of a book over several years and have only been on a best seller list a couple of times.

To achieve being “publishable,” you will need a good subject, a good title, a good sub-title, and your book must be well written – just to get someone to notice you.

For non-fiction, the best titles start with an imperative verb, like “Swim with the Sharks,” or “Think and Grow Rich.”

A forceful title grabs the reader’s attention and stimulates his or her interest. Many books have gone from failures to best sellers by simply changing the title.

Your subtitle should contain the main benefit the reader will get if he or she read your book, like “Get Paid More and Promoted Faster,” or “Make More Money with Less Effort.”

Every rule in writing is meant to be broken, including the rules about titles, but make it easy for the publisher to pay attention, and for readers to buy, by making the title attractive and alluring.

Before I submit a manuscript, I re-write it from front to back, word for word, five to seven times, until I am completely satisfied. You should be prepared to do the same.

To get published, write a book that publishers and readers want. Look at what is selling well, the best sellers in fiction and non-fiction, and write books on the subjects that are already popular.

To write and get published, you have to exercise your writing muscles.

There are three things that you can do for this:

1. Read something every day in your field, your area of expertise. Read the best that is out there. Never stop reading and growing;
2. Write something every day. Resolve to write 1,000 to 2,000 words every day to keep in shape;
3. Turn in clean copy. Spell correctly and use correct grammar. Have your work read and critiqued by friends and family members before you submit it.

If you are writing fiction, there are five things you must do:

1. Start strong: Grab the reader and draw them quickly into the story. If you don't have the reader in the first few paragraphs the publisher will stop reading and not publish your books.
2. Trim it down and make it clean. Use fewer words and better ones. Read "The Elements of Style" by Strunk and White regularly, once before each book you write.
3. Develop an interesting plot that holds together and moves forward quickly: It should read like an interesting or exciting story you are telling someone as fast as you can.
4. In non-fiction, develop each character, or don't introduce the character: The reader should be able to visualize your characters and have a sense for how they will behave and what they will do.
5. Even with a fiction book, you should have a point of view, some idea that you want to get across as a message as a result of reading

your book: What are you trying to say? What is your reason for writing this book in the first place? What message do you want to leave the reader with?

### **Get a Literary Agent**

This was the turning point for me. I found a literary agent and convinced her that I had at least three books in me that publishers would buy.

But when you get a literary agent or a publisher, your work is just beginning. Remember, they succeed or fail in their careers, make money or not, get promoted or not, based on the success of your book.

To find a literary agent, read Jeff Herman's "Guide to Book Publishers, Editors and Literary Agents – 2009." This is the bible of the industry.

### **The Query Letter**

The query letter is what opens the door for you. It must be an attention-grabbing, arresting description of your book, opening with a power paragraph that stops the editor or literary agent cold.

Many editors and agents receive dozens of query letters per day. Yours must stand out, like book advertising copy that triggers an immediate desire for the product.

Have other people critique your query letter and give you feedback; be prepared to re-write it several times.

Make it clear what kind of a book you are writing, how many people and what kinds of people will read it, and why your book is different from other books on the subject.

Before you mail, (not e-mail) a query letter, telephone the literary agent or publisher to determine the specific person to whom it should be addressed. This information is in Jeff Herman's book or in "The Writers Handbook" which is published each year. These are tools of the writer's trade.

When you get a favorable response from your query letter, you will be asked to write a proposal to describe your book. Here are some of the questions they will ask, and which you must be prepared to answer:

1. What is your book about – exactly?
2. How will a busy reader benefit from your book?
3. What other books deal with the same subjects?
4. How is your book different from similar books? How is it better? Superior? Unique in some way?
5. Who exactly will read your book? What ages, occupations, income levels, aspirations and how many potential readers are there?
6. Who are you? What is your background and why are you qualified to write this book?
7. What other books have you written and how many copies did they sell?
8. How will you help in marketing and selling this book?

9. Give a table of contents of the book and a brief summary of the contents of each chapter.

This is especially important in non-fiction, business and self-improvement books.

10. Finally, your proposal should include a sample chapter, usually chapter one so that a literary agent or publisher can judge if you are a competent writer.

Once you have gotten acceptance of your proposal, be sure to write your book with the following points in mind:

1. Be sure that it is a professional-looking manuscript.
2. Back-up what you say. When you make a statement, you must be prepared to prove it.
3. Be accurate, especially regarding numbers and quotes.
4. Use proper punctuation; look it up; study it if necessary.
5. Be concise: Use the fewest number of words possible and the shortest, simplest words to express your point.
6. Check for spelling errors over and over.
7. Re-read it once more, word for word, before you send it off.

### **Negotiating the Best Book Contract**

1. Get the contract and read it through carefully, line-by-line.

2. Beware of vague clauses, “Electronic rights” or tricky terms and clauses.

- a.) All electronic rights that exist or are to be invented in the future, are things you want to keep for yourself.
- b.) International rights – Should give you 50% of all royalties received by the publisher for your book published in another language.
- c.) “Right of First Refusal” will often be included in a book contract.
- d.) Application of royalties from one book against another.

3. Guard your rights, especially copyright. Sell as few rights to the publisher as possible.

4. Be sure that every agreement and every change is in writing.

5. Write your own contract terms. Cross out certain sentences and insert your own.

### **Get the Best, Highest Advance Possible**

The standard advance for a new book by a new author is \$5,000 or less. Many publishers offer no advance at all, because of the high risk involved.

In 80% or more of cases, the advance is the only money you will ever receive.



The best situation is when your literary agent gets two or more publishers bidding for your book. This is called an “auction.” This will ensure that you get the highest possible advance.

The most powerful word in publishing is “Ask.” The good news is that your literary agent is highly motivated by the 15% commission they receive from the advance and the royalties, and will work very hard to get you the most possible.

### **Self-Publishing**

Many authors, especially first-timers, cannot find or attract either an agent or a publisher. They have no choice except to self-publish it – if they believe strongly enough in their book.

Some years ago, James Redfield, author of the “Celestine Prophecy,” was unable to find a publisher for his book so he self-published it and sold it at his seminars and through the mail.

The book became very popular. After he had sold several thousand copies, he re-approached a couple of publishers who had shown some interest. This time, they grabbed the book, published it professionally, and distributed it world wide, eventually selling several hundred thousand copies in multiple languages and making the author rich.

If you want to self-publish, you must get Dan Poynter’s book, “Self-Publishing Manual, 16<sup>th</sup> Edition.” Dan is the recognized guru and authority on self-publishing. His ideas can save you a fortune in time and treasure.

Finally, if you believe in yourself and your book, resolve in advance that you will never give up.

Some years ago, a speaker friend of mine told me he had come up with a book idea and he was going to sell a million copies. I was a little skeptical but I encouraged him to go for it and wrote a testimonial for his book, for when he wrote it.

He followed through and wrote the manuscript. He then submitted the manuscript to 144 different publishers, all of which turned him down with the explanation that “There is no market for a book like this.”

Finally, a small publisher in Florida that was only publishing newsletters on health at the time, offered to publish the book for my friend if he agreed to buy 10,000 copies, which he did.

He now had a warehouse full of books that he had to sell. Everyday for six months now, my friend and his co-author went out and did something to promote the book. They never missed a day.

Finally, a friendly reviewer at the Los Angeles Times wrote a nice story about the book, and it started to move in the bookstores. This book was called “Chicken Soup for the Soul.” My friends, Mark Victor Hanson and Jack Canfield went on to sell more than 100,000,000 copies of their books and become multi-millionaires.

Remember, there are no limits on what you can accomplish except the limits you place on your own mind. Think Big!

Good luck!

Brian Tracy

