

**SELLING YOURSELF
AND YOUR PRODUCT:
A GUIDE FOR WRITERS
BY
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**Selling Yourself and Your Product:
a Guide for Writers**

An e-Book by Gloria Oren

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Chapter 1

The Fair Deal Wins

The art of selling is being able to sell yourselves as writers and being able to sell the materials you create, creating the foundation for your success. Knowing how to sell, though, isn't enough. Published writers, who wish to make a name for themselves as successful authors, must also become first-class promoters. Salespeople, in this case writers, are the steam that propels their writing business.

Referred to often, as the fourth profession, the art of selling is the combination of writing, editing, proofreading, and selling (including promotion). It isn't; it's the **first**. Writers who write to get published must first research, write, edit and proof their work so they can reach that goal. However, even before their work reaches the publication stage, they must promote (or sell) themselves. We now relate to this as building a platform. Writers must know when to persuade using gentle urging and when to let go.

Writers must persuade readers that they need their product and make them buy them – yes, *make* them. Writers are messengers, actors, lawyers, and politicians – all under one hat! Writers, when acting as salespeople, take their finished product and seek out their customers – their readers. They must be independent, emit dignity, and embrace every opportunity that comes their way to reap substantial success and rewards. Writers, who appreciate their success and rewards, can't wait for their next finished product so they can return to the road of success.

Not every writer who goes on the road succeeds. The road is no place for the lazy. Success results from the many drops of honey of commerce, waiting in the apple blossoms along the road, but it takes the hard working, success-seeking writers to get it.

Capable writers see the road as a great training school. As long as they carefully consider the steps they take, and take suitable opportunities that cross their paths, they will succeed. Work hard and be fair.

Successful writers/authors never lower the price of their products; they set the price right, from the start. A fair deal is the only type they give their readers – or should give them. Writers, selling their products along the road to success, who don't appreciate their faithful readers, don't deserve to reap the reward of success anyway. Readers, determined they must have a particular author's books, will buy them even if they're priced at a higher but fair price. Pricing their products fairly allows writers on the road to build a platform, an established following.

Rookie writers often make the mistake of pushing their potential customers too hard. This is especially true when selling books to the independent bookstore owner. Independent bookstore owners can buy no more than the amount they can sell to their customers, who become the writer's readers, unless they go broke one day.

The interests of writers and independent bookstore owners are the same. They're both interested in treating their customers, right. Treat customers right and they'll follow you; but treat them wrong and they'll lose confidence in you and your products. The more product writers sell, the more they want to sell and can. Writers whose books sell well want to keep the cycle going because they can. They write more. Sell more books. They do it repeatedly. A good rule of thumb: never overlook the small orders. Enough small orders can equal one big one or more.

Here's a story, an analogy of sorts if you wish, involving a country storeowner, cowboys and hats. Bear with me for a moment, the moral holds true for writers as well.

A salesperson once heard of a big cattleman in western Texas who owned a crossroads grocery store. This storeowner wanted to expand and offer dry goods, shoes, and hats along with the rest of his products. The store was only a few miles out of the salesperson's way so he drove over to see the owner. When the salesperson went in the old gentleman was tickled to see him and told him to show his wares. The owner said he wanted a right, smart bill that the salesperson interpreted as about \$75.

The salesperson pulled out a cheap hat, "That's a good one for the money," he said, "a dollar a piece."

The owner looked at the hat and pulled a fine Stetson off his head, "Haven't you got one like this one?"

"Yes, but that will cost you \$84 a dozen."

"The more they cost, the better they suit us cattlemen; we're not paupers, sir! How many come in a box?"

"Two."

"Two?" he said, "You must be talking about a pasteboard box; I mean a wooden box, a case."

“Three dozen come in a case, Colonel.”

“Well, give me a case.”

The salesperson had never sold a case of these fine goods in his life, so he said to the storeowner: “That’s lots more, Colonel, than I usually sell of that kind, and I don’t mean to overload you; hadn’t we better make it a dozen?”

“Dozen? Lord, no. You must think that there’s nobody in this country, that they haven’t any money, and that I haven’t any money. Did you see that big bunch of cattle as you came in? They’re all mine. I don’t owe the bank a cent on them. I want a case of these hats, not a little bundle you can carry under your arm.”

Afraid of having angered the old man, and knowing him by reputation to be worth several thousand dollars, the salesperson thought it best to let him have his way. He went through two stacks with the storeowner and then brought in the rest of his samples. The old man bought a case of each kind—fine hats, medium hats for greasers; he bought blacks, browns, and light colors. The salesperson was ashamed to add up the bill in front of him. But as soon as the salesperson got out of sight, he added up all the items and it came to \$2100—the best bill he took on that one trip.

The salesperson sent the order in, but thought that he wouldn’t have to call there again for a very long time. The house shipped the bill, and the old man discounted it.

On his next trip the salesperson considered giving that point the go-by. He really felt the old man not only didn’t need any more goods, but that he’d shoot him if he called on him. When he reached the town next to the old man’s, his customer there, a friend of the Colonel’s, told him that the old man sent word that he wished to buy some more products and to make sure the salesperson paid him a visit.

When the salesperson approached the back end of the Colonel’s store it looked peculiar to him. The Colonel had ordered so many goods that he had to take the wooden cases they were

shipped in and turn them into walls of an addition to his store for storage. The Colonel came out and shook hands with the salesperson before he was out of his wagon. He was never greeted more warmly in his life.

So what's the moral of the above anecdote for writers?

If writers can get people talking about them, they'll thrive. When people say good things about them, that's good; when they say bad things about them, that's better. It spreads faster. Bad publicity can be good too. How? By having the right products for their customers. If it pleases their customers, who cares what the bad publicity says. The customer isn't listening, that's for sure. He's making money, why should he listen, and why should he care?

Readers who purchased your books in a certain genre might or might not buy a book in a different one. But they'll still follow you and will be there to grab the next one in the first genre—the one that suits their taste.

Here's where the writer's personality and adaptability are the foundation of their business when they're on the road; if the good promoter gets the bookstore clerk to stock the book, it's even better.

When the independent bookstore's owner neglects his clerks, they in turn neglect his business; if the writer on the road ignores the clerks, they ignore him. But in this matter the writer must go so far and no more, because the moment the bookstore owner suspects an attempt to influence the clerk's decision, down comes the axe! This is bad for both the clerk and the writer. The books may still get ordered because of customer requests, but they'll likely end up on the bottom shelf.

To get their books sold, writers want them where it's easy to reach, NOT on the bottom shelf.

Bookstore clerks and owners follow the line of least resistance; they sell those they can reach first. Successful writers always strive to get their books up front. To do this they must get

the owner or buyer to look at their books. When the owners do, the writer should keep out of their way until they're ready to buy.

Merchants want to do business with the author or publisher; but they want to do it on their terms and time frame. Don't force them. Friendships will develop over time.

Chapter 2

Social Arts—the Writer's Assets

Skills needed for the promotion and sales of books involve the art of overcoming obstacles, and of turning rejection into acceptance by applying tact and patience. Writers, in the business of creating and selling books, who expect to remain in the same place for a long time, must give readers value in their products—well written and well-edited books. Over time, writers will know if their books are good or not. Their books may never become bestsellers but if sales are good requiring reprints, writers can consider themselves successful. Even just having a book accepted for publication is a success of its own. You are already successful. You've written a book and edited it well enough for acceptance. Celebrate your success.

If sales drop after the initial high, writers can be sure that negative word-of-mouth is in the air and their product isn't doing well. They can either improve their product or find something else to do. Most strive to improve the product, rather than to give up. Remember, it's the product's first impression upon hitting the market that produces the reward. A good impression reaps high rewards; a poor one doesn't. But impression alone

isn't enough; your best efforts at promotion are equally as important. Promote your products at every opportunity you get. Success is sure to follow.

Chapter 3

The Road is a College

The best college in the world for writers, embarking on their writing journeys, is the road to success. Its classrooms aren't confined to gray stone buildings of multiple stories and rooms; they're the nooks and crannies of the earth. Its teachers are live, active writers, editors, agents, and publishers who plant their own mulberry bushes. It's the group amongst them who willingly help the newcomers along the path to success. Writers on the road learn to "do it now."

When writers get an idea in their mind, even in the middle of the night, some of them get up and write it down. They don't wait for the morning and allow forgetfulness to kick in. They do it when it pops up.

When opportunity comes knocking at their door, writers aiming for success take it. Opportunities took many successful writers to advanced knowledge and expanded the paths of their careers.

Getting an editor, agent, or publisher to look at your product is just half the battle. The crucial half is getting the acceptance. The first things editors, agents, or publishers pick up are the things he knows the value of: good ideas, and the ability to hold the readers' interest, style,

etc. If these values leave the need for extensive work on their part, writers can expect the pink slip, that is—the rejection letter. If these values seem right, and the agents, editors, or publishers feel confident in the rest of the work under review, they'll usually accept it. To ensure the sale of your work, make sure it's better than your competitor's submission.

Besides the writing itself, which should be the best it can be, there's another important thing to remember. John F Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," For writers it should be—Ask not what your editor, agent, or publisher can do for you, ask what you can do for your editor, agent, or publisher.

To succeed in the writing business employ strategy, not deception. Make sure your query isn't overblown. Don't send queries for a certain genre to those who deal in others. Do your homework.

Writers aiming for success must strategize their moves. Take time to make the query good, the manuscript better, and the product a gem.

Chapter 4

The Helping Hand

Writers on the road often extend the helping hand to others who are just starting out. Writers on the road depend on the good will of those more advanced and more successful than themselves. Whether it's critiquing a piece or help promoting a published work, the kindness of others is much appreciated (or should be). The road to success trains the heart to gentleness. The road is loaded with opportunities to help writers in need. Kind acts reap such rich rewards to the doers, that they seek to do more. Soon it becomes a habit of pass-it-forward.

Newbie writers shouldn't fear sharing their knowledge. It won't hurt them, but it may help them reach the point of success.

Each writer's point of success is different. The generosity of writers on the road comes mainly from their good nature; it's for those from whom they never expect anything in return. Their biggest satisfaction is in seeing those they helped pass-it-forward.

Writers' success depends upon the combination of their readers' word of mouth efforts and their promotional efforts. Readers' thoughts are the main cause of failure for most writers.

Just as it's wrong to say a fruit is sour without tasting it, it's wrong to prejudge writers' works before reading them.

Days—and nights, too—of hard work often come together in the writer's life on the road. When writers on the road succeed they become instant members of the “Brotherhood of Writers.” The group's banner is the Helping Hand.

Chapter 5

Getting on the Road

The roads to success are wide open in every city in America and all over the world. Writers striving to succeed will work harder and push onward.

Writers, listen up! You must spend money to succeed. How much needs to be spent? That's up to you. Some can afford more, others less. Some can't even afford a dime, but will do whatever it takes to aim for success.

The writer on the road must go to his or her readers; when there, must give them a marketing tool (bookmark, postcard, something with information on the book) to help them make the decision to buy the writer's products.

Writers may have their work accepted for publication, but that alone isn't enough to make it a success. Writers must know, understand, and be willing to do their part on the road to success. Even more so if the writer takes the self-publishing route. Writers must have a good appearance. Neatness, goes without say, but there must be more to it than that. Writers must work hard, be professional, be honest, be quick, be frank, and be good-natured.

Once writers have their works published, it's up to them to take the next step—getting the word out. They must promote by selling themselves to their readers who, as a result, will make a purchase. The better writers are at promotion, the more success they'll have. Seek out your readers who would be interested in purchasing your book at the bookstores, at the library, and even at the supermarket. Tell everyone you meet.

If writers let even one rejection get to them, they'd better stay home. When writers set out on the road to success rejections are inevitable. Writers face them on a daily basis. Read them, see if there's anything helpful you can apply to improve your chance, and send it off again to the next source on your list. When writers get there, that's the moment writers must begin selling themselves.

The one, and most important thing writers can do, is to be professional. It costs nothing but is worth a lot. Honest, successful writers—even those who make only a reasonable profit—mark their book prices clearly in plain figures. They don't cut prices for anybody. They prefer to do business with those who will pay their price. Writers who cut prices too soon lose out.

Chapter 6

First Experiences in Selling

Newbie writers think they have a lot to learn when just starting out. However, upon the acceptance of one's first book, there's even more to learn. For writers there's always more to learn. The publishing world is huge and can't be covered in a day, or a week, or a month, or even a year. It's said that writers are readers; I'll add that writers must be learners as well.

Rule #1: Always have spare copies of your book(s) with you. You never know who you're going to meet along the way.

Rule #2: Know what you're selling.

Rule #3: Make connections with everyone you meet on the road. Networking is the name of the game in business, especially in writing and publishing. Even if no monetary transaction should occur, writers must form acquaintances with everyone in the business they bump into. The long-term relationships with an editor or agent may vanish in the time it takes a writer's eye to blink. Editors move on, change firms, become ill, and sadly, die suddenly.

Rule #4: Always have a backup agent in mind you can approach. The same goes for publishers, publicists, book reviewers, etc. Always keep in contact with more than one. Writers are too busy thinking about their current projects, but life happens, so be prepared. Writers must aim to know as many as they can who handle their genre.

Rule #5: The motto of all writers must be, "I will succeed."

Rule #6: When writers have more than one project on the table, they must present one project at a time. Only when one is accepted for publication, can they begin selling the next one. This should be the basics of training for newbie writers before they head out on the road.

If newbie writers are to remember one thing only, it would be this: the journey along the road to success relies more on confidence than on knowledge. Writers must be confident that their works and prices are right. Only then can they sell them at those prices. Confident writers can make others feel confident and want to buy their books so they can read them.

Chapter 7

Tactics in Selling

Writers on the road are like army officers. Their soldiers are their books. Their enemies are their characters. Their allies are their competitors. They fight battles every day. The “spoils of war” is their business. Bear with me here. Writers on the road employ similar tactics to those that generals use.

Before you have a chance to say “*What on heaven’s earth is she talking about?*” let me explain.

Writers may have neither the lives of men at stake nor the success of their country. But they do have something at stake—every day—their own livelihood, a chance for promotion—a partnership perhaps—and always, the success of the business. Writers must always be ready, awake or asleep, to wage war. Hardest of all, they must get the potential buyer’s attention so they can show them their book(s).

If they succeed in doing so, the potential buyers usually place an order with them.

Only one situation is better than that—if writers can get readers to ask for their books from bookstores, libraries, etc. That is guaranteed business. Getting the attention of those whom you can bring closer to the point of a sale—success—is the key point.

Beginning writers discover that the road to success is far more difficult than they thought it would be. An important thing to remember is that the opinion that matters most is that of your potential buyers, not that of your publicist or even your own.

Writers, like the general who wins his battles with a well thought-out plan, must rely on a good, well-planned marketing and promotional plan.

Chapter 8

Set Your Price and Keep It

Business success is based on confidence. Writers must be confident in themselves, in the price they set for each one of their books, and in any other service they offer. Treat everyone the same—sell to everyone at the same price.

Writers who advertise their books gain the biggest rewards. It's the advertising—the marketing and promotion efforts—that brings the business. Publishing houses depend on their authors to move the books. When authors fail to do this the publisher might as well close its doors.

Chapter 9

Winning Readers as Fans

Every writer hopes for readers become fans. The question they must ask is, “How can I make it happen?”

Writers must gain the confidence of their fans. Readers, whose confidence is hardest, and slowest to gain, will likely prove to be the greatest fans that will last the longest. Writers must be patient and, if necessary, let confidence in themselves grow slowly.

Writers are ensured of knowing the do’s of promotion, but less ensured of the don’ts.

1. DON’T grouch. When things aren’t going too well, it’s time for writers to smile. Frowning or expressionless writers who approach their potential customers (readers, bookstore buyers, owners, or managers) are doomed to failure. The writer’s facial expression should be as bright as a new tin pan. Cheerful writers make their readers cheerful. Only when readers feel good

about their purchase will they be willing to buy your books. When writers are asked, “How are you feeling?” they should reply, “Had a bad cold last night, but feel in good spirits this morning.” When asked, “How’s business?” reply, “The world is kind to me.” Successful writers are cheerful people; they carry with them a long stock of sunshine.

2. DON’T complain.
3. DON’T fail to befriend fellow writers. The hearts of writers on the road should be as broad as the prairie and as free from narrowness as a blue sky is from clouds.
4. DON’T fail to be friendly with anyone who comes your way. You never know where those connections can lead you.
5. DON’T depend upon your old friends. Writers’ friends feel writers approach them because they’re friends, and not because his or her books have value. They won’t take the same interest in them as a stranger would. Friends will give writers complimentary orders, but not the kind that count. Writers should make sure readers who purchase their books feel they’re getting the value they pay for. This will make a business friendship built confidence, and the business friend may become the personal friend.
6. DON’T switch agents or publishers without a good reason to do so. Writers who pick up good agents and/or publishers should stick with them unless a) the agency or publisher closes shop or b) they can get one who is much better and can assure them of continued success for a long time.
7. DON’T fall on prices. Writers who fall on prices won’t gain their readers’ confidence. Honesty is a matter of education, and it pays off in the end. Set

your price from the get-go and stick with it. If writers follow this method they'll surely succeed.

8. DON'T think anyone is too big or hard to tackle.
9. DON'T put prices on another man's goods.
10. DON'T run down your competition. Always treat competitors extremely well.
11. DON'T run down the other writers' works. Hard selling their books as a better priced product that their competitor's leaves nothing but insult to the buyer's judgment.
12. DON'T carry side lines. Stick to a certain genre, niche, or just two or three. Spreading out too wide can affect the writer's chances for success. If any genre or niche doesn't bring the rewards sought after, quit and move on to another that will.
13. DON'T take a conditional order. If a potential buyers can't decide to order when salesman, writers, speak with them, they'll never place that order. All of the above reap their own rewards.

There are many more "Don'ts" for salespeople, but you'll have to discover them on your own.

Salesmanship requires study and practice. There's a science to salesmanship, whether writers as salespersons know it or not. If writers realized they could prosper by studying their professional salesmanship skills, the result would be worthy to them.

Chapter 10

Buyers the Writer Meets

As writers selling your wares you're bound to come upon difficult buyers. Never mark them off the potential buyer list. Always add to that list. From time to time, send them information on your current available books.

Step and think outside the box. Start conversations with people you meet along the way. Seek out companies and/or organizations that tie into the subject of your book.

Business often comes to us from places where we least expect it. Enjoy a successful writing career and don't forget to pass it forward.