

# 5 Secrets of Successful Authors



A Guide for Self-publishing: **PART ONE**

*Excerpted from BREAK FREE FROM THE SLUSHPILE, CJ Lyons*

## Great writing is the best promotional tool.

*You can assemble the world's greatest team of publicists and social marketing strategists to help you promote your book, but if the WORDS you've assembled in that book can't sell themselves—well, then you're dead in the water.*

*BookBaby has put together a series on the craft of writing called "A Guide for Self-publishing." If you need inspiration, information, a good kick in the pants, or some tricks you can try in order to focus your prose, check out part 1 in our series of guides, with excerpts contributed by New York Times bestselling author CJ Lyons.*

*As a pediatric ER doctor, Lyons combined her medical training with her passion for words and carved out her own niche in the literary world, writing "thrillers with heart." In this guide she shares her advice on creating convincing worlds and how to be effective, motivated, and authentic when promoting your work.*

## Building Your Brand

*(excerpted from BREAK FREE FROM THE SLUSHPILE, copyright 2011, CJ Lyons)*

There are tons of places authors can find information on building a brand or platform. So many that it's often overwhelming. It's easy to want to hide in your hermit cave and write the next book.

No worries. Even I feel like that most of the time. As an introvert, my strength comes from my ability to sit alone and focus, get the job done.

I can put on a party face when needed, but it takes work and a lot of psychic energy. Often, after a conference, I can't write for days, I'm so drained.

Extroverts usually don't need help with promotion. They're walking/talking promotional power-houses. Which can be a good thing as long as they learn to channel that energy and focus on the real work: writing the next book.

Because here's what I'm going to tell you that is different from all the other how-to-promote advice for authors: Number one thing an author should do to promote their work and build their career? **WRITE THE NEXT BOOK!**

Number two thing? **WRITE THE NEXT BOOK!**

Number three? Repeat after me....**WRITE THE NEXT BOOK!**

What else should you be focused on while preparing your platform?

Ask yourself three questions:

- 1. Why did you write this book?**
- 2. Who did you write this book for?**
- 3. What are you willing to do for this book?**

Dig deep with your answers! The answers will frame your entire marketing strategy—and tailor it to you and your readers.

***Why did you write this book?***

Answer that truthfully and you'll find yourself telling all sorts of stories about what the book meant to you and what inspired you and why this character did that and how you researched various things, etc, etc, etc.

Key word in all of that? *Stories*.

That is the heart of every answer you need for interviews, guest blog posts, Q and A's, or press releases.

Why did you write this book? Write down your answer.

If you dug deep, you'll find you've placed a human, emotional face onto dry facts. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about your research or how you juggled your schedule to find time. It's all about your passion.

Let that passion and emotion shine through. It's how you connect to an audience!

Answer that question truthfully and you'll never have to worry about a paint-drying-boring press release or interview or feature article again.

Because the real you, authentic and passionate and honest, will be at the heart of each story written about you or by you.

That's pretty much all the content you'll need. Now, you need to decide who to send that content to.

## Sounds like the answer to question #2. *Who did you write this book for?*

That's your target audience.

It might be one person, say your mother. That's fine, but dig deep, ask yourself why? Is it because you've been estranged and you're reaching out through your characters for a chance to reconnect?

A large number of people have been there, done that! Use them. Reach out to them via blogs, online groups, etc.

Did you add a calico cat character because you wrote the entire book with your calico cat sleeping on your lap and the keyboard? Then introduce her to all the calico cat lovers out there.

Does the book wrestle with a social or political issue you feel passionate about? Then connect with others who feel the same way.

This is targeted marketing. Reach out and connect with PEOPLE, not just anonymous blogs or websites or demographics. You want to connect, start conversations, tell stories.

Do not simply post a bunch of tweets, blogs, comments, and turn tail and run. It's NOT about

## Publish and sell your eBook worldwide for just \$99!

### WHAT BOOKBABY DOES:

- FREE basic eBook conversion (a \$50 value!)
- Conversion for graphic-heavy books including photography, art, business, scientific, etc.
- Digital distribution to the biggest eBook retailers including Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble and more...in as little as 2 weeks.
- Pays out 100% of the net sales
- Basic eBook Cover Design, starting at \$149

 bookbaby™

BOOKBABY.COM • TOLL FREE: 877-961-6878



iPad

amazonkindle

Reader

eBookPie

COPIA

nook  
by Barnes & Noble

kobo

GB  
Gardner's Books

YOU—it's ALL about THEM!

Every time you aim to connect with an audience, first ask yourself: what do I have to offer them? What can I give them? What do they want?

### **Which brings us to question #3: *What are you willing to do?***

Knee jerk answer for any debut author is: ANYTHING or EVERYTHING.

Great way to burn out, fast!

Answer this one thoughtfully and honestly.

If you're terrified of public speaking and getting up to give a talk would make you lose a week of sleep and decrease your ability to work (remember your main job is to write the next book!) then acknowledge that and incorporate it into your plan: *I won't do any live presentations.*

Doesn't just saying it make you feel better? Feel that weight off your shoulders?

You're not ruining your career by focusing on the things you're comfortable with. In fact, you are PROTECTING THE WORK.

Your job isn't to PROMOTE your work, it's to PROTECT it.

Make a list of promotional possibilities and *impossibilities*. Play to your strengths. You may find only a few things under the "I know I can do this and rock it!" column. That's fine, then really focus on those.

They might not seem like promotion at all. They might be more along the lines of writing short stories, things totally in your comfort zone. No worries. As long as you're doing something to keep your name out there (and short stories are a great promotional tool) you can count it.

You'll probably find that you have a third column: *I'd like to do...but I'm not very good at...*type of things.

Great! Those are fun to try. As long as they don't get in the way of your writing.

For instance, if you're an introvert but really want to go to a big writing conference so you can walk around wearing your First Sale ribbon.

Figure out a way to do it so that conference won't sap your creative energy.

Partner with an extrovert friend who will introduce you and keep the small talk flowing. Schedule down time alone in your room so you can re-charge. Prepare a few topics of conversation ahead of time so you don't feel like you have nothing to say. Make appointments to meet people for meals so you don't end up eating alone in a crowd and feeling left out.

Bottom line: Very few authors make it big because of their own promotional efforts.

BUT if you know your strengths and play to them then you'll not only have fun, you'll be able to write the next book and build name recognition with YOUR audience.

And that's how bestsellers are made...one reader at a time.



# World Building for Every Genre

(Excerpted from *NO RULES, JUST WRITE: Crafting the Character Driven Novel*, copyright 2011, CJ Lyons)

People often associate world building with science fiction or fantasy. But I'd like to talk about a different way to build a world, one that works for any genre by focusing on specific word choices and details.

In order to draw the reader into your story you need to create a universe where you both CONTROL the rules and where you make a promise to the reader to also FOLLOW those rules.

If the world you create is 1950's cold war Berlin, you'd better not have your hero pull out a cell phone. Seems obvious, but world building is much more than mere scenery. Every choice your characters make from what clothes they wear to the car they drive helps to create this alternative universe for your readers.

When a reader begins your book an implicit promise is made by you as the author: You will entertain without boring or insulting their intelligence.

This translates to the only two rules I follow when writing: **never bore and never confuse.**

You start building your world with the very first sentence — which is why so many books begin with descriptions of setting or weather. But there are other more dramatic ways to pull your reader into your world.

I'm going to share with you my favorite first line. It's from Evan McNamara's *Fair Game*.

## New! Custom Book Printing The finest quality printed books — guaranteed!

100 Novels  
just \$599



BookBaby Print is a custom short-run book printing service for authors looking to create beautiful — yet affordable — books.

- Ultra fast turn times — as fast as 5 business days!
- Low minimum print quantities
- Order Online
- Customer service is a phone call away

 **bookbaby**™

PRINT.BOOKBABY.COM • 1-866-905-2446

*Ever since we shot half of the Mineral County sheriff's department, my deputy and I have been a little shorthanded.*

With that one line, McNamara creates an entire world that he invites the reader to enter. And with a hook like that, what reader would refuse?

How does McNamara do it? He made sure his opening had three elements: it is visceral, evocative and telling.

**Visceral:** as in revealing the point of view character's emotions.

Here we have a first person point of view. We immediately see that the narrator is laconic, that he's a man of action (shot half the department), and there's no remorse here, is there? Makes you wonder if maybe he's gonna get his comeuppance for those past actions during the course of the story.

Read that last sentence again. "Makes you wonder." *You* as in the reader.

McNamara creates immediate tension *in* the reader and involvement *by* the reader by making you care enough to wonder about something.

This is what I like to call Emotional Velcro and is a great technique for any hook, whether it's an opening line, a pitch to an agent or editor, back cover copy, or a query letter.

Why? Because you're evoking emotion in your audience.

That's the next element in world building: **Evocative Details**. Using your word choices to elicit emotion in your reader.

We already discussed how McNamara created curiosity, but what other emotions did you experience in reading this one sentence? A feeling of kinship or empathy at a lawman forced to kill half his department? A sense of bravado? How about anticipation of what might happen next?

And lastly, to successfully world build, you need **telling details**. Every single detail you choose must do the work of creating your universe for the reader.

McNamara uses several telling details: half the department was shot (telling the reader that some survived), they were shot by "we" (telling the reader that it wasn't only the point of view character doing the shooting), where are we? Mineral County — telling us the book will take place in a small town, rural setting. And who is the main character? The sheriff who's been overworked and short-handed but still has at least one loyal deputy to help out.

Wow! Look at everything that one sentence achieved!

Okay, most of us won't be able to pack that much oomph in one sentence. But remember, book buyers make their decision whether or not to read your book in less than 3 pages, so you need to get those telling, evocative and visceral details up front.

Should you stop there with the first page? Heck no. Once you make that promise to your audience, you need to keep delivering, building that world brick by brick.

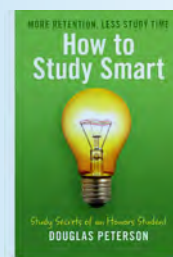
What are those bricks made of? Details. The decisions your characters make.

In essence, that means that you're not building your world alone. By choosing the right **visceral, evocative, and telling** details to color your plot and character, you are inviting the reader to join you.

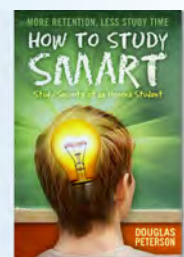
Once your reader is invested in your story, you've got them hooked!

## Great Cover Design helps you sell more eBooks

BookBaby offers Basic (\$149) and Deluxe (\$279) Cover Design services so your eBook can stand out from the crowd.



Basic Design



Deluxe Design

 bookbaby™

BOOKBABY.COM • TOLL FREE: 877-961-6878

## About CJ:

As a pediatric ER doctor, New York Times Bestseller **CJ Lyons** has lived the life she writes about in her cutting edge *Thrillers with Heart*.

CJ has been called a “master within the genre” (Pittsburgh Magazine) and her work has been praised as “breathtakingly fast-paced” and “riveting” (Publishers Weekly) with “characters with beating hearts and three dimensions” (Newsday).

Learn more about CJ’s *Thrillers with Heart* at [www.cjlyons.net](http://www.cjlyons.net) and more articles for writers at [www.NoRulesJustWRITE.com](http://www.NoRulesJustWRITE.com)

## BookBaby:

BookBaby can be summed up by our tagline: Get Published Now. Our mission is to provide authors and publishers all of the services they need to bring their books to the marketplace in a fast, hassle-free fashion.

Many of our BookBaby team members are authors themselves, and together we pride ourselves on delivering the highest quality services and products (including eBook publishing, eBook distribution, eBook conversion, high quality short-run book printing, book cover design and layout, etc.) at the most author-friendly prices.

[www.bookbaby.com](http://www.bookbaby.com)