

From a New York editor on GETTING PUBLISHED

New Concepts publishes print and ebooks

Being a good writer is important if you want to make a career in writing, but just **being a good writer isn't enough**. If it was, all of our authors would be earning huge royalties. You also have to be good at marketing.

A big part of marketing is studying what readers are buying and adjusting your writing projects and/ or style to accommodate the largest number of readers (market size) available to you. The best place to start in analyzing the market is the bestseller lists at online booksellers. Anything in the top twenty five that got there rapidly is a good story idea with wide appeal. Books that got there months, or a year ago, and are still there are exceptional story ideas. Study the storyline and pick it apart and see what you can come up with that is in a similar vein but unique.

What you see without even buying the book is what everyone else sees that compels them to buy it and the clues to better marketing for you are there.

When your book goes up for sale, you have these marketing tools to sell: The title, the cover, the one liner, the blurb and the excerpt. Every one of those tools is within your power to control, including the cover. The artist produces it, but you supply her with the information to give it real pizzazz or make it dull. The artist can NOT produce a spectacular cover for you if your story has nothing spectacular about it, and if you fail to supply her with the materials she needs to work with. If you want a fabulous cover, you have to make it happen. It doesn't matter if you don't have a picture in your mind.

When you sit down to plot a book for a project, your marketing begins. You pick the storyline, and the genre, according to what YOU prefer to write that also sells well. And you plot the book for excitement and originality. The book must have elements that will translate into an exciting visual-- cover art-- or your hard work could be for nothing. When the reader first sees your work, they will see the cover, the title and the one liner. Best case scenario, all three grab their immediate attention and they go for the buy button. You have three chances to grab them, however--the cover, the title and the one liner. If you fail to grab them with at least one of the three, you've lost a sale. If you succeed in getting their attention, they will go to the blurb and you have one more chance to make a sale.

Readers will NOT read a blurb that's two or three paragraphs or more. Do not waste your valuable sales tool on trying to give them background they won't need and that won't grab them. Consider the primary conflict of your story and the elements that make it unique and work that into a blurb that grabs, that vibrates with excitement and originality. If the blurb comes out sounding like a hundred other similar stories, you won't make a sale. ONLY the most desperate, obsessive readers who can't find anything else to read are going to buy a book by someone they don't know with a storyline that doesn't sound the least bit original.

Pay attention to trends in the entertainment field. You're an entertainer and you have to keep abreast of trends if you want to get to the top and stay there. The biggest problem a lot of our authors have is a stubborn refusal to change with the times. They are still writing the same types of stories, in the same style that were selling twenty or thirty years ago.

Times have changed, people have changed and tastes have changed. I despise the new reality shows on TV, but it's a clue of the way people are looking at entertainment.

They want realism. The popularity of the chick lit books supports that demand for more realism across the board in the entertainment field, including books. That realism MUST be carried over

into the bedroom scenes.

Readers have passed beyond amusement at what they call purple prose to an absolute hatred of it. When we can rate a book as spicy or carnal, the sales outlook for that book are automatically higher. A spicy book is one that, like traditional romances, builds a lot of sexual tension but actually contains no more than one to three love scenes, and those love scenes **MUST** be necessary to the story, and they **MUST** be as realistic as any other scene in the book. Euphemisms you aren't comfortable with are **NOT** necessary in a spicy book. Frank language belongs in the carnal.

Kinky sexual acts are **NOT** necessary in a spicy novel. Those belong in a carnal. But the reader demands to 'see' what's going on, and they can't do that through a veil of poetic rhetoric. They can only do that if you use the same carefully detailed descriptions and choreography that you would use in a fight scene, or any other scene in the book.

With the notable exception of straight contemporary romance, all of the genres we sell are doing well or fabulously well. I'm not suggesting that anyone who prefers to right contemporary should stop. However, Harlequin type storylines will earn you no sales or pathetic sales. If you want to write contemporary, your work is cut out for you and you must work **VERY** hard to come up with a storyline that does not have echoes of Harlequin. Romantic suspense is almost as tricky, but higher sensuality and really original story ideas can still make decent sales. Elements added to straight contemporary such as a stunningly different plot line, high sensuality level, paranormal elements, etc., can improve the possibility of sales.

If your preference is to write futuristic, fantasy, or paranormal, good. You're already in a better selling market. You still have to work hard to come up with unique plot twists.

Explore new possibilities. Don't just develop a plot line like a dozen, or hundred, other books and expect it to do as well. Stories about werewolves and vampires are rapidly glutting the market. Unless you can come up with something really unique to add to what's gone before, avoid those and explore other areas of the paranormal.

The more you're seen, the sooner you will become a recognized author to readers. To the best of your ability, you need to get work out as often as you can. If it takes you months to write a full length book, try doing short stories and/or novellas in between times.

Finally, your sales are your best guide to the effectiveness of your marketing.

First sales will tell you a lot about the story you've chosen to write and the tools you've used to market the book. These are the sales you make during the weeks the book appears on the front page. Depending

completely on the story itself and how well you've developed your name up to this point, a spicy or carnal paranormal, futuristic or fantasy can range between 200 to 1000 in first sales. Spicy or carnal historicals anywhere from 200 to 600 in first sales. Very special contemporary romances 70 to 150 in first sales. The weeks following the first sales will tell you more.

If sales plummet directly after it leaves the page, your story and/or your marketing missed. You did not gain word of mouth referrals for your book and it could be the story itself. Don't waste your time and effort trying to **MAKE** it sell by investing huge amounts of time and money on advertising. It will help some, but probably won't pay off. Instead, see if you can figure out why it didn't make it-and move on.

If you are doing everything right, every time you release a new book, you should see an increase in first sales and a steady, though smaller, flow of sales thereafter, peaking a little higher each time you make a new sale. If you are doing everything right, by the time you have a dozen or so books, or perhaps even before that, your royalty sales should be in excess of 2000 per quarter. If this is happening for you, then you need to take a hard look at what you're doing and/or seek help in your marketing because you are not doing something you should be doing.

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