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Articles to Books

 0 Comments

ARTICLES
TO
BOOKS



In this lesson I'm going to give you specific instructions to help you turn those magazine articles into chapters for a great non-fiction book.

Most of my friends in the writing industry are novelists or non-fiction book writers. Many got their start writing articles. It's a natural progression, to move from articles to books. But it's a tricky progression as well, which is why I've decided to devote an entire lesson to the subject.

Writers are writers are writers.

We've got the bug, and there's no cure for it. Not that we want to be cured. But if you ask an established freelance article writer to tell you his dream, it will likely have something to do with publishing a book. Most writers of small pieces (under a thousand words) usually dream of writing big pieces. But many never meet their goal. Why is that? Because selling a book, particularly a non-fiction book, is seemingly impossible!

Writers often ask, "Why are non-fiction books so hard to sell?"

Truthfully, they are tough to pitch to editors for several reasons. First, publishing houses look for non-fiction books from experts in their respective fields. If they want a book on dieting, they go to a well-known nutritionist or dietician. If they want a Bible study, they pick up one by Beth Moore. If they're looking for a book on child rearing, they find Super Nanny's latest "How-To" manual. Next, publishers know that readers are fickle. They will (primarily) buy from people with large followings. (Sad, ain't it...) However, there really are ways to get your message out there. I heartily recommend starting with magazine articles, then crafting them into books.

As I stated in another lesson, I attended my first writing conference with illusions of grandeur. I was going to publish my non-fiction book and become famous. Only one problem: I had the whole thing backwards. Who knew you had to get famous first and then publish your non-fiction book? Frustrated, I attended a class on magazine article writing, and was introduced to a whole new world, one that would eventually lead to the publication of countless articles and over sixty books.

Let's face it. Almost everything in life gets easier with

time.

The same is true with freelancing. The longer you've been in the business, the more articles, you've sold, the easier it is to continue selling. And after you've established yourself as one who's willing to go the distance, it's time to begin looking at building your platform.

So, what is a platform, exactly, and why do you need to build one? Isn't that whole "platform" concept designed for novelists and non-fiction book authors?

Consider this quote from Terry Whalin, multi-published author and editor:

If I write an article, it reaches many more people than my books. On the average a book may sell 5,000 copies. Certainly some books turn into bestsellers but with more than 50,000 new books a year—many books are fortunate to sell 5,000 copies. With one article, I have reached millions of people. ([Magazine Writing Leads to Book Publishing](#))

That's pretty amazing, isn't it!

You can affect the lives of thousands through one article. Imagine if you had several—and on all on the same subject. Why, you could actually "become" an expert, and then write your book.

BECOME AN EXPERT IN YOUR FIELD

The first thing I would suggest to non-fiction writers is this: Become an expert in your field. Whether you recognize it or not, your life experiences have made you an "expert" at one thing or another. You have the answer to someone else's question. Pause to think about that for a moment. What areas do you excel in? Do

you have answers to other people's questions? If you've been writing articles for any length of time, it's likely you've already answered more questions—and offered more solutions—than most.

How does this work in the transition from articles to books, though? I'm going to lead you on a step-by-step journey. If you're planning to write a parenting book, for example, set yourself up as a parenting expert. Here are some ways you can do that:

- Begin to write and publish articles on parenting
- Develop a speaking platform where you address parents
- Create a site on the WWW offering parenting tips, and sharing articles
- Create a parenting blog where parents can post their questions and your respond to them one-on-one.
- Begin to think about how you can take your magazine articles and craft them into chapters for your non-fiction book
- Start talking to parenting experts early on to see if they will endorse your book.
- Write your non-fiction book

My good friend Nancy is a life coach and licensed therapist. For years she has listened to parents pour out their hearts about their grown children. Nancy began her writing career as a columnist for a local paper. She often touched on topics pertinent to parents. Over the years, I watched as Nancy's desire to write a book on the topic blossomed. She took her years of writing, coupled with her expertise, and came up with a plan of action: a book for parents of grown children. That book was picked up by Bethany House publishers and will release in a couple of months.

How and why was this possible? Simple. She spent the necessary time establishing

herself as an expert. And because she is now seen as an expert, her opinion is sought after.

WHAT IF...

I'm going to lead you on a "what if" journey now. Imagine you wanted to write a book on potty training. (I'm using something really obscure to show you a pattern.) You could begin to set yourself up as an expert on potty training by writing a host of articles. Here are a few article titles you might pitch to parenting magazines:

1. Ages and Stages: Knowing When Your Toddler is Ready to Potty Train
2. From Diapers to Flushing: Potty Training in Three Easy Steps
3. Potty Training 101: Turning Your Accidents into Victories
4. Top Ten Tips for Potty Training Your Toddler
5. Oops! I Missed! (Getting Your Toddler over the Potty Training Hump)
6. Grandma's Favorite Potty Training Tips
7. Songs to Sing on the Potty

You get the idea.

Over a period of time, you would publish a host of articles on the subject of potty training. Then, just for fun, you could create a website, singing the praises of potty training and offering tips to struggling moms and dads. Parents could post their struggles and you (the expert) would address them, offering advice to the masses.

Now, imagine you're asked to speak to a MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) group. What topic do you think they will want you to address? Why, potty training, of

course. Before you know it, you're the circuit-riding potty training expert, garnering acclaim for your expertise from town to town, toilet to toilet.

Suppose you then decided to take your magazine articles and craft them into a book on the subject of potty training. Do you see the advantage you now have? You've been setting yourself up as an expert AND you have the material to transfer from articles to chapters. (And to answer that lingering question in your mind...magazine rights and book rights are two different things. You can craft your article into a chapter for a book, but you'll probably want to change it up a bit to make it fresh/original.)

So, how would you go about setting up your book?

Start by thinking in themes. You need a "thread" to run throughout your story. Maybe you make an acronym out of the word P.O.T.T.Y., dividing the book into five workable sections. Then you would take the same subjects you addressed in the magazine articles and put them into a sensible order, making sure the text flowed easily from one chapter to the next.

Get the idea?

Let's try this same exercise with yet another topic: Getting on with Your Life after Divorce.

- **Come up with a list of article titles here**
- **Develop a speaking platform where you address people who've been through the pain of divorce**
- **Create a (pretend) site on the WWW offering driving tips, and sharing**

articles for people who've been through divorce

- **Create a (pretend) blog where people can post their questions and your respond to them one-on-one.**
- **Begin to think about how you can take your magazine articles and craft them into chapters for your non-fiction book**
- **What will you title your book?**
- **Start talking to psychologists/pastors/marriage experts early on to see if they will endorse your book.**
- **Lay out the chapters for your book. (What will be your thread?)**

You can see a pattern here, right?

We started with a funny idea, one that probably wouldn't make the best book. But we're now using those same principles to craft a very real/workable book that will minister to hurting people.

Just so you know how closely this latest illustration hits, in 2008, I received a note from one of my editors, letting me know that she needed an author for a non-fiction book on divorce. At that time, I'd been divorced two years and had published articles on the topic. I knew several other divorced women, including many in prominent positions. Because of my years in the industry, I also knew counselors, pastors, marriage experts, psychiatrists, and so on. I approached one of my best friends, who also happened to be divorced, and asked her to co-author the book with me. She agreed, and our book, "I Know I'm Not Alone, Lord," released just a few months ago. None of this would have been possible if I hadn't laid the foundation and worked hard to prove myself as an expert in this particular field.

I want to leave you with a final exercise, also based on my personal experience. Let

me start by telling you my story. I have four daughters between the ages of 26 and 30. All four got married within four years of each other. I coordinated their weddings, baked wedding cakes, decorated reception halls and printed invitations. Now imagine you were in my shoes, and wanted to write a non-fiction book for brides-to-be. How would you begin to establish yourself as an article writer first?

- **What article titles would you come up with?**
- **Could you develop a speaking platform where you would address brides and grooms to be (or parents of brides and grooms)?**
- **Could you create a (pretend) site on the WWW offering pre-wedding advice for brides and grooms to be?**
- **Could you build a (pretend) blog where brides and grooms could post their questions and you would respond to them one-on-one?**
- **Imagine you did all of these things. Begin to think about how you can take your magazine articles and craft them into chapters for your non-fiction book**
- **What would you title your book?**
- **Could you talk to wedding planners/pastors/brides of fame early on to see if they will endorse your book?**
- **How would you lay out the chapters for your book? (What would be your thread?)**

I've shared my story about having four daughters. In 2005, my oldest daughter Randi and I were approached by a non-fiction book editor to write a book for brides-to-be. Because I'd coordinated so many weddings, because I'd written on the topic of weddings, my editor saw me as a wedding expert. Voila! Next thing you know, I was

also the author of a book on the subject.

This whole idea of shifting from magazine articles to books is an intriguing one, isn't it?

Maybe you've got the desire to write a book. Bide your time. Write your articles. Build your platform. Establish yourself as an expert. Then go forth and create non-fiction books out of your magazine articles! Become experts in your field, then teach the masses what you have learned!

By **JThompson**

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