

What do I do special as a writing coach?

I just woke up to a question/discussion on LinkedIn's Promocave:

Carrie Golden, Citizen Journalist/Poetry Consultant to filmmakers at Motionpoems, Inc., asked:

Writing coach...

Not sure if this group [Promocave] is the right place to post this question but...what exactly does a writing coach do to help writers?

I wear two hats (on one head): (1) **"court-of-last-resort" editor**, providing a last-chance no-nonsense review of what the writer is about to submit (the final final draft) for book publication and (2) a **first-step writing coach** (before much writing). So here was my contribution to the discussion that defines my view of what different do I offer as a writing coach—and why.

[As a writing coach] I think of myself as a nonfiction "what" coach. I prod the souls [rather deeply] through six or so what's (?), then the "how's" make sense (and cents). I'm there if they need me later, more as an action guide and (sometimes) a silent co-planner of their future empire.

Here's a longer explanation of (2), if you are interested and it helps you (*sans me*) do your own early nonfiction book planning, writing, and publishing.

There's not much mystery about the steps a nonfiction writer can and usually takes to prep and submit a book for

publication. See a hundred books in libraries worldwide that address that, and I have two books that address it too: [How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#) and [How to Pick the Right Kind of Publisher](#).

What distresses me most is the number of smart, organized, diligent would-be book writers who wander about, with perfectly good words and spelling, looking for something to say and, mostly, a reason to say it. Bewildered souls with hundreds of pages (at least it reads that way) of “what’s that?” copy that has no clear (or any) purpose (or buyers) presented in sweet-reading, grammatically correct prose. Their command of English is strong. (It’s worse if it’s not.) What’s missing is their grasp of elementary common sense about what a book must do to become a book...

The saddest thing is how easily that could have been prevented if they hadn’t been in such a damn hurry to see themselves and their brilliance in print (everywhere), with assumedly a fat advance almost in hand and many years of fatter royalties following assuredly behind.

About six questions will create the structure and map, plus point the writer to the most likely reader, why they would read it, what they would do with it, and how they just saved themselves about 75% in misdirected (or undirected) research, “what’s that?” writing, and the one thing they can’t get back, wasted time. Of course each question leads to deeper, related sub-questions which, in turn, lead to a dozen related books written (or waiting for you to write) that, combined with speaking, consulting, focus book series, perhaps audiobooks, and so on, can rather quickly create an empire based on their acquired expertise (which began with book one and is further proven and strengthened in subsequent products.)

So I guess that really makes me a **pre-writing and empire-building coach** (if being an emperor or empress is your thing).

That's the longer overview of what my kind of writing coach does. (Most of the others start when the writing itself appears. Bless them.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

10 Professional Tips to Sell Your Own Books...

Here's a great list of "to do's" about how to sell your own books that was shared and discussed at the last (9/10/16) BAIPA (Bay Area Independent Publishers Association) meeting in Novato, CA. That is precisely what my clients (and publishing friends) want and need to know. Since you're my friends too, let me share it with you—and invite you to share it with your friends as well. (The few notations in *italics* are mine to perhaps clarify the questions I had when I first read it.)

It is from IngramSpark, the huge distributor more known as Ingram or LSI through which most of us sell our books, mostly, to bookstores. It was shared at BAIPA by Jackie Thompson, a delightful soul full of fun, truth, and straightforward info and responses. From them, her, and me to you:

- **Before, during and after (l)earn what you can from industry data.**
- **Leverage distribution opportunities, US and global.**
- **Invest in professional editing, design and marketing, not inventory.** (*What good's the inventory if your book is embarrassing to look at and worse to read?*)
- **Use POD and digital to test demand for your book.** (*Not too*

many years ago you had to run 1,500+ copies just to see if a dozen unbribed souls would buy their own copy!)

- **Use POD to increase format choices (paperback, hardcover, large print).**
- **Get to know your local librarian, learn from their collections.** *(You can do the same for niche books by studying the 10 newest books your niches are reading.)*
- **If you are publishing to children and YA (young adults) have the material rated for age, and add this to your metadata.**
- **Use Social Media to build platform and market to your readers.**
- **Own your ISBN.** *(Even if some of the open publishers don't require it or will give you one of their ISBNs, instead post your own in every format and edition you publish.)*
- **Support your local bookseller and library.** *(Make it easier and a greater joy for them to later support you!)*

Good stuff I wish I had read when Ben Franklin and I were setting type and telling old jokes about older yokes on the Olde Sod.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[More how-to writing, publishing, and speaking stuff at www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm.]

The most important / most profitable reason to self-

publish

I enjoy and learn a lot from Bob Bly's frequent missives. (See www.bly.com). We sort of walk and work the same side of the street regarding professional writing and publishing, and we both agree on the importance of strategizing first, then following up with processes that work.

So the other day when Bob offered five reasons or situations where self-publishing should seriously be considered, I found myself nodding and uttered an aging "yep" at every point.

Alas, I had an extra "yep" unuttered, so I thought it fair in this blog to add number six to the list. We agree that self-publishing (1) can be a means of getting your words in print, (2) it will let you can control your tome's contents and design, (3) if you can market well, by self-publishing you can sidestep the big-house foot-dragging, (4) when your book is complementary to your greater purpose of displaying your expertise (as, for example, using your book to secure related speaking engagements), or (5) when self-publishing is the best (and perhaps only) way to get your words and ideas past the older, established houses so potential readers and buyers have a chance to see and decide about the merits of your independent offering.

The missing reason—the unuttered "yep"—for me trumps the other five. I think that **self-publishing** and **niche publishing** are potentially the two halves of a **golden egg**.

In fact, they have walked hand in hand long before "open" publishing made it possible for any writer to ignore the major houses and see their work in print. Many did profitably self-publish long ago, like Dickens, Twain, and General Roberts (of *Roberts' Rules of Order*). But when the focus swung from books for general markets (risky indeed) to tightly targeted or niche markets, and pre-testing (usually through direct mail

testing) allowed the publisher to define the specific buyer demand, then self-publishing let the niche publisher create publications with finely honed titles tailored to pin-point targets. It became a potentially risk-free investment since the publisher would then be able to print the number of books needed to satisfy that predetermined need.

We're not in disagreement here since Bob sells solid products about niche publishing and my [Niche Publishing-Publish Profitably Every Time](#) also extols (and explains) the "how's" of niching and pre-testing. I simply wanted to remind my readers that niche publishing continues to be a lucrative path (I think *the* most lucrative) in the grove of self-publishing.

Incidentally, blogs being structured as they are, I probably have 40 or 50 related blogs about "niche publishing" hiding right behind these words for further perusal, if interested. Just type "niche" or "niche publishing" (no quote marks) in the SEARCH box above and Word Press will kindly stack them up for you to read. (Since in my mind niche publishing and **empire building** can be almost synonymous, you are invited to check "empire building" too!)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[Also use Nook Press to publish your own book--free!](#)

I've been selling my e-books through Nook Press for four years and it's **a good way to get your book posted for sale at Barnes and Noble**, which runs it. (Its platform was earlier known as

Pubit!)

It's probably **the easiest free ebook press site to use**. (The others most used are Kindle and Smashwords.) Simply go to Nook Press.com and there are three choices: E-Book Publishing, Print Books, and Help Services. If you want to publish and sell your books through them, go to the first. If you just want them to print your books, the second, and if you need help putting the book together, the third.

Just follow the submission directions in the publishing section, (My book, [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#), will ease your march through the steps, if needed.)

There are usually **two perplexing areas** in the free publishing formats: (1) **who you can talk to**—actually talk to, or at least type to and have them immediately type an answer back, and (2) **how many copies have you sold**, when, and when will those royalties be paid.

(1) **Live assistance is great at Nook Press**. If you have questions it will tell you where to go and how to do it immediately.

(2) **Easy enough here too**, if you remember that you get paid 60 days after sale and you are paid for all of that month's total sales. For example, if you sold a book in March, you will be paid at the end of May. (They will send you an email telling you it is en route [to your bank account] at that time.) So if you sold \$42 worth (say six books) in March, you will be paid the \$42 at the end of May. Go to the SALES button and it will tell you the number of books sold the present month, how many were sold last month, and you can go down a list of previous months and it will tell you specifically which books were sold during those earlier 30-day periods. (There's also a graph on the SALES page telling the number of books sold each of the past six months.)

I need that by-the-month information (in our example, for April) because it tells me exactly which six books were bought that month. That's important to you if you have more than one ebook published by Nook Press. For me, I own a publishing company and I submit the books written by my five authors (see www.meetingk-12needs.com), plus me. So I need to know which books by which authors (and the royalty for each) they are paying. That's so I can pass that royalty on to them.

That's it. **Consider adding Nook Press to your selling force.** If nothing more, it's another publisher in your growing in-print domain. **Your kids will shriek with delight.** So will your spouse when those additional royalties get heavy in your account!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. If you want to **read other comments**, usually how-to, in the 400 or so blogs at this site about any of the "open publishing" sites, go to the **SEARCH** box at the top, right, of the first page of this blog and type in the publisher's name (one at a time). The blogs will be lined up for you to read! What are the other related publishing outlets you might want to know about? Try Nook, Kindle, Smashwords, BookBaby, Create Space, Amazon, Lightning Source, Lulu, Scribd, Blurb, iBooks, and Kobo.

Where self-publishing and

ebooks stand in late 2014

(1) “Ebooks have grown exponentially and reached a healthy balance by 11/14,” says **Mark Coker**, head of [Smashwords](#) in a no-nonsense delivery at [BAIPA](#) (Bay Area Independent Publishers Assn) on Nov. 8. Here is a much-abbreviated summary of Mark’s very enjoyable 10-point presentation. When Mark began Smashwords, about it 8 years ago, ebooks accounted for .5% of the books published. **Today they are 35% of the U.S. total. But in the last year that growth has held steady at about 35%.** That may represent a rough new balance between bound books and ebooks in the future.

(2) **“The stigma of self-publishing is disappearing,”** Mark feels. It’s no longer a sign of failure, a last resort, or a desperate “inch from evil.” The growth was led by romance writers, with Amanda Hawkins the pivotal figure, who first cracked the million-copy ebook threshold. “It’s best for all publishers if there’s a healthy selection of traditional and self-published books available for choice.” But Coker assured the audience that the indies have the flexibility to outsell, outcompete, and underprice the big traditional producers.

(3) **Writers earn a much healthier bite of the royalties by indie publishing,** 60-80% of the list price, versus about 25% net royalties (12-17% of the price) of the traditional houses.

(4) **“The big (traditional houses) just don’t understand self-publishing.”** They couldn’t make money from writers, so they had to fleece them. They turned to vanity press, like Author Solutions (bought by Penguin), and then give bad, over-priced service to those they otherwise wouldn’t let publish at the top level. “They should just abandon the vanity approach,” say Coker.

(5) **The democratization of the publishing tools is what freed the indies** from having to use the overpriced, underpaid, and

tortugian-produced big-press book process. Indies today have full access to presses, have much freer and faster promotion venues, can change prices in minutes, and can play with pre-ordering, free copies, two-for-one, and many more means to put their printed products in others' hands.

(6) **"Keep your eye on the ebook subscription services,"** Mark advised, "like [Oyster](#) and [Scribd](#) where anybody can pay \$10 or so to read any book in their catalog—and those book publishers with the catalog products are paid as if the whole book was sold if a small percentage is actually read. Amazon also has a form of this through Kindle Unlimited but the model isn't very friendly because you must give them exclusivity of use and Kindle pays a much smaller percentage from a pool, which seems to be about \$1.50 a read.

(7) Mark discussed **the new court decision between Amazon and Hachette**. The decision revolves around the agency model. Let me pass on this because the decision is so new that the dust hasn't cleared sufficiently to see who won, who lost, and how it will affect indies (like us). See future blogs here and elsewhere for emerging clarifications.

(8) **Ebooks are going mobile**. Lots of selling abroad. Apple iBooks sell 45% of their eproducts overseas.

(9) Mark got a laugh when he said that he had read that "self-publishing creates a tsunami of dreck." He agreed that lots of self-publishing books are mediocre in appearance but he felt, overall, **there is "more high quality content in books than ever before."**

(10) Yet selling books is getting harder. Now there's a glut of high quality print and it is harder to reach readers. Add to that that the growth in books is outstripping the readership, and folks read less in part because of the many other was to learn and be entertained. There are fewer major publishers, fewer agents, and lower advances in the

traditional arena. “But don’t despair: ebooks are immortal, they sit there waiting to be found forever. And **right now there has never been a better time to publish, when there are more world readers than ever before.**”

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I must remind blog readers about an overlooked element of self-publishing that largely circumvents the usual paths but uses all the now-available presses—and can be pre-tested for title, author, theme, price, and format before a word is written or a page published. That is the [niche field](#), which is **always begging for more tightly-focused books** and where the selling price is largely determined by how well the book answers one critical question or defines a new process (or an old process done in a new way). As many of you know, this is my area of specialization so let me send you to a list of [related products](#) that might help you explore this indie and traditional field.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[The new Nook Press isn't an "open" publisher](#)

Nook Press just announced its new paperback and hardback print service. Its features look similar to those of “open” publishers, like Create Space, Kindle, Smashwords, and others (including Nook ebooks). But here you simply build your book, prep the files, and upload the print-ready PDFs for the interior and cover. They print the book and can have it in

your hands in a week. (Maximum order is 125 copies, but you can get many orders simultaneously.) A 200-page paperback (black/white interior, 6×9, on white paper) will cost \$4 apiece, plus tax and shipping. But that's it. They don't sell it to others. What you do with the printed book is up to you. (Nor is there a discount for larger orders. "We hope to offer it in the future.")

Just don't confuse this with the "open" publishing full services where the book is produced, then sold by the publisher and/or through other distributors, as Nook itself does for ebooks. This new Nook Press service ends with the printing, period. According to Amanda at [Nook Press](#), "The NOOK Press print platform creates print books for personal use. The eBook platform creates digital books to put on sale through NOOK and BN.com. The NOOK Press print platform program is for you to print books for your personal use, and does not include selling those books through Barnes & Noble stores or BN.com. You may sell the books you print on your own, however."

If interested, check the details. Looks straightforward enough. I'm eager to see the end product.

But I am also a bit bewildered why I would have my book just printed if I could get it printed by the "open" publishers at (about) the same cost and put on the market for sale, and then they would send me royalties (even if they are modest and arrive slowly). Maybe the print-only folks don't want others to see or have their book. I suppose there's nothing wrong with that, though it seems a hard way to share your genius or be rewarded for the sharing.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I explain the "open" publishing process, mostly the prep and submission procedures, in [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#).

Non-fiction books should shout with benefits and authority

What do you want your book to do?

Probably (1) get bought—or at least read; (2) make you money; (3) if self-published, get snagged by a “big house” and do more of [1] and [2]; (4) establish you as an “expert” or “authority” in its topic field; (5) get potential readers to want to know more about the topic, and (6) make the world [or at least America] swoon at seeing your name and wisdom in print. Forget the swooning; save it for fiction.

Of the six rewards, (5) probably pays the best and generates the most of the rest. If there are enough eager readers who want the benefits and new knowledge, just knowing that your book and you exist can lead to invitations to write another book and/or one or several articles, speak to gatherings, consult, offer classes or programs, create a related product, join a faculty, and so on. It usually depends on how many benefits you suggest that can be realistically accomplished and how unique they are. If, for example, your book explains a how-to process that will (effortlessly) double the readers’ income, and you seem to be the kind of expert who can speak well and informatively, or can carry out the other invitations, your book can be your best spokesperson if you get it in front of enough of the right people.

Of course, when they see the book, its title, sub-title, description, cover messages, and all related promo information must draw their eyes to the benefits and your expertise. That

can be helped by getting testimonials from recognized authorities in that field, or at least from people with the kind of titles that should be given to legitimate authorities.

I know that this blog is mostly common sense. But how many books do you see that neither carry nor imply authority on part of the author? Or fail to tell you what good could occur if you grab the tome and get reading?

So let me say it another way. If you want others to pay you well and often, you must devise and explain a way that, if done by them, will change their lives (and all they touch) in a magically positive way. And that you, the author, have the tools to be their guide. Those tools are in your new book available right now...

If this helps you, fine. It is provoked by a spate of books I've seen lately that did almost none of what I suggest here. There are no promises or anything in them that even suggest that I should open the cover. Or that I would benefit by doing what the authors say. I'm a court-of-last-resort book editor and I can only imagine that the books are just as poorly researched and written. What a shame. Why didn't they study a few similar books that did succeed? I hate to see time and hopes lost. The most bewildering element seems to be the authors' timidity or fear of stepping out and making an honest claim for why a buyer (or reader) should read the pages. And how what's on those pages could change the readers' lives—and many others' too.

Whew! A rare rant.

Best wishes,
Gordon Burgett

Writers: ideas for creating top-selling nonfiction books

I think of top-selling two ways. The most obvious is to sell more copies of your book than any other book like it in the market. If you sell 10,000 copies of the book, you outsold a person who sold 5,000. Duh.

The less obvious way is to measure the effectiveness of your book's sale. If the purpose of your book is to create a core for an empire, starting with the book and spreading into other information dissemination means, a book that sells 150 copies but generates 50 \$1,500 speeches, spinoff books, keynotes, and lots of related consulting, and so on, is a huge deal too. (But "huger" if you sold those 10,000 copies here!)

The latter is much more safely done by writing books in niche areas where you zero in on key problem-solvers or frustration-reducers, the kind that every practitioner in the niche will bottom-line benefit from by reading your words, process, or direction. Once they see that your words come from tested expertise that should work well for them too, they will also be asking you to speak to their niche gatherings, write for their newsletter, and most of the rest.

The way to reduce the risk and assure that a high percentage of the nichefolk will buy your book (at your price) is to pre-test the book to a small selection of them with a note, a flyer, and a return yes-no test postcard. If you need an 8% positive response to earn \$50,000 (pick a starting target), then if that or more say yes on your quick two-question return postcard, you know they want your book—or at least they want to read more about your title, they like the format (paper or ebook, or both), your premise and promises, they want to see what you (or the the author) has to say, and they will buy it from you by direct mail or through regular marketing venues to

the niche.

The other way is to write a dynamite book to general markets where the title alone gets them so say (better, shout to the heavens) that they'd be a blubbering bobo not to buy your book the moment it is out.

I'm talking about books for adults. I'm not sure if kids clamor much for nonfiction books now, though I do see top fiction sellers for them. But since I don't know what I'd say to them that even I would want to read, I leave that field to others.

Look for books here for how-to details about niche pre-testing and publishing. There are many other good books that will tell you how to publish and sell to the general market.

The very first step for both, though, is to find a title that provokes a lusty "wow!" The rest is writing the same "wow!" book and making its existence well known to those who need and want its message.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[5 kinds of consulting \(and mentoring\) for nonfiction writers and publishers](#)

I've been an editor and nonfiction consultant for writers and publishers for at least 20 years, so I was grateful when an association client asked me to break down in greater detail

the kinds of consulting I do. I guess it was much clearer in my head than on my services data!

Then when I shared the result with some other writing consultant friends, they suggested that I share it as a blog. (I'm being blown by outside forces!) So here it is:

1. PRE-BOOK/PROJECT STRATEGIZING

With the author, I help identify the book's purpose; create a full-range plan to guide its realization; decide the means of publishing; define the book's benefits; design, construct, and help name the book, and let specific others (and the public) know that it exists, what it says differently, and why they must have it.

2. MID-BOOK MENTORING

With the author, I help guide the creation of a clear and logical book-building plan; find exceptional models; mold the facts, stories, and graphics to meet the book's intentions and needs; stay on schedule; advise about the organization, style, layout, and cover, and oversee its legality, proofreading, and printing.

3. "COURT OF LAST RESORT" (Pre-Print) EDITING

After the last proof, just before the book is ready to print, I conduct a full-book review to see if or where specific attention (and modification) may be needed in the book's design, layout, content, accuracy, adherence to its original purpose and plan, salability, integrity, clarity, reasoning, legal permissions, artwork, or other components vital to a professional publication.

4. POST-PRINT EXPANSION (From Book to Empire)

With the author, I help create a comprehensive plan to expand the content and related values of the book and its unique message and/or process(es) through other information

dissemination means such as other books, booklets, white papers, audio and video formats, speaking, teaching, and consulting. Also, I help guide the creation and use of integrated marketing means now possible for fast, far-reaching transmission of the book's contents.

5. SPOT MENTORING FOR NICHE BOOKS AND PRODUCTS

I assist the writers or producers of niche books and products at any phase of their niche publishing (including those above)–or through the entire project, from inception and pre-testing to completion. The niche process is fully explained in [Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time!](#)

For more details, call (800) 563-1454, check my [website](#) , or email me at glburgett@aol.com

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[25 blogs about Kindle, Nook, Create Space, LSI, Smashwords](#)

I was asked what **blogs** I had about “**open**” **publishing**. Here they are, below, and I'm certain there are more too so if you have a specific word or topic you are hunting for, please type it in the search box to see if it pops up!

The publishers mentioned in the blogs are **Kindle, Nook, CreateSpace, LSI, Smashwords, Scribd, Lulu, Blurb, Bookbaby,** and **iPad**. Most of them discuss the publishing process.

The titles below are not linked but if you type the first five

or so words into the SEARCH box, they should pop onto your screen. (Some are in the RELATED POSTS below.)

This is the WordPress website where they are residing:
<http://blog.gordonburgett.com>

I also have a **full book**, in paperback or digital, called [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#); it is linked at its title. It's available from [us](#) and the first six "open" publishers mentioned in the second paragraph above.

Best wishes with your book and hunt!

Gordon Burgett

Why free and fast "open book" publishing is a godsend

Differences between Kindle, CreateSpace, Nook, Smashwords, Blurb, Lulu, and Scribd

What's the summary, schedule, and process for printing almost-free books through Lulu, CreateSpace, LSI, Smashwords, Kindle, iPad, Blurb, and Scribd?

How do I profitably publish my just-finished book six times?

The 10-step publishing process; the list in order

Why would you change a book's title once it's out for sale?

Five-steps: how to pick your critical nonfiction book title?

How to find your 2012 earnings from CreateSpace, Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Bookbaby?

How to quickly find lots of ebooks you can publish and sell

7 times when using Lulu, CreateSpace, Blurb, Scribd, Smashwords, iPad and Kindle makes huge sense

Creating an ebook from your bound book text for Lulu, CreateSpace, Smashwords, Kindle, iPad, Lightning Source, and Scribd

8-step process to publish in Kindle, Nook, iPad, Lulu, and CreateSpace

My publishing order for paperbacks and ebooks

Your book needs final professional proofreading

What's so special about your book's second draft?

Test your book with experts after you've finished the first draft

Give your book order, an angle, and a table of contents

Write a dandy book and sell it worldwide in minutes, hands-free

What should the insides of your book look like?

Which sells best: publishing with major houses, an ebook, or self-publishing?

What your first book draft must include

Where do you find more information for your book?

Don't pick a must-use title before writing your book

How to find the precise book subject that others want to buy

Digital publishing: focus most on your book's contents, title, and cover
