

SEVEN

You *Must* Answer

QUESTIONS

Before Publishing
Your Book



How to define success,
choose a publisher and reach your audience

Steve Spillman
True Potential

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Seven Questions You Must Answer Before Publishing Your Book

How to Define Success, Choose a Publisher, and Reach Your Audience

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!!!IMPORTANT!!

THIS BOOK COMES WITH AN ONLINE RESOURCE FOR
EACH OF THE SEVEN QUESTIONS

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YOU MUST ANSWER BEFORE PUBLISHING YOUR BOOK ON-
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"Words may inspire but only action creates change."

– SIMON SINEK

Read This First

Five Reasons Your Book Won't Sell

1. You haven't finished writing it.

Really? Of all the authors I spoke with about their "in-process" manuscripts a year or two years ago, you'd be surprised how many of those manuscripts are still "in-process" today. I know there is a time and season for everything, but one day you'll run out of times and seasons ... and that manuscript will still be "in-process." **Set a finish date for your manuscript, and then tell someone you trust who is willing to hold you accountable.** If no one comes to mind, you can tell me your finish date, and I'll write it down and remind you as that date approaches. You don't have to publish your book with True Potential, but you do have to finish your manuscript if you will ever have it published.

2. You haven't published it.

Again, you'd be surprised at the authors who have a finished manuscript sitting in a drawer, safe from the world ever seeing it. Afraid some people won't like your story? I guess we'll never know. But maybe some people will love it. I guess we'll never know. Don't worry about failure at this point. **Failure isn't that some people may not like your book. Failure is never sharing it with the world.**

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3. No one knows your book exists.

That's sad. But think about it. Your book is competing with millions of other books (there are more than 49 million book listings on Amazon, not including e-books), and all those books are competing with millions of other things (movies, TV, video games, radio, YouTube, etc.) vying for your reader's attention. **There's no way to guarantee that your book will sell, but I can guarantee that your book *won't* sell if no one knows it exists.** You've got to share your story with others before they know or care if your book exists. The relationship between author and reader is just that – a relationship. Your job as an author doesn't end when your manuscript is written and your book is published; it's just beginning.

4. No one knows what's inside.

Sometimes authors (and publishers) focus so much on selling their books that they forget to share the story inside. When you've invested so much time, effort, and money into making your book a reality, it's tough to remember that people aren't interested in buying books. They are interested, however, in stories that will touch their spirits, expand their world, improve their lives or increase their happiness. **Readers don't buy books; they buy what books offer.** Share your story, share it freely, and share it often. And don't worry about giving your story away "for free." **Books are an odd commodity; you don't lose customers by sharing your story; you find them.**

5. People don't have the opportunity to purchase it.

I don't mean you forgot to say, "Buy my book!" A lot of authors try that approach and wonder why it doesn't work. I mean, **when someone is ready, do they have an easy, obvious way to purchase your book?** Do you keep a box of books in your car, just in case you have the opportunity to share your story with someone during your daily routine? Do you bring books with you whenever and wherever you're asked to speak or share your story with others? When you share your story online via Social Media, your blog, or your website, is there an easy, obvious path to "learn more" that gives your potential reader the opportunity to buy your book?

Read This First

Being an author isn't just about writing a book; it's about sharing your story with the world. **Your book is just the medium with which you share your story.** It's true; you'll never sell a book if you never finish your manuscript, and you'll never sell a book unless it's published. And others will never know your story unless you share it with them. When you've finished your manuscript and published your book and shared your story, your world – the audience meant for your story – if given the opportunity, will buy your book. That's how it works.

Let me say one thing before we move on.

As you've probably figured out from reading this far, a book is meant to be shared. You can sell it, you can give it away, you can shoot it out of a cannon at half-time, but a book exists to be shared. If you're not interested in sharing your story with the world, forget about writing a book. Save yourself some money, find a legal pad and a pencil, write out your thoughts, and stick them in a drawer. I do it all the time; it's my journal, and it's meant for my eyes only. It's a perfectly valid alternative for everything I don't want to share with the world, but it's not a book.

If you're still reading, I'll assume you have something to share with the world.



*"Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the
fit inheritance of generations and nations."*

- HENRY DAVID THOREAU, WALDEN

Introduction

The May sun was sinking into the west as Elaine and I sat with our feet dangling over the edge of the loading dock. It had been a warm day, a good day, except for the mountains of molded carpet scraps and the industrial dust that had choked us all morning. It was my birthday.

We had just finished clearing and cleaning a warehouse we purchased. It was across the parking lot from our main manufacturing facility. The company, our company, was expanding.

Twenty years earlier, I landed a job in a place just like this. \$3.50 an hour. I knew nothing about manufacturing. To be honest, I wasn't really clear on how things came to be manufactured. As far as I knew, they just appeared on the Kmart shelves. But I caught on. From worker to foreman, from foreman to manager, from manager to vice-president, from vice-president to owner. I hadn't really thought about it; we were too busy working. Today, I thought about it.

The afternoon had brought a peace that comes from a long day of work and a warm Spring afternoon. We faced into the sunset, quiet. I said to my wife, "If we don't leave this life, I'm afraid this will be our life."

We had never set out to own a manufacturing company; we had set out to survive. It had been a long time since either of us had thought about survival.

Elaine asked me, "What do you want to do?"

I answered. It wasn't me answering, or maybe it was, from a place so locked

away that I didn't recognize it as my own, "I want to start a Christian publishing company."

I need to confess something. I have a history. I didn't like Christians. At least not the professional ones. The civilians were fine, but those in the limelight? No thanks. I'd been there, and the taste of it soured me on Christianity as a profession. Furthermore, I didn't like a lot of what I saw in Christian bookstores. Like bringing marshmallows to a house fire. So what would possess me to say, "I'd like to start a Christian publishing company"?

I know now that it was the Holy Spirit. I hadn't paid much attention to him lately, but he was still there, patiently watching out for me. A lot of rough edges have been smoothed since that day, and I've learned that grace, forgiveness, and minding my own business go a long way toward healing and actually being useful in God's purpose.

So here we are, almost twenty years since that day on the loading dock, 150 authors, 250 titles published, and more than a million books sold.

The publishers no longer chose who would be worthy of being published.

The journey has been an adventure. We learned and experimented as we went ... and learned more and experimented more. It wasn't just me being new to the book publishing business. Technology had introduced possibilities that rolled over

the traditional publishing world like a tsunami, and whatever orthodoxy or "laws" in the old world of publishing were washed away by the flood.

The publishers no longer chose who would be worthy of being published. Authors could choose for themselves. The old supply chain of publisher to distributor to bookstore to reader was decimated. Neighborhood bookstores went from being both the gatekeeper and the gateway to nearly extinct. Readers' choices exploded from what a local bookstore carried to every book ever written. It was a good time to learn the publishing business from scratch because the world was quickly scratching away every old publishing rule. Serious cracks were developing at the base of traditional publishing's ivory towers.

Introduction

Authors were launched into a new frontier. They no longer needed the permission of traditional publishers to share their message with the world. Self-publishing was born, and that spawned self-publishing companies promising to hold the author's hand through the process. Some traditional publishers, adapting as quickly as their bulk would allow, created self-publishing divisions of their own; providing the illusion of traditional prestige but leaving the author still self-published.

Eventually, news of "hybrid" publishers surfaced. They promised authors autonomy over their work and a partnership in producing, distributing, and marketing their work.

Authors have several publishing choices today, but you should have answers to the seven questions in this book before making a choice that could determine the difference between the success and failure of your book.

Congratulations!

There's a lot of work in turning an idea into a manuscript and a manuscript into a book. I'm excited that you have begun! You're ahead of 95% of those who say they want to write a book someday. Just remember, wherever you are in the process, the answers found inside *Seven Questions* can help make your book a success!

This book presents seven questions you must answer *before* publishing if you want to give your book the best chance for success. You need to be thinking about and finding answers to these questions *while* you're still planning your book and working on your manuscript!

Your success depends on how much you know about the road ahead and how well you've prepared for it in advance.

Who Is This Book For?

I wrote this book for authors who are also professionals. Since True Potential was founded as a faith-based publisher, most of our authors are Christian ministry leaders and influencers. But our first, and one of our greatest success stories involves the faith journey of an oil and gas company CEO. As our ministry market grew, we met business and health professionals who

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wanted to share their stories with the world. Today we serve our authors in three areas; **True Potential Faith** (Christian ministry professionals), **True Potential Business** (entrepreneurs and business professionals), and **True Potential Life** (health, wellness, and quality of life professionals).

The common denominator is that our authors are all fully involved in sharing their stories, their profession, their gifts, and their faith with the world as a manifestation of their true potential and God-given purpose.

Writing and publishing your book may be one of the most important things you will ever do. As an author, you may have one book inside or several. Some of our more popular authors have written and published more than a dozen books. How many books you publish isn't as important as how well you reach the world with the book you're publishing now.

Choosing the right publisher as a partner in sharing your story with the world may be just as important. Your book shares your story. It has to be the best it can possibly be. Your message has to reach its intended audience. It's your publisher's job to help it do just that.

It isn't a matter of being able to "afford" the right publisher. This is your story, your message to the world. You certainly can't afford the wrong publisher. In fact, poor-performing publishers and self-publishing companies can cost a lot more than matching your message to the perfect publisher for you.

Planning For Success

This is your story, your message, something that you alone are uniquely qualified to share with the world in a way that only you can share it.

Successfully publishing your book is too important to leave to chance.

Your story, when it becomes a book, can extend far beyond your local world to reach readers in places that you may not now imagine. Your book is also part of your legacy. It is capable of touching lives beyond your lifetime here.

Introduction

My father, Jim Spillman, wrote several books. He passed away in 2002, but his books still touch lives today. I receive calls and emails regularly from people whose lives have been changed by what my father wrote decades ago.

Successfully publishing your book is too important to leave to chance. And answering these seven questions before you publish could mean the difference between disappointment and success.



"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

- TONI MORRISON

Question 1

Why Am I Writing This Book?

My plane arrived at O'Hare two hours late; just before 10 P.M. I grabbed my bag from the carousel and headed out to the taxi queue. The night was cold and windy and wet in a way that only a Chicago winter can give a guy. Thirty minutes later, my cab dropped me at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile entrance. It's a beautiful hotel; enough to make me forget the wet and wind and cold outside, almost.

*It was late, and I was tired. I wanted a room and a bed. Once I was in the room and had stashed my bags, I checked the night stand drawer (habit? boredom? I don't know). There was a Gideon Bible, a Book of Mormon, and a little paperback – **Marriott, The J. Willard Marriott Story** by Robert O'Brian.*

*When I rolled into bed, I pulled **Marriott** out of the night stand drawer and read a few pages, then a few more. **Marriott turned out to be a fascinating book, and J. Willard Marriott, a fascinating man!***

He was a Mormon (that explained the Book of Mormon in the drawer next to the Bible), and he was a remarkably industrious and entrepreneurial kid. As Marriott grew up, so did his industry and entrepreneurialism.

After their Utah wedding Marriott and his new bride, Alice ("Allie"), headed for Washington D.C., where they soon opened the first A&W Root Beer stand.

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Then another, and another. The Root Beer stands grew into restaurants; “Hot Shoppes.” Then the Marriotts opened their first “motor-hotel” ... then another. At this point, I dozed off.

*When I checked out the following day, **Marriott, The J. Willard Marriott Story** was in my briefcase (I did leave the Gideon Bible and the Book of Mormon in the drawer). I didn’t ask if the book was complimentary, but I wanted to finish the story, and my guess was they had replacements.*

*I finished the book on my flight home. When I unpacked my briefcase at home, I put **Marriott on my bookshelf, and it stayed there for years until I gave it to someone.***

*Something happened to me when I read that book. Marriott shared a piece of his life with me. There was a name, face, and life behind the brick and mortar of the hotels I stayed in. I became a fan of J. W. Marriott and the hotel chain. When traveling and given a choice, I chose Marriott. And I told Marriott’s story to friends and fellow travelers. **I became a Marriott evangelist.***

I’m not sure how much money the Marriott organization spent twenty years ago putting that little paperback into the night stand drawers. But I do know that I spent thousands of dollars in Marriott hotels over the next few decades because of it.

Today, as a publisher, the Marriott lesson isn’t lost on me. Sharing a story is also sharing a life. It can be the life of a person or an organization. Sharing creates fans, and fans become evangelists. They share your story, and that makes new fans. And fans remain fans long after they’ve finished your book.

Why We Write Books

Have you ever asked yourself what made you want to write a book in the first place? **There are a lot of reasons why. For most of us, they begin with, “I need to...”**

- “I need to tell my story.”
- “I need to share this message.”

Why Am I Writing This Book?

- “I need to help those who may have been in a similar situation.”
- “I need to teach an important lesson or share an insight.”
- “I need to reach a wider audience.”
- “I need to explain this in more depth than I could in a sermon, teaching session, or blog post.”
- “I need to do it for my own sake. If I don’t get it out of my head by writing it down, I’ll go crazy.”
- “I need to feed my muse, my creative spirit.”
- “I need to because God told me to.”
- “I need to use my position or status in the community to reach others for good.”
- “I need to use my business as a platform to reach others for the good.”
- “I need to share the story of this unique person, place, organization, or event with the world.”
- “I need to make a living.” There’s nothing wrong with that, as long as it’s really your “why.”

Take a moment now to reflect on why you’re writing this book. If you’ve already written your book, stop and remember your why. Can you write your “why” down in a sentence? Do it now. Keep your “why” sentence in front of you. Write it on a Post-it® note, as a screen saver for your computer or phone, or even on your bathroom mirror. Let your “why” be ever-present as you write and contemplate those you hope to serve with your message.

Take a moment
now to reflect on
why you’re writing
this book.

As you read what you’ve written, test it against your “why”. Is your message faithful to your “why”? If not, it may not be the message; it may be your “why”. When we write, there often come times when we’re “in the zone.” Words flow from within us out onto the page. Our prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain responsible for logical, organized, planned thinking, takes a back seat. What we write in this state seems to come from somewhere

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else, deep inside. Scientists may call that place our subconscious or intuitive side of our brain. Artists call it “the muse,” after the Greek god of poetic inspiration. I believe that God has a plan and purpose for each of our lives, and I believe that what comes out of our writing “in the zone” is directed by the Holy Spirit, bringing our message from inside, into to the light of day.

I don't want to come off as spooky or mystical. Still, I want you to understand that when you write, especially when you are caught up in your writing,

Don't be surprised if, through your writing, you discover more about your “why.”

what comes out may be more honest, creative, and powerful than your planning, outline, and poor old prefrontal cortex can express all by itself. Unless you're writing an instruction manual for a microwave oven, don't be afraid

to let your writing take you where it will; this kind of writing will surprise you and bring your real “why” more into focus.

So, **begin with a “why.”** It will direct you as you craft your message. But don't be surprised if, through your writing, you begin to discover more about your “why.” I've always thought that most authors write for themselves. They may think they are giving their message to the world, but they are the first to receive it. The work shapes the author first; only then is it free to shape the world.

Enough looking inward to find your “why” for now. Let's turn our attention to what you want your book to accomplish in the real world.

A Book Can Be More Than A Book

For professionals especially, a book can be more than just a book. It can tell your story and the story of your organization. Not just what you or your organization does, or how it does it, but why your organization exists, and the lives behind it. Your story is what connects you with your readers, parishioners, followers, clients, customers, or donors. Your story is the why. If you succeed in sharing the why with others, outsiders become insiders. Insiders become fans, and fans become evangelists.

Why Am I Writing This Book?

Ministry Leaders

A book can be exponentially more valuable to ministry leaders than the book's sale price, whether we calculate that value in economic or spiritual results.

Writing and publishing your book helps you refine your message and dramatically expand its reach beyond your current ministry bounds. It can also go a long way toward supporting your ministry financially. From my experience, both growing up in ministry and publishing hundreds of books for ministry leaders, I'm guessing that you didn't go into ministry for the money. Most ministry leaders are financially compensated less than their secular professional counterparts, and their ministry organizations often operate on a shoestring. Book sales and the secondary revenue books often generate can significantly give back to the ministry financially.

Improving your personal and ministry finances is great; you deserve it! Your book is something that makes that possible. But, as I just said, you probably didn't go into ministry for the money. There's something bigger at stake. Your book can allow your message to travel beyond your community and share your story and your vision with the world. Your "community" is no longer bound by geography when your book goes out into the world. The lives your story touches could be next door or a continent away.

Public Speakers

As a public speaker, whether you're a pastor, evangelist, teacher, or anyone who speaks to audiences, being a published author will boost your performance, audience, message effectiveness, and income. Here are six reasons why:

1. Being a published author makes you a better speaker. Having a published book doesn't necessarily make you an 'expert,' but writing and publishing a book makes you *more* of an 'expert.' The writing and publishing process sharpens your thinking and clarifies and organizes your oral presentation. It can make your message more dynamic and more popular. Your book won't necessarily guarantee your expertise or charisma, but it certainly contributes to the possibility!

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2. No matter how compelling your live presentation is, you can only fit so much into a sermon, teaching, or speech. Also, there's no 're-wind' in a live presentation – you've got to say it right, and they've got to be listening. Your book is your message expanded and explained, and the perfect backup for your live presentation. Your book allows your audience to deep dive into your message and reflect on your words by taking it home with them after your talk.
3. Selling books after your speaking event creates additional revenue. Several of our authors make more from book sales after speaking than the honorarium they receive *for* speaking. In some cases, your venue may not offer an honorarium; your book sales revenue will be the only compensation you may receive. And that may be what makes the engagement financially possible for you.
4. The fact that you have a published book means that you've invested the time and energy to understand and communicate your message. Your host and your potential audience want to know that they can invest their time and resources in your message. A book with your name on it is the easiest, quickest way to establish credibility among those interested in your topic but who may not know you personally.
5. Being a published author can increase the number and quality of your speaking invitations. Your host wants the best possible result for its audience. If your host is a church or a public event, they want the best possible experience and outcome for their people. Because you are a published author, your host can know that you've most likely done your homework on the subject, and your book allows the host to understand and vet your message up-front before inviting you to share it with their audience.
6. Being a published author makes you easier to find. Let's face it, an internet search is one of the first things a host does when considering a potential speaker; and this is the most common validation step in the vetting process. Your online footprint should appear early and often by searching your name. Having a published book by a reputable publisher with a robust 21st-century marketing and

Why Am I Writing This Book?

distribution infrastructure adds significantly to your online footprint. Even if you have a website, blog, and Social Media accounts, the online ‘places’ and frequency with which you and your book can be found dramatically increase your online footprint and content.

Entrepreneurs and Professionals

If you’re a business owner or professional (a coach, consultant, dentist, chiropractor, etc.), your “*why*” may be to expand your reach to a wider audience. Your book allows your message to transcend the traditional geographic or other boundaries that your company, practice, clientele, and audience may currently limit you. And your book allows you to stand out from competitors in your market and may create opportunities to enter new markets.

Your “*why*” may be like J. W. Marriott’s; to tell your story and to inspire potential clients, stakeholders, and other entrepreneurs. Or, your “*why*” may be to use the platform your business or practice has given you to share a bigger message, a greater “*why*” with the world. Whatever your “*why*” is, your book will help you share it with the world.

Chapter 1 Questions

1. What first went through your mind when you began writing?
2. Do you have a special story to tell or a message to share? Write out your “why” and set the goals you have for your book that match your why.
3. If you have several “whys,” go ahead and write them down, but decide on the biggest “why.”
4. What have you learned about your “why” through your writing? Has your “why” changed or been shaped as you read what you’ve written?

Narrowing your “why” down to the biggest one is important because it will point in the direction you need to go next.



"Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get."

- DALE CARNEGIE

Question 2

What Does Success Look Like?

I was holding a purchase order for one thousand copies, to be delivered as soon as possible. Great news! But there were a few kinks to work out. We owned the publishing rights for the book, but we hadn't published it yet. We hadn't actually published any book yet, ever. The author, my father, had passed away a few years earlier, and all I had was a yellowed twenty-year-old copy of the original. There were no print files in existence, but that was okay because we had never printed a book before.

I jumped in the car and drove to the Office store to buy a scanner and desktop publishing software (back then, Office stores sold office stuff, and Amazon only sold books). We scanned the yellowed pages of the old original and ran it through our new optical character recognition (OCR) software that theoretically turned the scanned images of letters back into real letters. I say, theoretically, because OCR doesn't know the difference between the number 1 and the letter l. You can see why. Neither is it good at distinguishing o from e or c. If the software got 90% of the letters right, it also got 10% of them wrong. It was like hunting Easter eggs in a black and white movie. Thankfully, it was a little book, only 79 pages. We finally got the inside formatted, designed a cover that mimicked the original, found a printer, and we were off to the races.

Four weeks later, we delivered our first one thousand copies. Then the customer ordered 5,000 more copies. Then, 10,000. They kept ordering, and we kept ful-

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filling orders. By the time the dust settled, we had delivered more than 300,000 copies.

This little book told the story of a “Last Days” oil discovery in the land of Israel. Our customer was an oil company exploring for oil in, you guessed it, the land of Israel. They simply shared the book with potential investors and let it tell the story. Readers caught the vision, and potential investors became shareholders. They never sold a single copy. Selling books was never their goal. Their definition of success was to share their vision with the world. The company went public in 2007 and raised more than \$100 million. They’re still drilling for oil in Israel today. Success for them isn’t about selling a book; it’s about bringing energy independence to Israel.

What first went through your mind when you began writing?

- Did you want your book on the New York Times bestseller list?
- Did you want your book to make children smile?
- Did you want to make a living as a writer?
- Did you want to reach more people with the gospel?
- Did you want to differentiate your business?
- Did you want to share your testimony with others?
- Did you want to help others live better lives?
- Did you want to encourage or inspire those who are hurting?
- Did you want to challenge the complacent?

Publishing a successful book depends on how you define “success.”

The definition of a book’s success can be subjective and unique to the author’s wider goals. If you choose to self-publish, be very clear and specific about why you’re writing the book, who your audience is, and what your goals are for the book. If you’re working with a publisher, it’s a good idea to define and agree at the beginning of the process on the definition of success for this book. Write down your definition of success, and then paint a picture in your mind of what success achieved will look like.

What Does Success Look Like?

If you're a full-time author who writes for a living, your definition of success for your book may be to sell 10,000, 100,000, or even a million copies of your book.

If you're a public speaker, your definition of success for your book may be to double your speaking engagements, double your honorarium, double the books you sell at live events, or all three.

Your idea of success may be simply seeing your long-dreamed-of book become a reality to share with family and friends or to share your story with the world, to leave a legacy that will live on long after you're gone.

If you represent a ministry or business, the definition of success for your organization may have less to do with selling books than it does with growing your ministry or promoting your business. Don't forget that a book can be worth much more to your organization than the cost of the book itself.

How do you define success for your book?

The definition of "success" can be different for every author and story.

- A famous Christian TV personality once lamented to me that his last book had sold fewer than 50,000 copies. In his mind, the book was a disappointment. His first book was a worldwide bestseller. "Success," for this author, apparently, was selling a lot more than 50,000 books.
- In the next chapter, I'll tell you a story of a lady who published three books to leave a legacy of wisdom for her family. She didn't sell many books. She gave most of them away to family and friends as part of her legacy. Paving the way to a better life for future generations was her definition of success.
- I have a friend who has written a lot of books over the last forty years. He has recorded hundreds of audio and video programs; he started a church and a Bible school. Whether it's his books, his audio or video programs, or the institutions he founded, he's only had one definition of success in the last forty years, to change the way the world sees God by reaching one billion people with the good news of the Gospel.

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Making a bestseller list, making a ton of money, and other poor definitions of success

If reaching a wider audience is your goal, then your definition of success might be something like, *“Publish the best book possible, share it with the widest possible audience, and put it into global distribution in multiple formats on multiple sales channels.”*

If inspiring others through your story is your goal, then your definition of success may be something like, *“Touching the lives of a million people through my story, giving them new hope and the promise of a better future.”*

Did you notice that *“Being on the New York Times Bestseller list”* or *“Making a ton of money”* wasn't included in either of the goal scenarios above?

You can buy or game your way onto a bestseller list (a lot of authors and publishers have), and you can make a ton of money in book sales by spending two tons of money promoting (a lot of authors and publishers have done that too.) Do you really want your definition of success seeing your name on a list made up by strangers? Is the promise of temporary admiration of people you don't know really what you want your book to mean? People and the lists they make up are fickle. They turn on a dime. Remember that the first Palm Sunday and the first Good Friday were only five days apart.

Books should be about more than making money. They should be about changing lives.

Is making a ton of money really the reason you wrote your book? Maybe it is. But books should be about more than making money. They should be about changing lives. Change enough lives, and the money comes along – it's a result, not a reason. The day you pass from this earth to what's next, your money won't be worth much there. But I've got to believe that the lives you've improved here will pay dividends

there. If you're only in it for the money, invest in real estate or the stock market, it's easier than getting rich from a book, and at least you're being honest about your definition of success.

What Does Success Look Like?

Don't get me wrong. Having your book on a bestseller list and making money are great outcomes, but they're outcomes, not great goals. I want your success to be more profound and longer-lasting than lists and money.

Your publisher's definition of success

If your publisher doesn't understand why you're sharing your definition of success for your book with them. If they're not interested in your definition of success it's time to find a new publisher. But if your publisher does understand and agree, you've got a powerful partner and ally in actually achieving the success you've defined for your book.

Word of warning

Your publisher may not agree with your definition of success for your book because it they see potential flaws.

Your definition of success may be "*to sell a million copies.*" But your publisher may recognize that you haven't built an audience or that the potential market for your book doesn't add up to a million copies.

Your publisher may suggest some tweaks to the manuscript or some additional content to increase your opportunity for success. They may suggest cutting some non-essential material in order for the story to come through better for the reader. Listen to your publisher. Hear them out. They've published more books than you have.

You and your publisher agreeing on and working toward your shared definition of success greatly increases your chance of success. Just make sure you've agreed on what success looks like at the beginning of the publishing process, not after your book is published.

When to define success:

1. Decide on your definition of success for this book before you begin writing.
2. Revisit your definition of success for this book once your manuscript is complete. Is your definition of success still valid?

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3. Share your definition of “success” for the book with your publisher. If you plan to self-publish, share your definition of success with a trusted friend or advisor who won’t sugar-coat their response to save your feelings.
4. Be sure your publisher is listening, and listen to your publisher until you’ve both agreed on what “success” for this book looks like.
5. Be sure your book is built around your shared idea of success throughout the publishing process.
6. Begin your marketing and launch plans as soon as the publishing agreement is signed, not after the book is published. Your marketing and launch plan should be built around your shared definition of success for this book.

Putting it all together

Whatever your definition of success is for your book, write it down, clarify it, test it, and partner with a publisher who understands what success means to you and will work with you to accomplish it.

From conception to final product, your book has been planned and built around your definition of “success.”

Defining what success means to you doesn’t guarantee that your book will be a success. This is where testing your definition of success comes in. Testing is simply matching your definition of success with the reality of your market and your willingness to invest the time, effort, and resources to achieve it.

From conception to final product, your book has been planned and built around your definition of success. Your publisher agrees with your definition of success and has partnered with you to turn your definition of success into reality. By the time your book hits its release date, you’ll know that it was built for your definition of success and that the plan to achieve that success has been working for months. Your audience is waiting.

Chapter 2 Questions

1. Have you thought about what you want to accomplish through your book? Take a few minutes right now to think about it.
2. Have you written down your definition of success for your book? Take some time now to write down what you think success for your book will look like.
3. Is your definition of success for your book somewhere you can see it each day? Keep your definition of success for your book in sight as you finish your manuscript and begin the publishing process.
4. Have you revisited your definition of success for your book lately? Don't be afraid to review and revise your definition of success as the process from writing to publishing progresses.



"Your audience is one single reader.... It helps to pick out one person-a real person you know, or an imagined person-and write to that one."

- JOHN STEINBECK

Question 3

Who Is My Audience?

Sandra arrived at our publishing offices almost an hour early. As I greeted her in the lobby, she mentioned that her husband and children were in the car. It was summer and I couldn't imagine her family waiting in the car, in the sun, as we talked about her book. I asked her to invite her family to join us.

Sandra had called our office the previous week asking for a meeting with "the publisher." True Potential is not necessarily a local publisher. Our authors are spread across the country and even around the globe. I've met many of our authors personally, but it's not uncommon to have worked with an author for years and never have met face-to-face. It was less common for someone to call out of the blue and ask for a face-to-face meeting before we discussed the book. Sandra lived in the next state, probably five hours away by automobile. I thought, "If she's more comfortable meeting in person to discuss her book, fine." I didn't know she would show up with the whole family.

Her husband, Leo, was a big man, quiet but sincere when he spoke, which he didn't do much. Their two sons, Samuel and William, in their early teens, were polite when spoken to; otherwise, they didn't speak. Each had brought with him a library book. Leo joined Sandra and me at the conference table while the boys sat quietly on the other side of my office, reading their books.

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I had no idea how Sandra had chosen us as her intended publisher, so I asked, "How did you first hear about True Potential?"

She told me she had read one of the books we published, and it convinced her that we should be the publisher of her story. Okay. That's happened before.

I asked her about her audience. "Who do you want to reach with your message?" She shot a glance to her two sons, reading on the other side of the room, and said, "I want to reach my family, and I want to leave them with the wisdom that I've learned so that their lives will be easier than mine."

Then she, almost imperceptibly, turned her head toward her husband and nodded. Leo pulled from his pocket an envelope. He opened it and counted out, in used bills, the amount of the publishing package displayed on our website. Well, that was a first.

I wasn't interested in taking their money before I made sure they understood what they were doing. Picking up on her body language, I asked, "So, you say your audience is your sons?"

"Oh no, Mr. Spillman, it's more than that."

I wished she wouldn't have called me "Mr. Spillman."

Sandra told me, "My father was a pastor. Three of my brothers and sisters are adopted. The families of our church fostered more than 500 children. Samuel and William are adopted. I am doing this for them; all of them. I am doing this for my family."

I understood. Sandra knew exactly who her audience was.

Your audience is not "everyone."

As I did with Sandra, one of the first questions I ask new authors is, "*Who is your intended audience?*"

They often think I'm asking, "What kind of people do you think will like your book?" What I mean is, "**Who exactly is your audience?**"

Who Is My Audience?

Do you have a list of people who know, like, and trust you? Have you told them about your upcoming book, and are they ready to buy it when it's released? That's an audience!

Who Is My Audience?

Family and friends - those in real life and friends and followers on Social Media. I tell authors to make a list of names of the first people who will buy their book. Is that a little too specific? No. Here's why. The only people who will buy your book are those who know it exists, have an interest in your book's subject matter, and know, like, or trust you. For someone to buy your book, they have to know it exists.

Amazon is not going to tell them. Bookstores (almost extinct establishments supposedly "responsible" for selling your book) will not tell them. And Oprah Winfrey is not going to tell them.

You are going to tell them. And for you to tell them, I'll assume that they already know, like, or trust you, or you're currently working hard to get them to know, like, or trust you. These folks are your first audience; they're the first ones who will buy your book.

Influencers - Another significant group of people may buy your book. People who know, like, or trust someone who knows, likes, or trusts you. We call this someone an "influencer." Think of it as a friend-of-a-friend. They influence others (their audience) to pay attention to you or your book. That's why we give books away or introduce authors to influencers; so that they might learn about the book and the author and share the message or the author with their audience. That's why authors do TV, radio, and podcast interviews. That's why they guest post on other blogs. That's why they join the conversation with a larger audience on Social Media. In addition to building their audience, smart authors join in with other audiences, which, if done well, builds their audience.

The only people who will buy your book are those who know it exists, are interested in the subject, and know, like, or trust you.

Will They Care About My Book?

People aren't going to purchase your book just because it's in print. First, they need to know about it, why they should care (what answers does it hold for them), and why they should trust you with the answers. That's marketing, and it needs to begin before, not after, the book is in print.

People are self-centered when it comes to the information they consume. Sorry, but it's a fact. Consumers, especially book consumers, have too many choices and limited time. Your book had better have something they want, or they're not going to buy it, even if they know, like, or trust you.

Readers don't
buy books; they
buy the promise
a book makes.

A reader doesn't buy a book; she buys a promise. The promise your book makes to improve her life, her looks, her situation, her finances, her family, her faith, her relationships, her health, etc.). If your mom buys your book, she will show it off to her friends and say, "*Look what*

my daughter/son wrote!" Even mom isn't exempt from self-interest.

That's okay, though. It's part of the business of selling books. Your book is a promise. It's a promise to your reader that what's inside will spark an interest, fulfill a desire, satisfy a need or solve a problem. That's the promise a book makes. That's why we write, and that's why they read.

Before you write, while you write, after you write, ask yourself, "Am I speaking to the interests, the desires, the wants, the needs of my readers? Am I solving the problem I promised to solve when they read my book?"

New authors (and some not so new) can be under the impression that once their book is published, it will somehow find its way to its 'audience,' or that the 'audience' will find its way to the book and the book will sell to 'everyone.'

It doesn't happen that way. Your audience, the people who know you and care about your message, will be your first readers. Remember, too, that your audience is made up of individuals. An audience doesn't buy books; individuals buy books. To build a great audience, speak to the individual.

Who Is My Audience?

Audience Is Singular

1. **‘Audience’ isn’t plural.** It sounds plural, I know, and it’s a lot easier to fantasize about an ‘audience’ of thousands than it is to get an audience of one to buy your book. ‘Audience’ is an aggregate of individuals, each of whom must discover your book and resonate with its message or author to the point of parting with cash to purchase your book.
2. **Each individual in your ‘audience’ has a name ... and a face.** People buy your books, not ‘audiences,’ ‘markets,’ or ‘demographics.’ **Stop selling your book to an ‘audience.’ Start sharing your message with Mary, Bob, or Judy.** If you’re sharing your story with a group, on a blog, or via Social Media, pretend you’re in your kitchen, sitting across the table from Mary, Bob, or Judy. Share your message, like your sharing it with a friend over coffee in your kitchen. It’s more likely that your message will resonate, and Mary, Bob, or Judy will respond by buying your book.
3. **Friends share with friends.** Once your book has resonated with a reader, provide a place where your reader, your new friend, can share your message with their friends. It can be as easy as a Facebook page, a blog, or simply a personal request to share your book with a friend. People need to share with others. You provide the message and mechanism and ask them to share your message; your reader will do the rest.

Individuals
buy books. To
build a great
audience, speak
to the individual.

Bonus Tip:

This is probably the most valuable advice a new author can receive. **Don’t wait until your book is published to build your audience! Build your audience now!**

- Share your message with family and friends.
- Share your message via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and whatever other Social Media platform you’re using.

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- Share your message on a blog.
- Volunteer to speak to groups.
- Anywhere, everywhere, there's an opportunity to share your message!

Don't worry that you might be 'giving away' all of the valuable content from your upcoming book. That's not a reality. The more you give and share, the more people you will reach who resonate with your message. Those are the people who will be ready to buy your book when it is published.

Chapter 3 Questions

1. Who are the individuals who make up your audience? Can you name them?
2. Why should they care about your book?
3. Can you turn the people in your audience into fans? Can you turn them into evangelists?



"The size of your audience is more important than the size of your book."

- BERNARD KELVIN CLIVE

Question 4

What Am I Doing Now To Build My Audience?

I received a letter the other day from a man in prison. We receive them fairly regularly. Prisoners are allowed to write to request books. Since they're not allowed to contact the authors directly, the letters come to us. Jesus had something to say about showing mercy and love to those in prison. When we get these letters, we send the book, or books, they request.

The prisoner who wrote this letter, though, wasn't asking for a book. He had been reading a book about prayer, [The Voice and Two Hours on Tuesday](#), by [Pamela Lash](#). Because of this book, the prisoner was learning to pray and had a question for the author. I could tell from the letter that, whatever it was that landed him in prison, this guy's spiritual life was taking a profound turn for the better. Reading Pam's book played a part in that. A life had been changed.

Currency like that, for us as a publisher and for our authors, is greater than any dollars we'll ever earn.

As the late Paul Harvey famously quipped, "Now, the rest of the story."

Several years ago, Pam and a few friends began walking and praying. Walking in and around the State Capital, in and around bars, in and around drug

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houses, in and around Masonic Lodges, in and around city government buildings – anywhere their presence and their prayers could have an effect. And it did. They changed lives in their community and beyond.

Pam had a profound story to share, several stories actually, of changed lives, saved lives, and healed communities. She contacted me about publishing the book that would tell these stories and provide advice to other believers for “prayer walking” in their own communities.

Her story, in a book, could light a flame that would spread far beyond her little Indiana town, across a nation, across a continent, maybe further.

Pam had a story, but not much else, certainly not any of the “requirements” of becoming a published author.

- *Pam didn't have the money to publish a book. She lived off of her Social Security check; it was enough to keep her fed and sheltered but not much else.*
- *Pam didn't have email.*
- *She didn't have a website or an “audience.”*
- *Pam was in her seventies. She had health issues and she needed surgery.*
- *Pam was not a good candidate for publishing.*

When she called me, she told me she didn't have the money to publish her book. I told her not to worry about it, that if her book was meant to be published, it would be. Finances have a way of showing up when a story is ready to share.

She sent me her manuscript. I read it, and she was right: it was an amazing, inspiring story. But she didn't have the money to publish it, and she didn't have the audience or a way of creating an audience to sell her book if it was published.

I told Pam not to worry about it. If she really felt like God had wanted her to write this book, finding the finances to publish it wouldn't be a problem. I suggested she pray about it. After all, her life was full of miracles as a result of her prayer walking; why not this?

What Am I Doing Now To Build My Audience?

I've told you about what Pam didn't have. Let me tell you what she did have:

- *She had a story she knew God wanted her to share with the world.*
- *She had friends who believed in her and her story.*
- *She had a Facebook account.*

A few weeks later, Pam called me. Her friend Cindy asked if she could cover the cost of publishing Pam's book. Cindy had seen the lives of others touched and the town itself transformed through Pam's prayer walking. Cindy believed the story needed to be told. We published the book.

Is this the end of the story? Nope.

It turns out that Pam's friend Cindy who underwrote the cost of publishing her book, was Cindy Sunday-Bartha, a relative of the early 20th Century baseball player and evangelist, Billy Sunday. Cindy also traveled the country and she volunteered to take Pam's book and sell them wherever went.

*The first printing of **The Voice and Two Hours on Tuesday** went faster than we expected. We ran out of inventory from the second printing, and we're planning a third. Pam is still prayer walking and changing her community through the power of those prayers. Lives are being touched outside of her community through the stories in her book. I was reminded of that again ... from a letter I received the other day from a man in prison.*

Whenever God gives you a mission, He provides the means to accomplish the mission. Your job is to do everything within your power to complete it. I believe He holds us responsible for that, but not for those things beyond our power. For those things, He reserves His mercy, grace, and supply.

Whenever God gives you a mission, He provides the means to accomplish the mission.

Use what you've got, do your job, and allow God to do His. And a little prayer walking wouldn't hurt.

When To Begin Building Your Audience

An old proverb says that the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago; the second-best time is now.

As it goes with trees, it also goes with audiences. If you haven't begun yet, begin today. Don't wait until your book is published. You need to begin building your audience now, whether it's through a blog, Social Media, public speaking, church groups, or all of the above.

First-time authors often believe the myth that once their book is published, readers will automatically discover it, bookstores will request it, and sales will happen just because the book exists. Myths aren't reality.

Another myth is that authors and publishers shouldn't begin marketing until the book is in print.

Here's a fact: those who will buy your books either already know, like, and trust you, or they're following the recommendation of someone they know, like, and trust who knows, likes, and trusts you. Very few readers purchase books that just happen to catch their attention without having heard about the author or the book being recommended by someone they know.

Marketing needs to begin way before your book is in print.

Even if your book is the perfect solution to a reader's problem, and the cover perfectly portrays that your book is their answer, they'll never see it unless you've done something to make your book rise above the millions of other books available. That "something" is called marketing, and it needs to begin way before your book is in print.

You may ask, "How can I market my book if it doesn't even exist?"

Marketing and selling are two different things. Marketing is making others aware of your book (in this case, your upcoming book). Marketing is telling potential readers why they should be interested in your book, the answers it gives for their problem, and why you're the person to whom they should listen.

What Am I Doing Now To Build My Audience?

Selling is when the reader purchases your book. Unless the reader already knows about your book, believes it holds the answer she's looking for, and trusts that you're the one to give it to her, she'll never buy your book.

Marketing comes before selling, and if you're smart, you'll be marketing well in advance of your book being available for sale.

Where Do I Begin?

Begin where you are. Do you have a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or any other Social Media account? Do you have a website, a blog, a YouTube channel, or even a podcast? Do you belong to a church, professional organization, or club? Begin by sharing on platforms you already belong to or use. If you feel like your existing platforms are limited, look into joining or creating more.

Begin a conversation around the ideas that first inspired you to write about your subject.

I'm not saying to join every Social Media platform or to start a blog, YouTube channel, or podcast, and join a bigger church. I'm saying to begin where you are and consider other possible platforms that may be effective in sharing your message with the world.

What Do I Say?

First of all, begin a conversation around the ideas that first inspired you to write about your subject. Is your book about stopping human trafficking? Praise and worship? Raising children? Building a better small business? Whatever theme inspired you to write your book, that's where to begin the conversation. Offer interesting facts or engaging stories about your subject. Ask questions or solicit comments. If you're online, your posts don't need to be long and elaborate, but they do need to be regular. Short, engaging comments every day beat an elaborate article once a month. Adding images or short videos to drive engagement. People browse Social Media channels and websites; they don't read what's on them word-for-word.

If you belong to a church, professional organization, or club, offer to speak on your subject or teach a class. You've got plenty to share with the world,

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or you wouldn't have written a book. Share your ideas and thoughts now, before your book is ready. This is the most powerful thing you can do to prepare your readers to buy your book when it is ready.

Chapter 4 Questions:

1. Do I have an audience now for my book?
2. What are the two best times to build an audience?
3. What am I doing right now to build my audience?



"The best marketing doesn't feel like marketing."

- TOM FISHBURNE

Question 5

What Is My Marketing Plan?

***“We can get your books into Walmart.** But let us tell you what’s going to happen. You’re going to get a purchase order for 50,000 books at a discount so great that you’ll be selling those books at a price very close to your printing cost. You’re going to have them printed and shipped to distribution centers around the country. You’ll also pay the shipping cost. Your books will eventually go into Walmart stores, but you won’t be paid for those books until sometime after they sell to Walmart customers. Most of them won’t sell. Somewhere around the 120-day mark, you will start receiving unsold books as returns. You may have to pay a fee for the books Walmart returns. Most of the unsold books you receive back will be in a condition that will prevent you from selling them as new. At the end of this process, maybe six months down the road, you will have paid for printing, shipping, and warehousing 50,000 books. You may have yet to receive payment for any of them, and you may have many, many unsellable books in your warehouse, for which you’re paying rent every month because you’ll need a place to store the unsellable books until you figure out what to do with them.”*

Wow!

When True Potential was just a year old, an opportunity came my way. A friend had set up a meeting with two industry consultants who, my friend told me, could get our books into Walmart and other big chain stores. I booked a

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*flight to Tulsa, and now I was in a room with the two consultants. On the table between us were thirteen books we had published, including the American version of a very large (over 800 pages) and popular (in England) volume titled *Unlocking the Bible*, by David Pawson.*

Bottom line: *We could get this book into Walmart and other big chains on the strength of the consultants' reputation; but it would cost us close to half-a-million dollars up-front that we most likely wouldn't get back. Not the news I was looking for.*

"What should I do?" I asked the consultants.

This was their advice: "Go home, take your books, build an audience for them and sell them to that audience. When you've sold enough of them, some bookstores may gain interest and order some copies for their stores. If and when the audience you've built has bought enough books to receive national attention, more bookstores may come to you. But remember this, bookstores won't buy your books to sell them; bookstores buy your books because they're already selling. They just want their piece of the action. If the action gets big enough, Walmart may come knocking for their piece. Go home, sell your books. If you're successful, bookstores, maybe even Walmart, will come to you."

What Marketing Isn't:

- Listing your book on Amazon.
- Wishing your book was in a bookstore.
- A stack of cartons of your books in your garage.

Don't get me wrong, bookstores are fine places to sell books, if your book is already selling. The fact that your book is printed, has a price, and is in stock is also great, if your book is already selling.

Bookstores don't buy books; Amazon doesn't buy books, distributors don't buy books, and not even TV talk show hosts buy books. People buy books.

So how do you get people to buy your book?

People buy books from authors they know, like, or trust, or because someone they know, like, or trust recommends the book.

What Is My Marketing Plan?

Your message must be communicated to your prospective reader before there's any real chance of that reader buying your book. You can do it yourself, or others can help you do it. It works best, though, if you are doing it yourself *and* others are doing it for you.

These "others" we call your fans and allies. They know, like, or trust you and your message, and they spread the word of that message to others who know, like, or trust them.

In the beginning, your fan base may consist of your mom, sister, neighbor, and sixth-grade teacher. But as your message gains traction, more people will become fans.

Your allies are those who may know, like, and trust you and are willing to share your story with their audience. We call these allies your influencers; this includes your publisher. But marketing your book is only a part of your publisher's job; you are the CEO of marketing your book! How will you market your book and yourself?

You are the CEO
of marketing your
book!

People aren't going to purchase your book just because it's in print. First, they need to know about it, why they should care (what answers does it hold for them), and why they should trust you with the answers. That's marketing, and it needs to begin before, not after, your book is in print.

Do you have a list of names? These are the people who know about your upcoming book and who may be willing to purchase it when it's available? Don't be ashamed to add Mom, Aunt Bessie, and Uncle Carl to the list. Your fan base begins at home.

Best-selling author Tim Ferriss has sold millions of books, and every book he has written has been on the New York Times best-seller list. Where did he begin his fan base? Right at home, with those who knew him best.

Do you have friends at church, a club, or an organization you belong to? Do you have a ministry, club, or organization mailing list? Do you have followers on a blog, a website, or Social Media accounts? These are places to begin marketing your upcoming book. Right now.

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Marketing isn't begging people to buy your books; it's simply sharing the message of your book and pointing out why it may be an answer to a problem or provide value to the reader. People need to know about your book and you before purchasing your book. If you haven't already started, begin working on your list today!

What Is The Difference Between My Audience And My Network?

The most important thing to understand is that "audience" isn't a vague conceptual term. Audience is people. Individuals, each with their own perceptions, needs, understanding, and reasons for listening. Your audience is Bob, Angie, Mary, Frank, and Elaine. They may aggregate at certain places in the real and digital worlds, but they are not "an aggregate." They are real people, individuals; that's how they want to be heard and treated.

Your book is for
"someone."
Forget about
"everyone." Focus
on "someone."

The second most important thing to understand is that your audience isn't "everyone." "Everyone" is not going to want to hear your story, resonate with your message, or buy your book. Your book, the message it carries, is for "someone." We hope, for many "someones." Forget about "everyone." Focus

on "someone." Your job is to identify who those someones are, where they hang out, who they listen to, and become a part of their conversation.

Your network is where your "someone" hangs out, congregates, and aggregates at certain places in the real and digital worlds. This is where they listen to, discuss, and share ideas. This is where you need to join the conversation.

Your audience is made up of people. Your network is made up of places, real or digital, where your people hang out/congregate/aggregate.

What Are My Live (real world) Networks?

The places your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and colleagues hang out.

What Is My Marketing Plan?

Groups, organizations, clubs, and churches – Do you belong to a club or civic organization? The Rotary? The Chamber of Commerce. The PTA? Do you speak to any of these groups? Would you if you were invited to speak? Many of our authors sell most of their books after speaking engagements. It's natural for the group you speak to or teach to want to know more about you, your message, and your ministry or business.

How about your church? How many people attend church with you each week? How many of them know that you're an author, run a para-church ministry, or own a business?

How about your pastor? One of our authors told her pastor about her new book. The next Sunday, her pastor asked her to share her story with the congregation and offered her book for sale in the church bookstore. Over a thousand people attended that morning, *and* the service was televised!

You may be the pastor – that's even better! The people in your congregation come to get fed each week. Just think of how much more of your message your book can share that would never fit in a 20-minute sermon.

Here is a list of places the people in your audience most likely hang out (aggregate) to learn and share ideas, thoughts, opinions, and beliefs in the "live" world. I don't suggest that you try to cultivate *all* of these places, but choose the places that fit you and the people in your audience best.

Live Community

1. Church
2. Ministry
3. Community Organizations
4. Professional Organizations
5. Family and Friends
6. School
7. Neighbors
8. Business/Work

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What Are My Digital Networks?

If you're in ministry or business, you most likely have a website, Social Media accounts, and possibly a mailing list. If not, you'd better consider it. The digital world is how we reach others beyond the boundaries of our own walls, neighborhoods, and cities. Face it, most of your potential audience is

For the first time in history, we can touch people's lives with our message regardless of geography.

most likely outside of your own hometown. For the first time in history, we can touch people's lives with our message regardless of geography. Our authors' books sell worldwide because their websites, Social Media, and email can reach worldwide.

Your Website, Blog, and Mailing List.

Your loyal website and blog readers and mailing list subscribers know you the best and are your first and most powerful book-buying audience. They already know you and are interested in what you've got to say! Those are the people in your core audience.

Social Media

How many Facebook, Twitter, and other Social Media followers do you have? The average Facebook user has 350 "friends" or followers. Suppose you're an average user and your friends or followers are average users. In that case, through Social sharing, you have potential direct or indirect access to around 122,500 people with at least two things in common – a mutual friend and Facebook.

The principle of Social sharing is the same for other Social networks. For example, the average number of Twitter followers per user is 208. $208 \text{ (your followers)} \times 208 \text{ (their followers)} = 43,264$. There are also YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and a host of other Social Media platforms that work on the same principle.

Here is a list of platforms the people in your audience most likely hang out (aggregate) to learn and share ideas, thoughts, opinions, and beliefs in the

What Is My Marketing Plan?

digital world. As I stated earlier, don't try to cultivate *all* of these platforms, but choose the platforms that best fit you and your audience's people.

Digital Community

1. Website
2. Blog
3. Mailing list
4. Facebook
5. YouTube
6. Twitter
7. LinkedIn
8. Pinterest
9. Instagram
10. Other Social Media platforms

IMPORTANT! You don't own your Social Media platforms, you don't make the rules, and the platforms can change the rules any time they want. The goal of your Social Media effort is to cultivate relationships, share ideas and then **drive your new potential audience members to the community you own – your website, blog, or mailing list.**

Do You Have An Elevator Speech?

An “elevator speech” is a **30-second story** – the time it takes to ride an elevator to its next stop. This is the time you have to sell your story to a potential reader. You don't have to do it every time you ride an elevator; most folks would prefer you didn't. But, if the opportunity presents itself, an elevator is as good a place as any to tell your story.

The idea behind an “elevator speech” is to effectively tell your story to a potential reader in 30 seconds. Remember that **you're not trying to sell your book in those 30 seconds; you're trying to sell the promise.** If your listener resonates with your 30-second story, if it communicates that this promise might answer his question or solve his problem, there's a chance he'll buy your book.

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EXAMPLE: Elevator speech for *How to Find God*.

“You know, it seems like everyone is searching for something; peace, meaning, purpose, or happiness, but what they’re really searching for is God. That’s because all those things they’re looking for, come along free when you find Him.

I looked for those things for a long time. But eventually, I discovered that peace, meaning, purpose, and happiness don’t come by searching for them. They come from finding the One who gives them freely. I also discovered that finding Him wasn’t that hard. He was waiting for me. That’s why I wrote this book. I wanted others to find the source of every other thing they’re looking for. It’s pretty easy to find what you’re looking for once you discover where to look.”

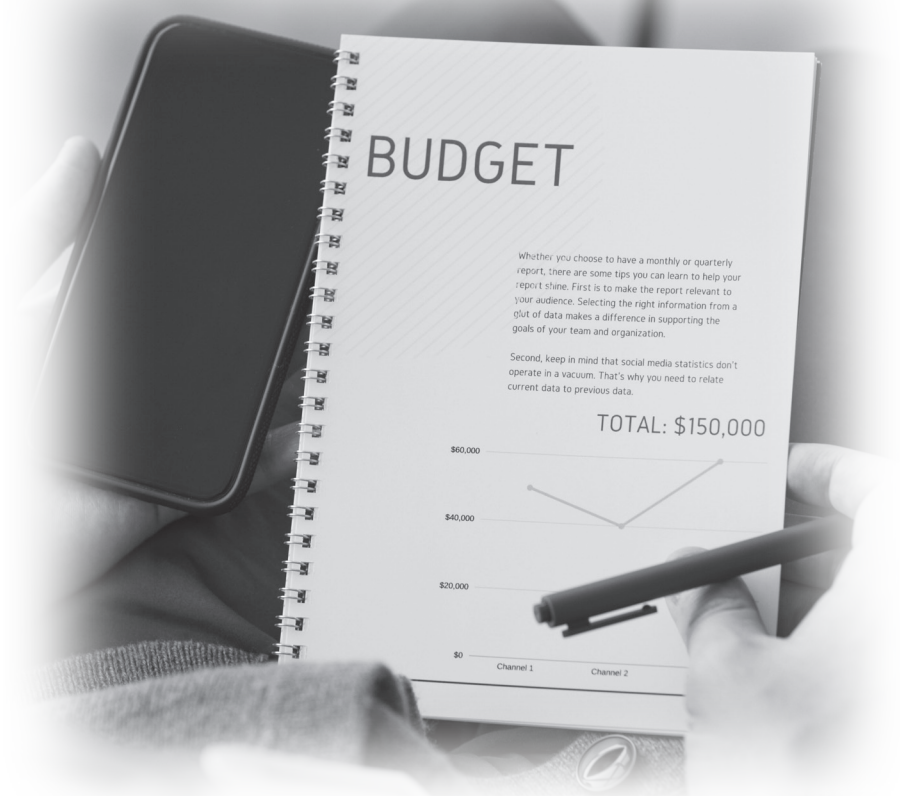
30 seconds exactly!

Think of Marketing as a funnel.

Think of all the platforms you use in the face-to-face and digital worlds to share your story as a big funnel. Your interactions with others on these platforms go into the top of the funnel. As you add more value and develop connections, conversations, and relationships, those in your funnel work their way to the bottom to find your call-to-action. Your call to action is the invitation to buy your book.

Chapter 5 Questions:

1. Do I have a list of people who know, like, and trust me and who may have an interest in my upcoming book?
2. Do I have a list of people who know, like, and trust me who may recommend my upcoming book to those who know, like, and trust them?
3. Do I have a ministry, belong to a church, club, or other organization where I know and engage with others?
4. Do I currently have a blog, website, Social Media accounts, or a mailing list where I can share news about my upcoming books? (list them)



BUDGET

Whether you choose to have a monthly or quarterly report, there are some tips you can learn to help your report shine. First is to make the report relevant to your audience. Selecting the right information from a glut of data makes a difference in supporting the goals of your team and organization.

Second, keep in mind that social media statistics don't operate in a vacuum. That's why you need to relate current data to previous data.

TOTAL: \$150,000



"If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, wait til you hire an amateur."

- RED ADAIR

Question #6

What Is My Publishing Budget?

I left the bank crying... God, I know a year ago you gave me this vision! I know it was you! I know it was not me... How am I going to raise this money? I'm not even getting paid myself... I stopped at the red light and placed my head on the wheel, and thought, God, where is the money for The Garden of Eden going to come from? I heard a clear small voice say, "There is money on the hill." I raised my head. There was only one hill, and it was to my right. I looked up, and I saw the red and white word Budweiser! Budweiser? Really? No way, Devil. I just knew God would not send me to Budweiser to build a children's playground.

When I got back to church, I was crying like a baby. I shared an office with our Outreach Pastor. He kept asking me what was wrong. "What's wrong? What's wrong, Stacy?" I did not dare tell him or anyone else. After an hour or so, he kept saying, "Stacy, come on. What's wrong? This is not like you. Is it about you not getting paid again?"

"No," I replied.

"Oh, it's about The Garden of Eden, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," I replied.

"So you don't think God told you to build it?"

"No, I know he did," I replied.

"Well, what's wrong then?"

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I told him what I heard when I asked God where the money for The Garden of Eden was going to come from. When I explained that God said the money was on the hill, and the only hill had Budweiser on it.

“Stacy, do you... do you know who owns that building?”

“Budweiser,” I said.

“No. Do you know what person owns that building?”

“No,” I said.

“So you don’t know about his daughter?”

“No,” I said.

“Stacy, what is the name of the playground God gave you?”

“The Garden of Eden,” I replied.

“Well, guess who owns the Budweiser building? Bob Edens owns it.”

“Huh, that’s strange. He has the same last name as the Garden,” I said.

“Stacy, it’s not just his last name; it’s his daughter’s.”

“Who is his daughter, and what does she have to do with all this?” I asked.

“Heather Edens. She used to attend our church years before you came. She came here as a little girl.”

“Okay, so...” I said.

“Stacy, she is dead. She died earlier this year in a car accident.”¹

Stacy Cope, a small-town youth pastor of a church that couldn’t even pay his salary, raised sixty-thousand dollars to build what God told him to build - The Garden of Eden children’s playground. Budweiser paid for it.

I met Stacy several years later, now senior pastor of Tower of Refuge Church in Dublin, Virginia. Small town, small church, small income. He told me that God told him to write a book of testimonies from his life. The Garden of Eden story was one of those. He also told me that he couldn’t write or spell well and that grammar was not his friend. Oh, one more thing, he really didn’t have the money to publish his book.

I told him what I tell all new ministry authors who feel that God has led them to publish but don’t have the funds to do it. “Just obey. Do what you

1 Excerpted from *Untold Testimonies Told*, by Stacy Cope

What Is My Publishing Budget?

know to do. Write the book. If it's really God pushing you to do it, don't you think He would provide the way to do it?"

Stacy took the leap. A week later, almost all of the money required to publish came in. By the time *Untold Testimonies Told* was ready to go to print, all publishing costs were paid. Two years later, Stacy published his second book, *Testimonies Told*. Just before I wrote this, he let me know that book three is almost complete. Stacy Cope still struggles with spelling and grammar, but he's an amazing storyteller and a successful author.

True Self-Publishing

Technically, you can self-publish for free if you want to count endless hours of your time as free and you want to make many, many simple and critical mistakes. If you have a computer and a word processing program, you can write your manuscript, create an Amazon account, and upload your manuscript for free. Amazon's software will even help you create a cover for your book from one of their insanely overused templates. It is possible to write and publish your book on Amazon without spending a nickel, but you will not be happy with the end result, especially if your book represents you as a professional.

Technically, you can self-publish for free if you want to count endless hours of your time as free and you want to make many, many simple and critical mistakes.

Self-publishing a professional-looking book that effectively and artfully conveys your story and then distributing and marketing your book is not free. In fact, it can be a lot more expensive than partnering with a professional publisher.

Basic content editing from an online freelancer can cost between \$1,200 and \$3,900. And that's just spelling, grammar, and maybe a little sentence structure. Advanced editing like "does my manuscript flow and make sense to the reader?" costs more.

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You'll need one professional to lay out your book's interior and another to design the cover. But that's not a problem. You can find freelance services on the internet. Costs can range anywhere from \$1,750 - \$4,000 or more.

Did I mention eBooks? Add another \$300 - \$850. Of course, you need to be sure the freelancers you hire off the internet will do what they say. It's hard to be sure if the editor you choose is a professional *book* editor, not a college student with a side hustle. There are a lot of graphic designers for hire out there. How many know what a book cover is supposed to do other than look pretty? It took us many projects, several thousands of dollars, and a few years to build the team we have now. And getting there included some painful mistakes I don't want you to make.

Professional self-publishing does cost money. One popular author and self-publishing advocate advises authors to budget at least \$20,000 to self-publish a book. And that's before addressing the marketing expense of launching your book.

If you choose to self-publish, understand and budget for the cost of bringing your book to market.

Self-Publishing Companies

How in the world is editing "optional" in publishing a quality book!?

Self-publishing companies often feature an a la carte pricing menu that offers optional services for critical steps in the publishing process (like professional editing). How in the world is professional editing "optional" in publishing a quality book!?

Optional a la carte services can also include "deluxe cover design" and marketing packages. If "deluxe cover design" is an option, what does regular cover design look like? And if self-publishing companies aren't in the business of selling books, do you really want to buy their marketing packages?

Xulon, self-proclaimed as the world's largest Christian self-publishing company, offers a "Basic" publishing package, "on-sale" (as of this writing) for

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just \$1259. It's "Basic" alright; offering almost nothing but a cover and interior from a standard template. If you want options like having your book in distribution and available to bookstores, an eBook, or a press release when your book is published, you'll need to choose an upgraded package that can cost over \$5,000. None of this includes editing, however. You'll need to pay three to ten cents per word for editing. For a 60,000-word book, this can put your self-publishing cost up to a whopping \$11,469!

The sad thing is that by the time you've added up all of the self-publishing "options," your book will cost more than professionally publishing with a hybrid publisher, and you're still self-published.

The sad thing is that by the time you've added all of the self-publishing "options," your book will cost more than professionally publishing.

Traditional Publishing

Traditional publishers underwrite their publishing cost by publishing only well-known or celebrity "commercially viable" authors with a substantial existing audience, guaranteed to sell tens of thousands of copies of any book they publish.

Since the overhead costs of most traditional publishing companies are significant, if the author doesn't already have an audience in the multiplied thousands or even millions, it is simply too risky and too costly for a traditional publisher to take a chance, even on a great manuscript.

As an author, you don't need to worry about a publishing budget if a traditional publisher publishes your book, but in some instances, you may be required to purchase books, and you will need a marketing budget. The marketing window for many traditionally published books can be remarkably short. Traditional publishers count on a big initial launch to recoup their publishing costs. Depending on the book or the audience, they may have a three to six month promotional campaign. After that slows down, they'll let the book take its course in the distribution system while they move on to the next launch or the hottest seller. After the launch and initial

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push, it's primarily the author's responsibility to promote their book. As a traditionally published author, you'll need your own marketing budget for the long term.

Hybrid Publishing

Hybrid publishers almost always require authors to pay something or purchase a certain amount of books up-front (usually more than 1,000 copies). Some hybrid publishers may charge an up-front fee of \$20,000 or more, depending on what they offer and their expectations or ability to make a profit by selling the book after it's published.

In some cases, a hybrid publisher may pay the up-front publishing costs of their established, highly productive authors. Some of our most popular authors began by purchasing a publishing package, successfully sold their books, and grew their audience to the point where we now cover the cost of publishing their books. But, those authors who have achieved this "traditional" status have a proven track record of both publishing (each of these authors has published more than ten titles and have their own audience) and regularly selling a significant number of books. One of our goals is to develop our new authors and their audiences to the point where the cost of publishing is easily absorbed by book sales revenue. Even so, we need to sell about 4,000 copies to make a book break even under a traditional publishing agreement. Where does that leave authors who can't guarantee that their book will sell 4,000 copies?

Hybrid publishers should be in the business of selling books.

Hybrid publishers should be in the business of selling books, and the author's cost of publishing should reflect the hybrid publisher's actual cost. In the long run, profits for the author and the publisher should come from selling books. If this is true for the hybrid publisher, they can't afford to cut corners in the publishing process.

Professional cover design, editing, interior design, and every other critical process in creating a world-class quality book aren't optional; they should be *standard* for every book a hybrid publisher produces.

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The quality of your book should never be determined by the cost of your publishing agreement.

As should be the case with any hybrid publisher, the cost of our publishing packages reflects our costs of professionally publishing and printing your book. Since we're in the business of selling books, 80% of our profits come from selling books, not selling authors.

We're in the business of selling books. 80% of our revenue comes from selling books.

Self-publishing companies, on the other hand, are in the business of selling authors, charging them for an ever increasing litany of services. That's their product; services. The more services they sell you, the more it will cost you to publish. Since their business is selling author services, their focus is adding services, not necessarily how well a book will sell after it's published.

So, if hybrid publishers are in the business of selling books and most of their revenue comes from selling books, why charge the author anything at all? Why not cover the cost of publishing your book, like the traditional publishers do, by selling books?

The truth is that it is difficult for most new authors sell enough books to cover the publisher's cost and provide a profit. New authors don't have a track record of successful book sales. It takes time to build an audience and publish enough titles to make an author "commercial" in the publisher's eyes. As I said earlier, each of our "commercial" authors have strong audiences, have published more than ten titles, and have worked with us for several years. They have a track record. We take the risk up-front.

If we couldn't limit our risk by allowing new authors to invest in the cost of publishing up-front, we'd be forced into the same boat as traditional publishers; only publishing "guaranteed" authors. We couldn't afford the risk of developing new authors and helping them grow their audience.

The reality is that someone has to cover the up-front publishing cost. If it's not the publisher, it's the author. Ultimately, it's the readers who allow the publisher or the author to recoup up-front publishing costs.

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Traditionally, books have been sold through distributors to bookstores, who either sell the books to their customers or return them to the distributor without ever paying for them. The bookstores take their discount on what they sell, and the distributor takes its commission from what the bookstores order. Bookstores are notorious for paying slowly or not at all. By the time your book has gone through this process, the publisher receives less than half of what the book sold for and usually waits 90 – 120 days for payment, assuming the bookstore hasn't gone out of business without paying for books (more common than you can imagine). Your royalty comes out of what your publisher receives in sales revenue. If your publisher relies on traditional book sales, that ain't much.

We don't focus on professional authors; we focus on authors who are professionals.

We've come up with a better answer. We don't focus on professional authors; we focus on authors who are professionals. This means that our authors are already established in ministry or business, and they not only

have an audience but also have a reason to expand their ministry or grow their business through a professionally published book. We show our authors how to maximize their book revenues and expand their ministry or business reach through their books. We teach our authors how selling or even giving away their books can more than cover their publishing costs by grow overall revenue and serving the mission of their ministry or business

Additionally, their books are now available to our audiences through our marketing, websites, and online bookstores, and they're in our global distribution system, available anywhere books are sold, including Amazon. We're helping you build your audience and selling your book as we go.

Authors who choose a hybrid publisher invest in themselves and in their ministry or business. True Potential and other reputable hybrid publishers have already invested in quality editors, artists, and designers and millions of dollars in distribution and marketing infrastructure and relationships. A hybrid publisher should work together with you to create books and build an audience that will make both you and them successful in reaching the world with your message.

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Because we focus on professionals who are ready to invest time and effort in the success of their books, 80% of True Potential's revenue comes from book sales. That's why we don't depend on charging authors huge upfront fees to survive. With most established hybrid publishers, authors can expect to pay up to \$20,000 or more in upfront publishing fees before the first book is ever sold. True Potential publishes, distributes and markets our authors' books for less than half of that upfront cost.

Again, the up-front fee should only be meant to offset the risk of publishing a new author. We believe that publishers should make most of their money selling books, not selling authors.

Chapter 6 Questions:

1. What is the financial investment required to self-publish my book or have my book professionally published?
2. Are there any “extras” in one publishing package that are standard in others?
3. Does the publisher make most of its revenue from selling authors or from selling books? Will they partner with me to sell books after my book is published or are they only interested in selling publishing services to me?
4. What other investments should I consider (marketing, website, etc.) to make my book a success?
5. What plans do I have now to make that investment when I’m ready to publish?
6. Do I have a marketing/audience-building process in place now that will quickly recoup my publishing investment by selling my book as soon as it’s available?



*"Choices, options, decisions abound. Choose right,
take the best option, and decide well."*

- JAACHYNMA N.E. AGU

Question 7:

What Are My Publishing Options?

I opened the lid, and my heart sank. There it was, sitting on my borrowed makeshift workbench. It was about the size of an extra-large pizza box. Layers of gears, gaskets, flat metal rings, and disks. Some things inside I couldn't identify at all. And a single slip of paper, a diagram showing all of these pieces exploded into what looked more like a repair kit for a warp drive on the Starship Enterprise than the transmission of a '74 Oldsmobile Cutlass. This was way beyond my pay grade. What was I thinking? My confidence skulked out the door, leaving me alone with the Powerglide 350 Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission rebuild kit on which I had just spent my last fifty-six dollars. My hands were shaking a bit as I quietly closed the lid.

I never did rebuild that transmission. It was easier to skimp on groceries, work overtime, and patiently baby the Olds as we rev-slipped through intersections for the next five weeks while we saved up the \$350 for Frank's Transmission to do the job.

Thoughts of that pizza box full of transmission parts came back to me twenty years later when it was time to publish our first book. Like the transmission, I was discovering more moving parts than I had imagined. I found a printer, but that was useless because the book needed to be typeset in a file the printer could use. What's typeset? Who does that? Do I do it?

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With what? I had a picture for the cover, but of course, a picture isn't a cover. There's a back cover too. What goes on that? And a spine. How wide is the spine supposed to be? Who makes all this happen? Could I find the software and learn to do it myself?

I hadn't even begun to think about what would happen after my book was printed. What had I gotten myself into? Would this be a repeat of the Olds transmission? As it turned out, we made it through the process of publishing our first book. Now, more than 250 titles and 150 authors later, we're as comfortable and proficient publishing books as Frank was rebuilding transmissions.

Choosing the right publisher can mean the difference between the success or failure of your book.

Choosing the right publisher can mean the difference between the success or failure of your book. Just like you shouldn't wait until your book is in print to begin marketing, you shouldn't wait until your manuscript is finished to begin the process of choosing a publisher.

Five Major Publishing Responsibilities:

Content editing – Making sure your manuscript is error-free and clearly communicates your message. A good professional editor not only needs to know proper spelling, grammar, and syntax, but they also need to have a basic understanding of the subject matter or know where to look for unfamiliar terms.

Interior design – Making sure the pages of your book are easy to read, attractive to today's reader, and enhancing the reading experience is a science in itself. Interior design is not just "words-on-a-page" anymore. Font and sizing choices, whitespace, callouts, sidebars, images, and interactive links all contribute (positively or negatively) to the reader's experience. They can make the difference between the reader dropping the book after twenty pages or reading to the end.

Cover design – Professional cover design is a lot more than a pretty picture with the book's title and author's name printed on the front. In many

What Are My Publishing Options?

ways, a good book cover is designed to have as much a subliminal effect in selling the potential reader as a conscious one.

The image on a good front cover is often a seamless blend of several foreground, background, and intermediary images orchestrated to evoke a feeling or a visual representation of the story inside. Some book covers are intentionally stark, often with a single focal point and a bright color or no color, all designed to evoke a response and visually prepare the reader for what is inside. Most celebrity books will fill the front cover with a photograph of the author because the author's image is what potential readers will relate to most.

Printing – Publishers are responsible for getting books printed, but not for printing the books. Printing and publishing are two different businesses. Many new authors don't know that. Printers don't want to be responsible for publishing someone's book, and publishers don't want to own a printing plant. Printers don't like talking to authors, laying out interiors, creating covers, or marketing books; it's not their job. They want to receive print-ready files from a publisher who prints with them regularly, knows the printing/publishing lingo, takes responsibility for the quality of their print files, and pays their bills on time.

As far as authors are concerned, the publisher is responsible for getting books printed and sent to the proper places. As far as the publisher is concerned, printers are responsible for printing their books and shipping them where they need to go.

Distribution and Marketing – Putting your book on Amazon is not a marketing and distribution plan. Sure, Amazon is the world's biggest book store; it's pretty much the world's biggest *everything* store. Putting your book on Amazon is essential in an overall marketing and distribution plan, but it is not the whole thing, especially if you're a professional.

Your publisher (even if it's you) should have access to trade sales, that is, selling to booksellers. This includes Amazon, Barnes & Noble, even Walmart and other online retail behemoths. Brick and mortar bookstores are not extinct yet, but they are an endangered species. Your publisher should have those channels covered also.

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Your publisher (even if it's you) should market and sell books to its audience through its own websites and online stores.

When making a publishing choice, carefully consider these five critical responsibilities. Remember, these are the basics. If any publisher you are considering isn't proficient in all of these areas, keep searching.

Your Publishing Options

True Self-Publishing

You, the author, also act as the publisher. If you are one of the brave souls who choose true self-publishing, depending on what you're trying to accomplish, it is not a bad option ... if you have the time, energy, determination, and money to succeed. You're learning how to be a publisher while trying to succeed at being an author; it can be tough to wear both hats. If you are a business or ministry professional with a full-time schedule and if your business or ministry has a stake in the success of your book, self-publishing may not be right for you. There's too much at stake.

If you are a professional with a full-time schedule, self-publishing may not be right for you.

Understand that even if you self-publish, publishing is not free. Well, technically, it can be. You can write your manuscript if you have a computer and a word processing program. You can create an Amazon account and upload your manuscript for free. Amazon's software will even help you create a cover for your book from a template. Publishing your book to Amazon is possible without spending a nickel. But let's look at this option in light of the four critical publishing responsibilities explained earlier:

Content editing - If you're not going to hire a professional content editor, you'll have to settle for your word processing program's "spell-check" to be your editor and proofreader. It won't catch the difference between to, too, and two, and there's no way it can determine that the second paragraph in your third chapter is completely out of context. It certainly can't tell you

What Are My Publishing Options?

that you are using professional or "insider" language that the reader won't understand. Professional editors and proofreaders cost money, and they earn their fees by correcting obvious mistakes and suggesting more subtle but highly effective advice on communicating your message.

Interior Design - You'll have to settle for whatever font and formatting options your word processing program offers, assuming you understand what fonts and formats work best for a book, what whitespace is and how to use it. Then there's the callouts, the links, chapter heads, pagination ... Oy!

Cover design – Self-published author-designed covers are pretty easy to spot. They're either from an overused Amazon template or a cut and paste image, title, subtitle (maybe), and the author's name. Covers are supposed to help sell the book. Most self-published authors' covers don't. Self-designed covers are the first and most obvious red flag for a potential reader or reviewer. Go back and read "Cover Design" above.

Printing - Real book printers shun self-published authors like the plague. Too much trouble! They print books for a living; lots of books. They can't afford to spend time sending improper files back and forth, counseling the author on how to create the right sized book cover, or explaining why they can't store your book until you sell more copies.

Distribution and Marketing – Putting your book on Amazon is not a marketing and distribution plan. Sure, Amazon is the world's biggest book store; it's pretty much the world's biggest *everything* store. Putting your book on Amazon is essential in an overall marketing and distribution plan, but it is not the whole thing, especially if you're a professional.

Putting your book on Amazon is not a marketing and distribution plan.

Reason to self-publish:

- You have 100% of the control
- You have 100% of the profits from sales

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Reasons not to self-publish

- You may not have book editing or design experience
- Hiring editors and designers you know nothing about is a gamble
- You will have limited distribution
- You'll be doing all the marketing yourself
- You'll be paying for all marketing assets
- You may not have marketing experience
- You may not have an existing audience
- You bear 100% of the publishing cost
- You bear 100% of the marketing cost

Unless you're cash-strapped with no expectations for your book's success, don't consider trying to do everything yourself.

most always contract their books with a professional publishing company.

Unless you're cash-strapped and just want your book "out there" with no expectations for its success, don't consider trying to do everything yourself. Even successful authors whose organization already employs a team of publishing, logistics, and marketing professionals that support their current business or ministry, almost always contract their books with a professional publishing company.

Self-Publishing Companies

Mission: Selling publishing services and add-ons.

Product: Author services. Design, editing, marketing packages, etc.

Author focus: Amateur authors who want their books published.

Customer focus: Authors are their customers; no focus on selling books.

It is not their mission to:

- create a book that sells
- create a book that promotes the customer's ministry or business

What Are My Publishing Options?

- promote a book once it is published
- understand the ministry or business goals of their customers

Self-Publishing companies are really "publishing services" companies. They offer publishing services packages to authors that might include interior and cover design, assigning an ISBN, and uploading your book to Amazon. Self-publishing companies usually list their services in "book packages" that go up in price as you add more services. Bizarrely, the two major self-publishing companies in the Christian world, Xulon and Westbow, do not offer editing as standard in their book packages. They do offer various levels of editing as an expensive optional extra service. Editing is a core function in the book publishing process; to offer it as an option is beyond comprehension for any professional book publisher.

Bizarrely, the two major Christian self-publishing companies, Xulon and Westbow, do not offer editing as standard in their book packages.

To understand self-publishing companies, you've got to understand that they are not in the business of selling books; they're in the business of selling authors on publishing packages. Xulon, the largest self-publishing company by far in the Christian space, boasts that it has published more than 15,000 titles and that more than one million copies of Xulon Press books have been printed and sold in the last twenty years. Those sound like impressive numbers until you realize that one million books divided by 15,000 titles is less than 67 books sold per title. True Potential is certainly not a publishing behemoth, but we topped the one million books sold in our first ten years, with just 250 titles.

"Self-publishing" companies are just that. You're still "self-published," meaning you're responsible for every aspect of your book's success. They will edit, format, print, and ship books to you for a price. In some cases, they'll even put your book in their "catalog." But if they're not actively involved in distributing, marketing, and selling your book, they're not really a publisher; they're a "publishing services company." After the "service" is complete, you'll discover what puts the "self" in "self-publishing."

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Book Marketing Companies

Book marketing companies don't publish books; they promote books and/or authors. Marketers of every sort offer an endless array of "paid opportunities" to promote your book, and many of these never produce a single tangible result. There are legitimate promotional companies who can produce the results they promise, but their "results" may not translate into book sales.

Chris, one of our authors, paid a reputable media agent thousands of dollars for a promotional book tour. The agent did everything he promised. Chris spent the next three months as a guest on several television and radio talk shows. Chris had to pay for his travel and lodging, but the agent got him booked. The promotional tour was a success in terms of the agent performing what he had promised by getting him talk show publicity. But Chris's book sales did not change at all. In terms of selling books, the promotional tour was a bust.

Mission: to get visibility for a client's or a client's book via media interviews, press releases, marketing premiums (bookmarks, gift cards, etc.)

Product: interviews, mentions, posts, advertisements, promotional products

Author focus: Authors willing to pay for visibility

Customer focus: the authors are their clients; their focus is on visibility, not on selling books

It is not their mission to:

- publish their client's book
- sell their client's book
- grow their client's ministry or business
- understand their client's ministry or business goals
- integrate their client's book into the bigger picture

What Are My Publishing Options?

Traditional Publishers

Mission: to sell books ... lots and lots of books

Product: mass market books to a wide distribution

Author focus: big name, celebrity authors with an existing huge fan base, platform, or trending story

Customer focus: Mass market, wide, not deep. Strike while the celebrity is up or the story is hot, follow trends and events, or guaranteed sales to the author's existing audience.

It is not their mission to:

- promote the author's ministry or business
- understand the author's ministry or business goals
- use the book as a tool to support or enhance the author's ministry or business goals
- lead the reader into an ascending value ladder or enhance the author's relationship with the reader

Traditional publishers are in the business of selling books ... lots of books. That's where they make their money. They pay for the cost of publishing and often (not always) offer the author an advance payment on future sales.

The advance payment isn't a bonus; it's more of a loan against future royalties. The author doesn't have to pay to have her book published, and she may receive a payment up-front against future royalties. Another advantage of being published by a big traditional publisher is the prestige. For authors who value prestige, it can be gratifying to have others see the publisher's imprint on the spine and say, "ooohhhh."

Traditional publishers are in the business of selling books ... lots of books.

Because traditional publishers invest the money to publish up-front, they're only interested in a-list authors with a-list manuscripts. Unless you're an

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ex-president (or an ex-fling of a current president), you'll need an agent to represent you. And your agent will need 15% of your earnings ... forever. And you'll need to find an agent who is willing to take you on since she only makes her 15% if you make anything. And all agents are not created equal, as you'll read shortly.

For traditional publishers it's a numbers game. They count on the celebrity authors' existing audience or a moment of fame will sell a lot of books in a short time while the celebrity or the topic is still hot. This means that they seek out celebrity authors with very large followings. When the book launches, they schedule a book tour to put the author on every television show, radio show, and podcast they can arrange and flood retailers with books. Retailers will keep books on the shelves as long as they're selling. When sales slow down, retailers return unsold books to the distributor for full credit. Publishers move on to the next celebrity author and the next launch, and yesterday's celebrity author's book is relegated to the "backlist" where out-of-vogue books go to slowly die.

Did I mention that traditional publishing companies pretty much own the rights to your book?

Did I mention that traditional publishing companies pretty much own the rights to your book? Although it doesn't happen much anymore outside of academic publishers, they can even own your copyright. In many cases, though, unless you have the power to stop them, traditional

publishers can own your secondary rights like film rights, foreign language rights, and audiobook rights. Another twist is that your book is published according to the publisher's marketing schedule, not yours. Depending on your publisher's editorial and print schedule, it can take anywhere from nine months to a few years to get your book to market.

Still, if you are a celebrity author with a huge following and a great agent, don't care that much about having control over your own book, and get a charge out of having a big publisher's name on the spine of your book, traditional publishing may be what you're looking for.

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Hybrid Publishers

Hybrid publishing is an attempt to provide both the art of producing a professional book with the commitment of partnering with its author to market and sell that book. Hybrid publishers should also consider the author's personal and organizational goals and the book's role in enhancing or fulfilling those goals. **True Potential is a hybrid publisher.** Although we can't speak for all hybrid publishers, we can share our mission, product and focus.

Mission: To reach the world with our author's message

Product: A comprehensive, integrated approach to incorporating the author's book as a medium to both share the author's message with the world and promote the author's ministry or business goals

Author focus: Ministry and business professionals who are serious about sharing a positive message and growing the influence their ministry or business has on the world.

Customer focus: Narrow and deep. Targeted toward readers who have an affinity or need for the author's message and have the greatest likelihood of moving from reader to fan to lifetime customer to evangelist.

It is not our mission to:

- serve authors not serious about sharing their message with the world
- serve authors who are not willing to actively participate in promoting their message and growing the effect their ministry or business has on the world.
- serve authors who want to write a single book in order to check it off of their to-do list.
- serve authors who do not have a positive message to share with the world through their book and their ministry or business.

When I founded True Potential, I didn't know that hybrid publishing existed. Twenty years ago, it probably didn't.

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We were a traditional publisher. But not in the sense that we only published celebrity authors. I didn't know any celebrity authors, and if I did, they probably wouldn't let us publish their books because we were new.

I thought we could just publish anyone's book and try to sell it (I was a little naïve about publishing at the time). There's an old saying, "God watches over idiots and children. I was in my mid-forties, so I didn't qualify on the "children" clause. Amidst a few flops, our first book was an amazing success, selling over 300,000 copies. I learned a few lessons; one, that God does watch over people like me, and two, that you've got to put a ton of energy into selling books to actually sell books.

It never occurred to me that publishers could partner with authors financially.

A few years later, we bought an established publishing company that partnered with their authors to cover the cost of publishing. It never occurred to me that a real publisher could partner with authors financially to publish their books. This was my intro-

duction into hybrid publishing.

Then I remembered my father's first book, *Omega Cometh*, published way back in the 1970s by Fleming H. Revell, a respected name in the publishing world. Dad had made a deal to purchase 10,000 copies of his own book from the publisher for two dollars each. The retail price for the hardcover book was \$7.99 (that was a long time ago in a galaxy far away). During his public speaking engagements, he would sell the books he purchased for eight bucks each. He eventually sold all ten thousand of those books, turning a \$20,000 investment (in 1973 dollars) into \$80,000.

Now, forty years later, it occurred to me that maybe Dad hadn't made the deal. Maybe it was Fleming H. Revell who made the deal to sell 10,000 books to the author, in cash, up-front to cover its publishing costs. It was a good deal for the publisher and a great deal for Dad. Maybe hybrid publishing wasn't as new as I believed.

The publishing company we bought taught me two lessons. The first one was that publishing could represent a much wider scope of possibilities

What Are My Publishing Options?

than traditional publisher vs. self-publisher. The second lesson I learned was that if True Potential was going to be something different than those two choices, it had better provide more value to authors than either.

Publishing must include both producing a professional book and selling that book. That's the challenge of a hybrid publisher. At True Potential, we've taken it a step further. Because we work with authors who are either ministry, business, and health and wellness professionals, our mission isn't just to publish and sell their books; it's also to use those books to promote their ministries, businesses, and practices. That's what, I believe, makes True Potential unique in an already unique part of the publishing world.

The Best Choice For You

If you choose to self-publish, understand what the steps of the publishing process are, who will complete them and how long each step is scheduled to take. Then faithfully follow up with every editor, cover designer, web developer, and marketer you've hired to be sure they stay on track. Independent contractors are famous for keeping mysterious, ever-changing, and sometimes non-existent schedules. If they wanted to be "managed," they wouldn't be independent contractors in the first place. Be sure to establish a firm timeline before contracting with any outside worker or service.

Even if you're planning to truly self-publish, trying to perform and manage all of these tasks yourself, it's still critical to have a detailed task list and timeline and stick to it.

If you make the decision to have your book professionally published, understand what your publisher will do for you before and after your book is published. Understand what's included and what's not.

The publisher you choose should be in the business of selling books, not just selling authors. If you're a professional, your publisher should also understand that your book can be a valuable tool for providing value to your

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audience that promotes your ministry, business, or practice through integrating the message of your book with the message of your mission. This is what we believe a hybrid publisher should be. Not hybrid in the sense of another option, but hybrid in the sense of a better option, replacing what may have been relevant twenty years ago with what is relevant today and optimizing it for our authors' mission, message, and goals.

80% of our revenue comes from selling books. Another 5% comes from digital products like online courses that directly support our authors' ministries, businesses, and practices. True Potential's top-earning authors publish exclusively with us, and our relationship goes back years. I believe that is because we see not just their next book but their mission and message to the world.

As a professional, your mission and your message are more than just your next book. Choose a publisher who is not only capable of producing a great book and sharing it with the world but who also understands why your mission and message matter.

Also ask how much of the publisher's revenue comes from selling books. Ask how the publisher uses books to promote its authors' ministries or businesses.

Whatever publisher you consider, be sure they have an organized publishing process with specific tasks and timelines established that they will share with you. Ask your prospective publisher how and when the author is involved in important steps of the publishing process and if their authors can track the process online.

Good luck and Godspeed. My hope and prayer for you is that your message reaches those it was made to reach and that this world benefits from what you have to say.

P. S. I'm serious about wanting you to succeed. If you would like free access to our Virtual Writer's Conference (\$197 value), just click on this link: <https://www.truepotentialmedia.com/10-dynamics/10-dynamics-successful-book>. My gift to you.

Chapter 7 Questions

1. Is self-publishing the best choice for me?
2. If I choose to have my book published professionally, what are my top 3 choices for a publisher?
3. Of the top 3, which one stands out as being truly interested in my success and the success of my book *after* publishing?
4. Which of my top choices stand out as the best long-term value for my success and the success of my book?
5. Does the publisher identify itself as a "self-publishing" or "publishing services" company?
6. Does the publisher make most of its revenue selling books or selling services to authors?



"It is in your moments of decisions that your destiny is shaped."

- TONY ROBBINS

Congratulations! Now it's your turn.

Writing a great manuscript is just one part of a process that makes your book a success. You've come a long way; your manuscript is almost ready to share with the world!

While you're putting on the finishing touches, put what you've learned in this book into practice.

Research your publishing options and begin answering the questions I've presented at the end of each chapter. It's never too early to prepare for the next big step – **turning your manuscript into a successful book!**

If you're ready to talk to me about creating an amazing book and sharing with the world, let's set up a time to chat: <https://www.truepotentialmedia.com/schedule-manuscript-consultation>

I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Steve Spillman, Founder, True Potential

About the Author

Steve Spillman lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of South Carolina. A former packaging executive, he sold his Greenville manufacturing company in 2004 to found True Potential Publishing.

In 2007, True Potential Media opened its doors in Tulsa, Oklahoma to serve commercial media clients.

As technology continued to exponentially change the communications world Steve began to understand that book publishing was no longer just about books and “media” was no longer confined to advertising and videos. The true mission for both companies was to craft their authors’ and clients’ stories and share them with the world. In 2010 True Potential Publishing and True Potential Media merged under True Potential, Inc. A few years later the company acquired Pennsylvania publisher, Milestones International.

The combined companies have published more than 300 titles for 150 authors and sold more than a million books. Other operations include an online learning division and twenty-nine company or affinity websites.

Seven Questions You Must Answer Before Publishing Your Book is Steve’s third book.

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