

# 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?*

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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

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## 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](http://www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm). ]

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**Leading your idea in print  
down its most profitable**

## path...

So you've got an **article** or **book idea** that you want to turn into both **big money** and widely-seen **expertise presence**. That's the way to think! I'd also add that the copy needn't be completely rewritten again and again, so also think **reprint, rewrite, reprint of rewrites, and more...**

Let's say you want to write about the 2016 Chicago Cubs and their playing in the coming National League baseball playoffs—and perhaps for the pennant, of all things! But, if you can't tell, or wouldn't want to tell, a baseball from a ball of wax, your idea and copy to sell again and again could be about the Trump-Clinton presidential election, kumquat delicacies from the kitchen, or driverless autos driving nonetheless on the streets!

Alas, I've been a baseball fan from/in Chicago almost since the Great Fire and the hapless Cubs haven't won a pennant for 107 years. You know us by the fetching blue, red, and white "C" hats that we have had to hide in our cupboard for generations. Alas, this is our year, so we dusted them off and wear them on our heads for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and almost all the hours between—until October when we will know if the hex of the billy goat is true. **So I'm picking the Cubs for this empire-building article writ long...** (But if you're reading this in the Philippines, on the Pyrenes, or in Peru, kumquat delicacies might be easier to understand...)

Let's start with an **article** about the "plight of the Cubs" (or any fetching topic) for an American magazine. You do the usual things: some basic research to find the most interesting angles or slants, pick the best approach, and subject that idea to a two-pronged **feasibility study**—is it feasible to write and is it feasible to sell? (Go to the search box in the

upper top right corner and type in **feasibility study** to see how the magazine approach works. The blog copy comes from either [\*How to Sell 75% of Your Freelance Writing\*](#) or [\*The Travel Writer's Guide\*](#). To read those books, used and sold for a pittance, check the [Amazon catalog](#).) The feasibility study tells how to test magazines vs newspapers, who are the most likely readers, the querying process, and (for magazines), should you get a "go-ahead," how you best present the copy for sale. (If it fits newspaper freelance buying fields too, submit the written article in final form, without a query and sent in ready-to-go fashion.) If the idea is a "go" as feasible to write and sell, send your articles to the best markets in both categories.

If the **magazine** buys your submission, you can use much of the article's contents again (at least slightly rewritten) two ways: as a **reprint** or a **rewrite**. Then if a rewrite is bought, you can send that off to a still-virgin magazine as a reprint. With cunning, you can have several of each of these three partially-completed masterpieces filled in (completed) and in print, all paying you! (Again, go to the Search box above and write in reprints or rewrites to see step-by-step blogs with more details.)

With **newspapers**, there are two paths: (1) you can literally sell the first copy to as many newspapers as will buy it as long as they aren't "national" newspapers (like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or the *Wall Street Journal*—sell them one at a time, and, after it is sold, thoroughly rewrite the piece before selling it to another "national") and (2) don't simultaneously sell it two or more regional newspapers within 100 miles of each other ("distribution ranges"). Otherwise, you can sell the very same newspaper article(s) to any other newspaper (except the "nationals") as long as they don't overlap. Just tell the newspaper editor yours is a simultaneous submission and you are selling it outside of their 100-mile circulation orb.

What more can you do with reams of unused copy parts shouting to be read? Throw all the used copy into a cauldron, add the unused gems, mix them up again, and “**topic spoke**” them to find as many of the other potential eager buyers as will shriek and pay, delightfully, to use your genius and make you rich. Check the blog search for items about “topic spoking” in the 400+ blogs waiting to be used!

How many **books** can you pluck from that cauldron (adding in other sources still untouched)? You could write/publish a book for all kinds of Cubs’ *aficionados*: one for kids/young adults, one for the regular folk, another for seniors (some praying for the Cubs to win, others incredulous that they are anywhere near the top), another for the Cubs fans focusing on this year and the past two, another putting all 107 years in perspective, and so on.

And because each book requires a mound of research, interviews, anecdotes, photos, and more, you can turn this into new wealth of found and reworked copy and pluck out more **articles**, and thus more **rewrites**, **reprints**, and **reprints of rewrites**. You can also sell related **photos** where you sell copy (check photos in Search), often the same photo repeatedly since they are almost always sold on one-time rights.

Lost in this pile of print are the **directly related spin-offs**, like **audiobooks** of any or all of those books just mentioned; **focus books** about specific elements of baseball for the truly absorbed, of the past year or two or of all time, like the pitching, the records set and broken, ERAs, a projection of future years and records of new(er) players emerging in the 2016 excitement; even **videos** and **movies**, all being in print before being converted to other media. Then using the most visible of the platform builders, authors speaking about their (new) specialty from the platform: see **rallies**, **speeches**, **how-to workshops**, **seminars**, **talks**, and so on...

Every time your champion copy has your by-line attached to

your super writing in a newspaper, magazine, or book, you are solidifying yourself as an **expert** in that field, building a following, and making yourself more wanted by **information and product producers**. They want to get more good items from you, a recognized “valuable and prolific source” of, in this case, baseball, Cubs, and sports ideas, information, and articulation.

The point here is that **almost any word or idea has lots of legs (and ears) and can be multiplied very profitably many times by many means**. The trick is to create interesting copy about ideas that others want to know more about that is spelled properly and has the facts, quotes, and anecdotes artfully blended into more good ideas. Most exceptional writers don't stray too far from what others want to know, and they churn a fair amount of interesting text into many articles, then books, rather than just making one sale or two before wandering off to find unrelated subjects for articles that are also sold a few times. **It's wiser and fills your coffers faster by turning your related ideas and copy over and over.**

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[ More how-to writing, publishing, and speaking stuff  
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**A very new format for a**



# seminar workbook...

In a now very long past—decades—I must have literally copied and carted 40,000 seminar workbooks (sometimes a half mile, too often up stairs). Most of those workbooks were 12-20 pages long! Too late to complain: that was the way it was done. But yesterday technology finally removed my shackles—and perhaps my blinders!

Some fact-setting now, then a detailed explanation copy of the new format that you may be interested in modifying and using. Explaining the 40,000: I have given more than 2,000 four-hour seminars, most as college/university extended ed offerings, almost all in California. They rarely had less than 20 participants, which meant 24 or so workbooks in case last minute registrants were waiting at the door. Ugh.

But yesterday a different request opened my eyes. I spoke to the **NSNC** (National Society of Newspaper Columnists) in L.A. about "[Publishing for Profit](#)" and, even though I myself had been a columnist several times, I had no way of knowing what other writing experiences the veteran audience had nor which of the dozen or so suggestions I would offer and expand upon they might wish to pursue.

Nor did I want to schlep any workbooks nor published books to sell BOR. (The airlines made that impossible anyway by charging for baggage—and rubbing in more salt by starving me en route!) But I did slip a copy of eight different books into my suitcase to display on a side table so they could see that they actually existed!

I know, I could have run copies off of the workbooks once I reached L.A. But I'm doubly convinced now, the day after, that the new format is many times better and smarter for the future, it gives the audience more options, and it reduces or eliminates the burdensome task of hauling products for sale.

That's why I'm sharing it now, while the fire burns, in case it would help you too. (If you have already discovered this "new" workbook process, congratulations! I'm sure you double agree! Why didn't you tell me?)

**The rationale:** I knew that all of my attendees were writers, they used computers daily, understood how to find websites, blogs, and could figure out the free-book code. Therefore all I had to do was explain the media or means needed, where the items could be found, the links or addresses for each, and what the resource references referred to. I gave them the instructions needed in the first two paragraphs, where the program was going in the next two, and the broadest of explanations of what the four sections to be covered in the text that followed.

That took a minute or two to re-explain at the beginning of the presentation, but then I could focus on the most important ways columnists might earn more and live happier. When appropriate, I could direct them to one or several of the references and, in some cases, tell them the best subtitles to the critical step-by-step details. There must be 600+ printed pages in the three free books and 200+ in the other items. Thus, by knowing where the information is at hand, almost immediately, they can pick, select, or reject it as they wish—or go back later, if they change their minds.

**The workbook:** The two-sided page *is* the workbook. In this case the program was designed to show U.S. columnists how else they can share, market, and expand their written gems (now or later) into other lucrative venues or ventures. That is what I talked about. If they need the application guidance, the resources would then send them to the "how-to" support material.

Enough explanation. What follows is the "workbook" they received.

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## Workbook as delivered to the NSNC presentation:

### Welcome!

I'm Gordon Burgett. It's 2016, we're all experienced writers, and the airlines won't let me schlep boxes of handouts as baggage anymore, so I'm going to use the Internet to let you pick what specific information you think will be useful to you later. At that point, you can download what you want or need, if anything. The most important material is free, there's no shipping or tax, and it'll be in your hands almost immediately!

Thus you have no workbook or piles of paper to lumber through. Just sit back for the first hour and let me explain a sort of strategy and ways that should help you considerably increase your writing income, then I'll answer any questions you have during the remaining 15 minutes. If you have more questions later, please email me at [glburgett@aol.com](mailto:glburgett@aol.com).

My task is to help you fill your coin bags and increase your second-life options by doing more of what you already do very well—and make even more money (heavens!) by doing it.

I think the more-mullah quest starts with you strategizing at whatever point you are along your moneymaking-by-writing trail. I'll address that.

The rest of our oral trek today roughly follows the other four sections on these pages. I've posted lots of backup resources here that you can download if/when you want or need them. The most important material is free—three full core books, three helper reports, four website articles, and 400+ blogs to pluck from. To download most of that information, use our order page at [www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm](http://www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm)

Here's how to download or see the resources: (1) find and separately order each **free book** on the order form—but *before* you submit each order write the coupon number [        ] in the coupon code box on that order form. Then submit the form, the price will drop to zero, and follow the download instructions that follow! (The freebies expire on 8/20/16.) Other items, unless noted, are from the order form and can be ordered separately or together at any time. They are also available from Amazon but if you want the three books free you must follow the instruction in (1). How to get the three **free reports** is explained below. See [blog.gordonburgett.com](http://blog.gordonburgett.com) for the blogs listed. Once there, find the SEARCH box, upper right corner under the Twitter logo. In that box enter either the topic you want to see more about (like query letters or niche) or the word I will give you. The **website articles** are from the direct website link location.

(I) **WRITING—[Travel Writer's Guide](#)** (free ebook)

Explains how to sell 75%+ of your freelance writing (mostly newspaper and magazine articles), how to triple your income by topic-spoking, how to earn more with sidebars, and how to organize profit-packed copy-, quote-, and anecdote-gathering trips...

Related resources:

“4 Proven Ways to Sell 75% of Your Freelance Writing” Go to **blog**, enter 4 proven ways

“How to Sell 75% of Your Travel Writing” (2 cassette program), \$20 + shipping

“25 Professional Query and Cover Letters” (ebook), \$4.99

“Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales”

(ebook), \$4.99

“The magic of topic spoking.” Go to **blog**, enter topic spoking

(II) **PUBLISHING–Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time** (free ebook)

A huge percentage of the risk-free, market-guaranteed book money is found here. We made \$2 million from dentists and are now following the same path from K-12 school administrators, supers, principals, and school boards. That process and business plan is explained in this book. If you write and publish, almost all the niche profits are yours. If you find experts in the field, you direct/edit, they write, and you publish, most of the profits are still yours but the fame is theirs.

Related resources:

“12-Step Pre-Test for Niche Publications” (ebook), \$4.99

“How to Test Your Niche Book before Writing or Publishing” (ebook), \$9.99

“How to Get Niche Articles in Print 75% of the Time” (ebook), \$2.99

(III) **PUBLISHING–How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days** (free ebook). If you’re not niching, use the “open press” revolution plus Create Space/Kindle [Amazon] and Lightning Source as your first or major paths to building your own empire. Publish here, then (perhaps) try the major publishers.

Related resources:

“Open Book Publishing: Almost a Miracle! (ebook), \$3.10

“When Would I Always (or Never) Self-Publish My Book?” Go to **blog**, enter self-publish

“12 More Ways to Turn Your Book into Many More...” Go to **blog**, enter more ways

“Focus books and Selling a Book by its Parts” Go to the **blog**, enter focus

“Sample Focus Book: Rights and Responsibilities of School Principals” (ebook), \$3.99

“Sample Focus Book: How to Create the Best Staff Possible” (ebook), \$3.99

(IV) BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER—Empire Building (O.P., no replacement book yet.) Ultimately, for big money, expand the perception of your expertise through related information dissemination means, like speaking, seminarizing, giving workshops or retreats, audiobooks, classes, consulting, social media venues, radio-TV, guest performances, and so on. Or create/sell little empires along the way. Or align your writing, researching, interviewing, and publishing skills with others’ empires. Or do it all.

Related resources:

“How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar” (4-cassette seminar), \$40+shipping

“Six Special Tools That Get Speakers Booked First” (ebook), \$9.99

**MORE FREE REPORTS:**  
*Lifelong Wealth by Being  
Indispensable*  
*Finding Indispensable Article  
Topics*  
*101 Niche Marketing Topics*

Just subscribe to my newsletter (seldom sent) at <http://www.gordonburgett.com/free-reports> and all three reports are immediately downloaded. Nobody else ever sees your address. Then if you want to escape my elist, just email me to be removed. I'm not offended—I forget names instantaneously.

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That's it. If it helps, go to it.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## [How to make your friends smile gratefully all day long...](#)

If this were addressed to you, how would you feel if it arrived unexpectedly in your email box ?

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This year (2016), I've decided to send one email each day thanking someone who has enriched my life.

It could be someone who is close to me, like a family member or a friend.

It could be someone I have only met once or perhaps admired from afar.

It could be someone I have known for a long time or only momentarily.

**TODAY YOU ARE THAT PERSON.  
I APPRECIATE YOUR BEING IN MY LIFE.**

Allen

*P.S. Please know that there is no hierarchy here. In the past few days, your name and who you are in the world came to mind. When that happened I realized that I wanted to honor and thank you for enriching my life.*

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My reaction was delight and total surprise. So rarely is unsought, free kindness sent our way! If you want to use this model or concept, just do it. Change the names, of course. There are no copyrights or restrictions at all.

If your curiosity is stirred, here's a pinch of background. Allen Klein and I are veteran writers/speakers who have met, mostly in passing at presentations, for years. He's very funny and has written many books that I have enjoyed and shared, so I was indeed honored—and quite surprised—when it arrived. The next day it occurred to me that others may want to say the same or something similar to those they know. So I emailed Allen, thanked him for the thoughtfulness, and asked if my sharing the idea with others would be okay. His reply, almost immediate, was “Yes, please *do* share it. Imagine if we all did this! What a great world this would be.”

**So now it's in your hands to use as or if you wish!**

(Allen Klein's most recent book is *You Can't Ruin My Day*. See more at [humor@allenklein.com](mailto:humor@allenklein.com).)

Best wishes,



Gordon Burgett

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

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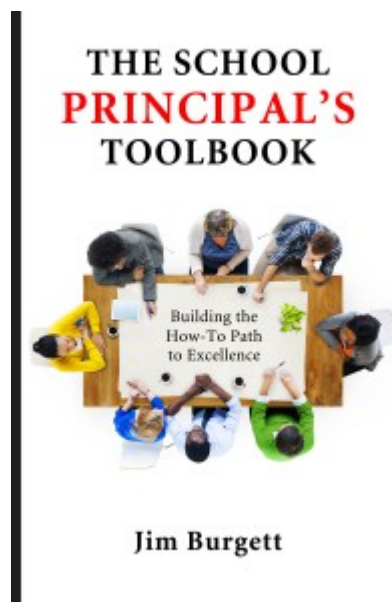
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## [FOCUS BOOKS: Sell your entire book and its chapters at once](#)



Congratulations! You **just printed your nonfiction masterpiece**—but what do you do next? As the adage says, “You’re all dressed up with no place to go”! In other words, how do you find and get others to praise your new book’s genius, especially to their colleagues and friends, while also getting muchos congratulatory pesos in your pocket—fast!

**Let's half solve your selling dilemma and also suggest a new way to simultaneously shake loose some key focus book pesos too.**

Most of a book's marketing solution happens before the book is created. Like identifying the buyers before the book is written, and also by figuring out how or where potential buyers buy books like yours. Doing that keeps most bookfolk free from having to sell on street corners and at flea markets (unless their book is about fleas or how fleas market).

It's also wise to determine what specific book your buyers most want or need—and then write a book about that. (It sounds obvious. Fortunately, the best way to identify those most-wanted books is also easy to do. Just ask the most likely buyers what they most need—or can't find.)

Let me suggest a bias here that makes the marketing hunt far easier: **zero in on a niche market first**, then offer your how-to brilliance in print directly to them. But that's another (or many other) blogs. In the meantime, see [Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time](#).

Whatever marketing or selling path you choose—often Internet and bookstore selling, through catalogs, by word-of-mouth, social marketing, radiant reviews (even dumb reviews sort of help), other digital machinations, a classroom text, an Oprah highlight—think of selling both the big book and its contents (perhaps as chapters or sections) all at the same time.

**Let me share what we are doing right now so you will have actual examples** of this to peruse and verify. (Who am I to share this innovation? I've been doing and teaching article and book prep, and publishing, since about the time Ben Franklin was mixing ink. See Google.) Mostly now, when I'm not talking to groups, I edit and publish books to the K-12 school administrator's niche.

That's doubly enjoyable because my younger brother has been a

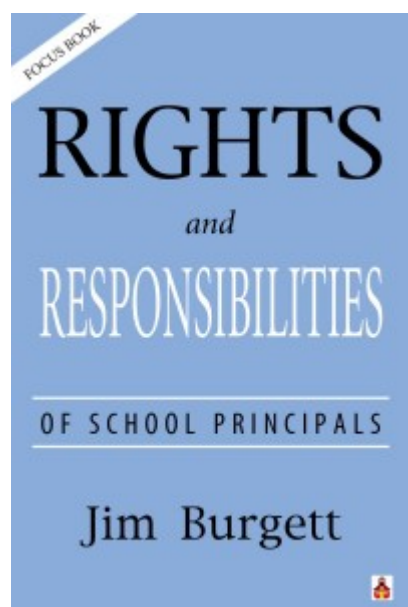
luminary in that field for 40 years, and my firm snagged him and his illustrious cohorts to write our much-sought books about their expertise. Let's look particularly at Jim's newest creation, **The School Principal's Toolkit**.

Our market isn't hiding. We can directly contact all of them, plus others who particularly benefit by having our book in school principals' hands: the superintendents (who usually select the principals), the school board (that usually approves the superintendents), and other school-related buyers. So to make the book visible the book's author speaks widely to the respective associations at conventions and gatherings about the new **Toolkit**, we send flyers to principals, the book is reviewed in the respective newsletters, and so on. Still, we want to make sure it is even more widely known. So we have created what we call our "**focus book**" program. That's how you "Sell your book simultaneously, intact and by chapters."

We think that any educator reading any of the book's 12 chapters will see why the principal needs to have at least the rest of this book, and probably all of Jim's other [five related books](#), in hand or on her/his desk at all times. (No vanity there. If we didn't feel that strongly Jim wouldn't have written the book and I wouldn't have published it if he did. I'm sure you feel the same about your book.)

So my idea—no doubt 100 other publishers have had it too—was to **take the most vital and needed topic, edit it to about 50 pages, and publish a focus book with the same words from the book as its content**. Thus from Chapter 1 of *The School Principal's Toolkit* we extracted [Rights and Responsibilities](#) and added **of School Principals** to it (so pile drivers, whiskey sellers, or accountants don't buy it in error—and want refunds!) Next, we had that text set (with a frill-less cover) to be sold in paperback and ebook formats. We also priced them at \$3.99 [digital] and \$6.99 [paperback] and made them buyable at **Kindle, Create Space, Nook, ECU** (that's us), and other

outlets. (Incidentally, we also created a focus book of the fourth chapter of **Toolbook** and priced it the same. It's called [How to Create the Best Staff Possible: Building K-12 Excellence from Hire to Rehire](#)—slightly reworded from the book so the public is, again, fully informed.)



We won't earn much (if we break even) at the low focus book prices, but we are certain many superintendents will buy a couple to dozens of copies for district meetings with their principals. So that will meet a future need since they will prefer paperbacks to ebooks, and we'll be ready.

The real purpose of the focus books—almost all will be ebooks here—is to have free sample copies to send (by email, as an attachment or download) to the superintendents to review (or skim), so they know the book exists, they have had it in hand, and they can validate the solid writing and expertise it contains. Most superintendents will be contacted by email or flyer (many may read about it in their respective state newsletters). It will also induce some associations to book Jim to speak to their gatherings where the books may be bought (in paperback) and given to all attendees.

**The primary purpose of the focus books is to sell more copies of the “mother book,” The School Principal’s Toolbook; to draw**

attention to all of Jim's other books; to provide a dandy and very useful focus book about particular topics principals need to know, and to encourage speaking engagements for our five authors.

I hope by sharing this new process (at least new for us) you will see how a book with 12 chapters, like ours, can result in selling as many as 13 books, all promoting each other, your firm, and the author(s). The exposure and quality also solidifies your expertise, standing, and presence in your niche.

At this blog site I will keep you abreast of how this program, just begun, is working and how we will expand it. To read more about niche publishing or focus books, write "niche" or "focus" (no quotes) in the search box above. It will direct you to earlier blogs, in posting order, about both topics. Or email me at [gburgett@aol.com](mailto:gburgett@aol.com) and I will try to respond as time permits. Please keep them short—and in English!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## [Stretch one skinny article into five with minimal effort](#)

How would you like to design one article to appear in five different magazines or newsletters that explains the benefits, through example, of **your firm's specialization** and why they may want to know more about your services? The best thing: it's pretty much the same article with a similar message, and the five articles will probably take far less than 40% of the

time and effort!

Let's say you consult in the first-contact field, to help improve relations and create more business follow-through between receptionists and front-desk employees in small to medium-sized businesses. You can outwit your competitors by using the same basic idea five times through a popular **reprint and rewrite concept** familiar to journalists.

Perhaps your consulting would work well for offices that deal in insurance, real estate, loan processing, titles, and interior designing. What you must do is **create a master article** that will work well in publications to each of those five fields. Let's say the creation of a telephone answering approach and basic script that would make all who phone (1) feel welcome and reassured by the professional message content and tone, (2) would be promptly directed to the person best prepared to answer their question or give advice, (3) or would be sent to the department or desk that handles their needs, and (4) would experience the properly directed pass-off smoothly and courteously.

That master article (probably about 650-900 words long) would give an example of how the greeting program you would design would function, with now-and-then examples and benefits clearly visible. But it would be niche-tailored to meet the needs in the five fields just mentioned. To do that you might **interview a first-contact person** or two in firms in each field, so the article has the right tone and vocabulary, and meets the unique needs in the different niches.

For example, you might call the office manager in, say, a loan office nearby and tell that person that you are \_\_\_ and you are writing an article about greeting solutions in the loan field and could you interview her/him for 15 minutes in person or by phone to have a better understanding of how greeting is handled in the loan office field. **It's surprising how eager others are to be interviewed.** You could do the same to the

other four fields too. What you need for all or most of the niche articles is inside, hands-on, how-to information from an experienced practitioner.

Later, you might call the same person again, thank them once more, and ask if they could suggest the three niche magazines in their field they think might be interested in sharing the short article—that you will handle the placement but thought it prudent to see what is most read right now.

Since you already know how positive greeting programs can be designed, you can then take the problems mentioned in the interview and design a program that would **provide significant benefit**. (And do the same in the other fields too. The second article will be much faster; the fifth, about as fast as you can type.)

Then you use the usual submission procedures to the target magazines, in this case a **query letter** suggesting the article or a **direct submission** of the finished article with a cover letter. When accepted and submitted remember to include a “**bio slug**,” a 20-35-word short that tells about you, the author, or the firm, plus the address/phones/email info so the readers can contact you for business!

**Why would you do this?** To make local contacts through the interviewees, get your firm’s beneficial suggestions in front of readers nationwide in five different fields, and to have copies of in-print articles to use for your p.r. or direct promotions. **What I like best is doing five while you do one.** As long as you are thinking this way, why not think a bit deeper and get a much better return?

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. To see other blogs about **reprints, rewrites, query letters**, and **selling freelance writing**, just type those words

in the **search box**, upper right, and the other blogs will appear after this article.

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## Some thoughts about interviewing...

*This is an excerpt (part of a chapter) from my coming book, **Interviewing**. I talk about tools and means used to interview:*

Interviewing is mostly you asking questions to a person or, rarely, a group, and receiving an intelligible response in return. When you record what you asked and what they replied, that is the thinnest skeleton of a completed interview.

That's a bit simplistic but most of the rest just adds bulk and hope to the process.

A huge percentage of my interviews have involved direct communication with my target person. **More than half were done eye to eye (really mouth to ear)**, and most of those were done when I was learning how, usually on the road last century gathering travel material. I asked and they responded, and I translated and wrote what they said into a notepad, in a kind of shorthand that spontaneously evolved (nouns mostly, other key words underlined.) It was give and take, staccato fashion, one question/a reply, segues... My goal was about five minutes, which was a long time for them and for me. It rarely lasted 30 minutes; an hour interview never happened.

Well, that sense of brevity may be somewhat misleading because many "interviews" became conversations, and ended when it was comfortable or necessary to do so. If the other person wanted to keep talking I was usually game to do so (unless I



absolutely had to be somewhere else right then—sometimes we resumed the exchange later over lunch or coffee.) Other times they just wanted someone to talk to, or were lonely, or were proud of what they had done or seen and wanted to share more of it. That was fine. Often it gave me more, better information and a deeper interview.

Occasionally I was drawn to an interviewee. I wanted to know them better, and (hard to believe) that seemed mutual. They were interesting, often passionate about some cause, and they almost always bubbled or bristled with humor. What they said was worth sharing; it was fun; they were worth knowing. A few of those contacts became lifelong friends, particularly those still living.

But mostly interviewing is fast and focused. It's kind of a dancing duel: you extracting what you need (and hoping for more); them telling you what they want you (and your readers) to hear, hoping they didn't say too much.

In my mind, first interviews should be courteous, painless, and fairly fast, leaving open the possibility of a later follow-up. But I don't mention that before or during the first interview other than asking them how I might later contact them should I run into a fact or a phrase that needs clarification and asking for or verifying an address where I would send them a copy of the printed article. (If you offer, do send it.)

Most of my interviews not done eye-to-eye were done by **telephone**. Those weren't as satisfactory because you couldn't tell how much of what they were saying was true, a greased lie, or something in between. Nor did you ever know if the voice you were hearing belonged to the actual person you had called. (I don't think I ever interviewed a stiff or a stand-in, but surprisingly often they grilled me to make sure I was the journalist they were supposed to be talking to and that I was writing an article for such-and-such a publication.

Everyday people took me at face (or voice) value, happy to be the one being interviewed. The higher ups were more likely to have their assistant or caretaker vet or check me out first).

Another telephone problem: the tenuous connection between you and the person you are interviewing—one wire—almost invites the other person to simply hang up or disconnect when they have said what they think you should (or need to) hear. It's a true test of your interviewing (and inventive) magnetism to be able to keep the other person focused and actively responding. Some of that is created before starting the actual interview by getting the respondent's buy-in to the importance of the exchange so what they say can reach their target listeners' or readers' ears.

My restraint to interviewing by phone was personal—and, in my dotage, still is. I grew up weaving waggish humor and pun-riddled, antic wordplay into my everyday conversation. It drove my few friends crazy. But all of that tomfoolery had to be excised when phone interviewing strangers for print, particularly when they envisioned sparks or bolts of radiated global fame emanating from the article (or even book) they would be in. It was their big moment and they didn't expect mirth or frivolity—any humor at all—then, particularly over the telephone where smiles are never seen and barely heard. So half of what I normally might have said, or how I might have said it, was verboten and probably dumbfounding. However funny, they never, ever would have laughed. They were expecting to be asked to share gems of wisdom, poignant observation, Christian guidance, and household tips. Out the telephonic window flew my witty high jinks, which left the interviewer, me (or you), nearly speechless, jocularly disarmed.

Alas, nothing is incurable when regular eating is at steak. I immediately reverted to my telephone high school date-getting scheme of imploring (or interviewing) by script. My first 100 or so interviews (it may have been 500) were very, very

tightly structured, almost every word written or typed. It looked something like this, although where you see ideas below I had complete sentences, short sentences to give them time to respond:

- \* wee introduction

- \* reminder of why I was calling and where their words would be shown to the world

- \* a question

- \* a second question—these were the most important answers in case something else interrupted the call—it happens often—and there would be no chance to finish... [more on this later]

- \* [if something relevant in their reply to my questions was said or hinted at I would ask more, prodding queries about it, to provoke more facts or brilliance]

- \* a third question

- \* [if they verbally wandered off and what they said would also interest my imaginary readers I let them wander. I only reherded them back into my imaginary readers' corral of interest when they wore out or I still had a final question to ask]

- \* fourth question (or more) if needed. See above.

- \* anything else, Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, that I should have asked but didn't?"

- \* "is there a phone number I could use to reach you if I find something I need to verify later?"

- \* "I'll gladly send you a copy of the printed article as soon as it appears—remember, printing can sometimes take months"

- \* "is \_\_\_\_\_ the address where I should send the article, in your name?"

- \* "thank you again, Mr./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, for the information and your time"

- \* "it sounds like a very interesting article. I appreciate your kindness and your sharing"

- \* (hang up softly, breathe deeply, wipe brow, hydrate rewardingly, and type out the whole interview then or before nightly repose)

Interviewing by **email**, or even by **social media**, is fast, sometimes too public too soon, and a whole lot less expansive. Combined with **Skype** or other computer-to-computer linking, it's fairly easy and much faster to talk with others now—if they agree to talk with you.

For example, ...

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This is an unedited extraction of part of **an early chapter of a book called INTERVIEWING**. Check future blogs for more copy about the topic.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## [Author of Self-Publishing Manual, Dan Poynter, has died...](#)

The author of the best-selling **Self-Publishing Manual**, Dan Poynter, has died. We were “in the trenches” writing friends and I already miss him, in part because it was Dan’s turn to buy lunch. So will thousands more whose lives he touched and changed. He had been quite ill for a while, seemed to be improving, but, instead, Dan passed away a few days back.

Poynter wrote almost 100 books but he was best known for his **Self-Publishing Manual**, now in its 14th edition. Many of us exploring the hinterlands of “doing-it-ourselves” publishing, with our starter books (rarely sought, even more rarely

bought), pounding away on clunky typewriters and wading in rubber cement, wandering through the last days of the past century, when up popped his how-to gift. The **SPM** was a light from heaven. It answered questions we didn't even know we should ask. As Dan learned more, the book kept getting better and bigger. In short order his grateful fans, hat in hand, too often bruised by the titans from Gotham and other bookstore bulk buyers, turned his manual into a huge seller...

Dan was a close friend of mine for lots of decades. We're a few weeks apart in age (he would never admit it), I lived about 20 miles away, and we seemed to wander into the same ersatz gatherings and adventures, befriending many of the same odd people, and we quietly joined the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)—Dan helped birth it—and the National Speakers Association (NSA).

He was a tall, quiet fellow who gave freely of his knowledge. Many know that he was President of the Parachutists Assn as well. He joked that he married the thrill of descent (he was a life-long bachelor), and was faithful to the end.

In fact, rather than using his law training Dan set up and ran a loft in Oakland. His publishing career (and life) started when he couldn't find a book about parachute knotting that his clientele needed, to get licensed. "I knew as much about publishing as some poor soul tapping rubber trees for a living," he told me. So he contacted every company however involved with knotting and made copies of the diagrams and instructions they sent back, pulled them into a \$40 three-ring instruction manual, wrote the conjunctive copy, then bought a dandy house near Goleta (Santa Barbara) from the profits. It overlooked the Pacific Ocean east of the UC Santa Barbara. From his front porch you could see the only American mainland target attacked by the Axis in World War II, an oil tank sighted by the misdirected Japanese Navy.

I first met him at a free lunch where Xerox was showing their

brand new copiers to a bevy of hungry writers (becoming publishers). We passed on the street a couple of times but we didn't really meet again until he tried to kill himself (inadvertently, he claims) by falling 100+ feet straight down and almost impaling himself on a volleyball net pole on East Beach. He had written (or was writing) a book about Parasailing (or was it Paragliding? He also wrote a pile of other weird books). There was a slack in the tow rope and he found himself stalled in midair! Alas, the pause was miraculously timed—a gaggle of bone doctors taking a break from a convention happened to be playing volleyball when he dropped in on them! He was nearly killed. A few days later, in the weakest voice hearable, he called and asked if I'd take his newest book to the ABA in Los Angeles the next week. I did (when I found out what the ABA was), and that started a long string of lunches, Gold Coast meetings (a sort-of branch of NSA), and so on...

Dan had a sense of humor, much of it hoarded internally. He didn't have time (or much patience) for editing would-be books sent for his help by adoring fans. He threatened to farm them all off to me, and rarely he couldn't help himself: I would get a DOA bundle (with a spine) in the mail with a note daring me to make sense and save the soul of the hapless scribe of the offending manuscript. The note usually mentioned that I was the only person who could get the author in print since the bundle was so much like my own books!

A final story. Dan gave weekend gatherings for book creators at his palace. The couple of times I spoke there he would hold up one of my early books and tell the attendees that it was certainly not how to design your own cover—and that he had bought a couple of copies of the book so he wouldn't run out of such a pitiful display. I told him I was hunting for some hole in one of his books, the table of contents lost in the index, upside-down chapters, or something equally egregious for revenge. But I never found anything out of place—and now

he's left before me and the fun is gone.

Dan Poynter was a smart fellow and already is a much missed friend.

Gordon Burgett

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## Writers: How to Write in Financial Comfort Even in Old Age!

There are ways to do what the title says—and about 1000 other ways that guarantee writing penury, most about as lucrative as begging for or selling writing pencils on the street! I'll not foul this blog by describing how you can find cliché distress or dangling destitution—poverty you can find on your own. Or it will find you, particularly if you're lazy or wreyete horribly!

For the rest of you wordsmiths overflowing with words, wit, proper punctuation, vivid imaginations, and computers that spell well, here's what an old writer thinks are the most likely paths to help you at least end up paying your own bills—and comfortably at ease between now and then.

We can **eliminate some kinds of writing** at the outset, like **essays** and **poetry**. Verse may be the showcase of a mastermind, but 99%+ of the poets, bless them, even when in rhyme don't have a dime.

Let's focus on the **four paths** that make the most cents.

**Geniuses** could secure comfort if they could express their

wizardry in lucid, sought prose, then link themselves to vendors who could harness, package, and sell their brilliance. (So much for geniuses.)

A harder path would be from the bottom up, **from stringer to city editor to editor-of-editors**. Theirs might be the bobbing path of nervous comfort while publishing mastheads sink into the sea. Editing excellence may have to be mixed with the deft art of vessel leaping, derring-do in life preservers, afloat, preserving words and news while awaiting the calm. Still, in business and government there may be a million jobs that have a writing core. They pay well and keep the faithful comfortable during retirement. Some of the greatest writers had their day jobs there, and bloomed into fame from the product of their nighttime/weekend passions.

**Fiction writers** have the privilege of inventing comfort when needed, of living where their imagination takes them to find solace. But to have enough coin to eat and stay warm as needed requires that they cook up a tasty singular plotstew of people, purpose, and place that readers want, then keep that blend boiling until their culinary/literary fame makes them well rewarded. For most this is surely the hardest way to spend a life fed solely by writing.

The fourth path is obvious but its luster is so unseen by the everyday public that most miss its truly gilded glow. These are the folks who **write for close-knit bonds of workers**. They define their niches—surveyors, goat breeders, school principals—and write books or create how-to guides or give workshops transformed into BOR tomes about what every member of the group needs to know to do what they do better. Most also speak professionally about what they write. And if their primary field folds or changes form they reform their knowledge to match the new configuration, get the groups' email addresses and sell their solutions to their associations and their members. They have ready-made followers eager for every applicable word that they write or speak. When they



write articles, they know specifically who will read them and what they need or want to read. Their blogs are avidly awaited, they use social media to enhance their expertise, and as they get known and grow older their demand grows proportionately. They're probably too busy to be too comfortable in their prime years, but they could have a self-generating empire that would keep them very comfortable as they age. The downside? Who knows they exist (comfortably or at all) and who reads their chosen words, other than the tight circle of their followers.

That's it. Musing about how those fed by the flames of imagination and word-molding are most likely to be able to be comfortably closer to their preferred mode of creation longer and freer from debilitating or impoverishing distractions.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I write books and speak their messages, mostly. Some are published by others, while I also publish niche books, all of which I edit but are written by others. Here is a [list](#) of those books that are currently available. (Oh yes, I'm also old.)

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