

How to Write a Best-Seller While Keeping Your Day Job!

**A Step-by Step Manual of Success for
Writers Who Want to Be Published But
Don't Have the Time. *Do it Now!***

Or

**The Little Red Book. One populist writer's
manifesto for change in the publishing business**

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Daniel H. Jones

To my mother and father who always knew just what they wanted to do and each in their own way, just did it! Thanks for sharing.

Acknowledgments

Maybe I'll get this right. I'd like to acknowledge all those I didn't acknowledge in *St. Jude's Secret*. Please accept my apology for allowing that to happen. Of course, that effort and this on wouldn't have happened without the love and patience of my wife, Diane. To my children, Elliot and Elizabeth—thanks for making it all worthwhile!

Thanks to all the good folks at River Oaks Books in Houston for their continued support of my mother, Jeanne and my brother Michael at the store. I remain eternally grateful for the good will you've shown them that has rubbed off on me. Thanks to my brothers Michael and Casey for everything from Kirkegaard to Keith Richards. Thanks to all my grandparents for sharing so much and for my Louisiana roots. Thanks to my Louisiana cousins, especially David and Laurel Bullock, Bill and Cindy Cruikshank for sharing New Orleans with me

Thanks to Elizabeth Lyon and her editorial group, namely Carol Craig for all their help in educating me in the craft of novel writing. I'm slowly getting it – I hope!

Thanks to Texas authors David Wilkinson and Austin Bay for sharing their time and writing experience with me and pointing me in the right direction. Thanks to Sean Henkel, Esq. For his legal assistance.

Thanks to all the friends, family and colleagues who have graciously encouraged me namely: Martha Minton (I've treasured our friendship for 25 years), Celia and Jay Munisteri, Esq. (remember the four boys!), Shannon Meadows (a kindred spirit!), Chip Duncan, Esq. and his lovely wife Colleen (thanks for reading and listening!), Elizabeth Ryan, Esq. (thanks for sharing your dynamic personality and enthusiasm for *St. Jude's Secret!*). Earl and Colleen Adorno, (thanks for sharing New Orleans history), Bob Hanson (thanks for believing!) Steve Adams, Bill Fehlis, Walter Guidroz, Sarah Hocutt, Laura McGrew, John Quintana, Lorna Rosquites, and all the great folks at Highlands Insurance Houston- thanks for never running me off!

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Chapter 1

Today's date is September 9, 2001. I have given myself a challenge to complete this manual by September 16, 2001. I've got lots of nervous energy due to continued procrastination on following up on a my debut-novel *St. Jude's Secret*. My wife and kids asked me to channel that energy into something more positive than the several botched handyman projects I attempted during a recent stint between jobs. Enough with the storage racks, I can hear the kids argue as I power-screw yet another plastic rack into the back-side of my sixth-grade's son's bathroom-door. Honey, the new ceiling fan in the kitchen works great, but I can't turn on the oven. More grouching from my wife. Where's the gratitude?

Anyway, this little number's offered as an outline of possible steps in the journey to

publication. As I said it's born of the usual writer's angst at staring for far too long at a blank page, re-directed nervous energy and a burgeoning notion that it may actually be helpful to somebody. This notion dawned on me after a recent interview with my local newspaper on my novel's journey to publication. Moreover, I've discussed the process with several friends, neighbors and co-workers who are genuinely interested in exploring their publishing options without re-inventing the wheel, as I did.

So, here we go. This piece is meant to be an easy, quick-reference guide outline, handbook, whatever you choose to call it, to creating, publishing and marketing commercially viable fiction and I think, nonfiction, although my experience is in fiction. Something you, as a writer can arm yourself with as you enter the book business battleground. Consequently, please note that each chapter will be formatted as a **10**

Point Attack Plan. But first, let me begin by doing a little housekeeping:

1. I will not get bogged down in technical things. You can find how-to books on everything from proper manuscript form to proper manuscript submission on your own. Besides, that's no fun! Fun for me to write (remember that nervous energy) and fun and easy for you to follow. Just, to let you know, I have a favorite Rolling Stones CD blaring, NFL Football on the tube and a Houston Astros ball game going on the radio. The wife and kids are out of the house for a few hours and I've just popped the top on a cool one. Ah! Fun!
2. You may take this to be the caveat emptor, if you like, but this manual doesn't offer a sure-fire method to get published by a traditional publisher. Although I have enjoyed success and have been assisted and guided by many good

people, my own journey to publication was fraught with more than the usual up's and down's of getting fiction published including but not limited to disingenuous literary agents, publishers and promotional folks. In fact, it was the "back-burnering" (devastating to me at the time, but a common practice in the industry whereby a publisher doesn't publish one's accepted manuscript and keeps the rights!) of *St. Jude's Secret* by a publisher in 1999 that led to my publishing with the print-on-demand publisher, www.iUniverse.com. Print-on-demand is a new technology in publishing that allows out-of-print books to be re-printed and works of previously published and unpublished authors' works to be electronically created and digitally stored then printed in a traditional book format once an order for the book is received. There is a nominal upfront fee for this service. My experience has been with www.iUniverse.com but there are other

print-on-demand publishers such as 1stbooks.com, X-Libris.com. POD publishers aren't vanity publishers. Manuscripts wanted! You've seen the ads.

Two-thousand copies of a two-hundred and fifty page book would likely cost upwards of \$10,000 to produce through a vanity/subsidy press. POD books can cost as little as \$99 to produce regardless of the number of copies ordered and printed. Essentially, POD publishers provide the enterprising and entrepreneurial writer an efficient and quality, turn-key vehicle to get his or her work to the marketplace. However, please be aware of the limitations and keep reasonable expectations. Just as in traditional publishing, POD success doesn't come overnight or without growing pains. But, the adventure is worth it. Now, with e-books and e-classes, gaining popularity the sky's the limit!

Chapter 2

We're still on day one. It's late. We had some late afternoon turmoil. My son's buddy accidentally slammed my little girl's fingers in a door upstairs. She screamed bloody murder as she came downstairs holding her fingers. The stress was palpable as it charged our family pod with adrenaline flight-or fight signals. Battle stations! I ran to her. She's only five, but her regular, cupie-doll face has twisted into a wrinkled mass of grown-up pain.

I noticed the purple discoloration under her nails

and around the little knuckles of her middle and index fingers. I reached for and picked her up as my wife flew into action, her dark eyes shot daggers as she swooped down on my son and

his buddies, scolding and scattering their number. Cleaning up Dodge, for sure.

“Mommy,” she bawled as I tried to get a better look at her fingers. “I want Mommy,” she said choking back her sobs.

“Get some ice!” Mommy ordered, making me feel left-out and somehow as guilty as the boys she’d just sent running with their tails between their legs. “You were *supposed* to be watching them.”

Life does tend to get in the way of the Great American Novel, doesn’t it?

All for the good, though. And my daughter’s fine. I mean writing can’t really occur without living can it? No. Not really. And with the typical advance for a first time novelist averaging in the \$1,500.00-2,500.00 range, life and its gainful employment prerequisite better get in the way!

With POD, your day job can support the writing habit.

Okay. I'm back at it after several days when life and death got it in the way. It's Saturday morning, September 15, 2001. The nation is in its "middle hour of grief" to borrow a quote from President Bush, after the horrendous incidents in New York and our nation's capital on September 11, 2001. I'm still waiting for a words to come to me to adequately convey my feelings at seeing the television images from New York City on a beautiful Tuesday morning. The words may never come. Horror. Shock. Anger. All seem to fall woefully short in capturing the visceral emotional reaction to witnessing such a horrendous mass murder. My employer's New York office was home to over a thousand of my colleagues. To date, over two-hundred are missing. I have friends in both buildings. Where do we go from here? I don't know. It's been impossible to focus

at my regular job. Moreover, my little problems and Walter Mitty-like existence seem so insignificant now. My prayers go out to the departed souls and to those who mourn their terrestrial passing.

Onward. It seems right to move on and keep working on this project, now. Is this taking action after grieving? I don't know. In some small way, maybe this manifesto as I've somewhat presumptuously started out to call it, will help someone who endured the trauma of that Tuesday morning who needs to write and share their experience in a published format but doesn't know how to go about getting it in print and on the shelves.

I've chosen to start with promotion. That's because it's the probably the biggest and least prepared for hurdle the grass-roots writer will encounter. So, let's begin with the assumption

you have completed your compelling, commercially viable work and have gone through the submission process with your POD publisher of choice. So how do you get folks to buy it? Remember, we're assuming a modest budget here, too. One your spouse or life-partner will let you get away with!

Promotion. 10 point attack Plan

1. **Set up a business for expenses.** A sole proprietorship is the easiest, cheapest and most effective tool for tax purposes. Choose a DBA and pay the nominal filing fee in your area. Save all promotional expense receipts for tax time! Besides, this is your writing and publishing business.
2. **Make flyers and business cards.** This is the cheapest and probably the most bang-for-your-buck weapon in your promotional arsenal. Try to come up with an angle or catchy slogan. For example, my novel St. Jude's Secret features

the hot topic of genetically modified foods and in particular coffee. So, I went to a very reasonable business card store around the corner from my office and about 24 hours I had cards to leave all over town. The cards asked “Is your Coffee safe?” and featured my title and where to get it. Same thing with flyers. Do them up on your computer, print them out and pin them up at local college bulletin boards or message kiosks around town. Leave them at coffee shops or ask merchants to feature them.

3. **Plan your Promotional efforts in a timely**

manner. This sounds simple but it’s not.

Typically, there is a gap of about 6 weeks from the date your POD book goes “live” to the date that it’s readily available through normal retail channels. As the author, you’ll receive several free copies within a few weeks of the book going live. Moreover, you can order the book for yourself about a week or two after going live.

(More on this in POD submission section). You won't get traditional galleys with a POD book. Be prepared to order a minimum of 25 books yourself, from the POD publisher as soon as you are able to do so. You'll see why in a moment. It all dovetails. You've got to be ready when this happens!

4. **Get your Press Kit together.** It doesn't have to be fancy, but you don't want to wear brown shoes with a tuxedo either. A glossy note book-type folder with inside pockets will do. You may want to get a good picture of yourself to put in the press kit. I didn't do that until it was too late in the game. It could help to make for a professional presentation. Inside the press kit pockets, you'll need to insert the copy you've generated so far for your book. Print the back cover write-up you'll have written for your novel (more on this in POD submission chapter), print the press release you've generated. This press

release needs to be succinct, and if at all possible, it should have some connection to current events, local interests or some human interest element. Put copies of all the above along with a copy of your book in the folder. That's your press kit that you'll use to send to potential reviewers and interviewers. Be sure to think up 10 questions for an interviewer to ask you in connection with your book.

5. **Contact and cultivate ties with local independent**

booksellers. Do it once your book goes live. Let them know it's coming. Give them a press kit. Visit and let them know what genre it's in for fiction or the subject matter for non-fiction. Get to know them if you don't already. Talk books. Buy books. Become a regular customer. favorite local independent bookstore. Offer to *give* them promotional copies of your book as soon as you get one in your hot little hand. If it's good, they'll know. If it fits their clientele, they'll know

that too. If they say they can't sell it in their store, don't get bent out of shape. That's their way of telling you what their customers tastes are. Move on to a store more suitable for your book. Locate stores in other towns and mail them a copy with your press kit. The key for you is to work patiently with a store in your area to develop someone who'll *hand sell* your book. Hopefully, you'll coordinate a signing with the store, but be prepared to get creative. Remember it's their business so work with them. They may order your book directly from the publisher. Let them know the discount your POD publisher offers for direct orders for an author signing. Offer to take the returns off their hands or be prepared to purchase your book from the POD publisher and working an agreement for the retailer to sell your books on consignment. *Do whatever it take* because a local bookseller, selling books the old fashioned way can do

more for your sales than an on-line retailer or chain bookstore. Remember, Grisham sold his first novel to independents and individuals right from the trunk of his car. Bring the store and its customers along on your journey to publication. Also, always have a copy with you when you travel. Then you can visit with and discuss your title with independents in other cities. On a recent trip to Seattle for my regular job, I gave one of my books to a well-known criminal defense attorney I spotted at the check-in gate then made my pitch to a wonderful independent in Seattle who told me they could sell my novel and would order it. You never know.

6. **Get your book reviewed. Somewhere.**

Anywhere! This is crucial. To do it, you'll need copies of your book to send to potential reviewers. So, as soon as you can order your book yourself from your POD publisher do it then send copies out for review. Yes, that takes

money. But remember, in essence you have taken on the role of the publishing house. In other words, you are taking the risk. This is key to understanding the process. Don't go into it thinking *they* are going to do anything for you. You are them! I recommend starting with on-line review sources. You can search for them on any search engine, but I've found Ed's Internet Review to be a good starting place. Once your book is available at the various on—line retailers, then you need to e-mail on-line reviewers (this is a bid deal at Amazon) yourself and see if they'd be interested in reviewing your book. They may buy it, but be prepared to offer a free copy to a reviewer in exchange for a review. Choose your reviewers wisely and always be courteous and remember they are helping you get to your readers. Turning to print reviewers, be advised that this is a tough nut to crack. I've had one newspaper book reviewer tell

me that they can't review every book people want them to review. Understandable. That and the newness of the POD technology, have made it difficult for the grass roots author to get to the trough. But you must try anyway. So, send those promotional copies along with your press kit to the reviewers at your local paper and any others that come to mind. You can find the names and addresses in the paper or on-line or in *The Literary Marketplace*. Try the Midwest Review of Books, Kirkus Reviews and others. Your book may be the POD breakthrough.

7. Get some ink! Any publicity is good publicity.

Send your press release to your local paper. I've found that the community sections of the paper are always looking for announcements. Tie your press release in with a community event or announcement such as Hometown High School graduate announces publication of his/her debut novel. Announce any signings in this manner

too. I mentioned earlier that it's difficult to get a print review. You *can* turn this reality around to your advantage. I have found that your best bet to get ink in newspapers is to work the feature angle on the new technology that features your title book as a shining example. Be sure to announce your book's debut in any alumni magazines you receive, church bulletins or trade publications that are related to your business or businesses that are featured in your book. For example, I recently received the good news that a favorable review of my novel will be featured in an upcoming *Journal of Maritime Commerce* due to my main character's involvement in Admiralty Law and the shipping business. I sent the reviewer a free copy of my book about six months ago. This is how you must build your writing publishing business! One final note on publicity. You may wish to hire a publicist. If you do, steer clear of those who want to charge

you a large upfront retainer and then an hourly fee. They may discuss book tours and other events to market your book. It's a waste of money. First of all, your POD book will not even be on the shelves of these stores unless you've bring them yourself. Secondly, nobody will be at these signings. So, get any ideas of being on some grand book tour out of your head. The big publishers only do that for the big names, or latest sensational tell-all type books, not for your great American novel. Better to choose a publicist that you can pay as you go on a monthly basis or per specific request you may have. A publicist can get you booked on radio talk shows around the country, whereby you call in and discuss your book after the host has read it and your press kit. Generally, they'll ask you the interview questions you submitted in your press kit. www.Talion.com is a very helpful and reasonable publicist, specializing in book

promotion. I've done many wonderful radio interviews booked by the folks at Talion.

8. Send copies to your local library and to large

libraries. Address lists and contacts are available on-line and well at the library! This is one area in which traditional publishers seem to have POD publishers out-gunned. They look for some institutional buying by libraries to get some monetary return on a 5,000 copy run for a debut novelist. Try to get some institutional buying for your book and wait for a break! It's coming if you keep the dream alive and keep the promotional wave moving.

9. Book Clubs, Writing Groups, Writer's

Conferences, Speaking Engagements. Join as early and as often as you can. Of course, you're there to share and participate, but these groups and places provide you with an opportunity to talk with people one on one about your book.

Who better than you to do it! There is some chance of institutional buying with national book clubs, but I've found it's best to just work with them on an individual basis. Word of mouth is better. So, if you know your sister in Ohio is in a book club, send her one of your books and maybe she'll present it as a club read!

10. The Internet and e-mail. This a great tool for book promotion. Of course, your POD publisher will feature your title for sale at their website. www.iuniverse.com allows authors to publish articles about their books on their website. Be sure you do this because these articles are generally pick-ed up by the big Internet search engines. Once your title is available at Amazon, you can e-mail anyone you like, information about and the link to your title on Amazon. I don't think the other on-line retailers have this feature. B&N.com has a link to www.iUniverse.com, but is otherwise limited in

its marketing capabilities. www.Amazon.com , also allows you to promote your title right alongside big name authors in your genre. This is done by buying points through a sponsored results account but it's reasonable. Additionally, Amazon allows customer reviews of your book. This is very helpful and can help to increase on-line sales of your title as more folks give their two-cents worth. But don't be fooled by the sales numbers. Your Amazon sales ranking may go from last place (say 2,000,000th place) to the top 50,000 in ranking overnight, but that may mean you've sold only 20 books. But 20 books is nothing to sneeze at in this business so stick with it! Of course, you'll want to e-mail any and all friends, family, work colleagues, school mates, old flames, anybody you think may have even the slightest interest in your book.

Finally, on-line reading groups and chat rooms can be a big help. Join the club or chat

and participate with courtesy and genuine interest, then ask the members if you may share information about your book. I have made many on-line friends who have been kind enough to review my book on-line. Their reviews helped to create an on-line buzz in connection with *St. Jude's Secret*, which led to increased sales. I have been invited to be a guest author during club chats. Although on-line reading club members don't generally request free copies of your book, be prepared to do so. The good will can only help you over the long term. Moreover, you should obtain and/or compile e-mail address lists and e-mail a compelling sales pitch out with an offer of freebies (your book in e-format) to those who'll got to Amazon.com and buy the hard-copy. This can really take off with some pre-planning!

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Chapter 3

Before I present the **POD 10 Point Action Plan**, remember that your book is print-on-demand. Always give people the name of your publisher and do not say self-published. Despite historical evidence to the contrary, (Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* comes to mind) there is a perception in our society attached to self-published author akin to that associated with an honorable mention award winning contestant. Good try but you're still a loser! You can't change that perception, so don't waste your time trying. Just remember your POD book is not self-published or the product of a vanity press.

In a real sense, print-on-demand offers you a chance to exercise your freedom of speech and whether it's good speech or bad speech, will be

determined in the marketplace of ideas once your book is available.

Five years ago, this effort I'm doing right now would have remained just a brief daydream that tempted me during some monotonous meeting or after a dull day of paper-pushing. If I did carry the idea through to a non-fiction book proposal, the bottom-line publishing elite would likely deep-six it. Or say you've written a compelling piece of fiction that so skillfully crafts conflict, description, character development, and plot so as to take one's breath away. You are the voice of the fly-over people. The flame that burns brightest. Mark Twain reincarnated. Dickens reborn! But there's one problem. You haven't been published before and you don't have a literary agent.

“Write a good book,” the elite likes to say, “and you'll get published. We're always looking

for that diamond in the rough.” Not all of us have the time for them to find us. Moreover, the downsizing and merging that’s gone on over recent decades has further diminished a first-timer’s chance of leaping from a publisher’s slush pile to the best seller list. Gone with the wind are the days of a genius like Maxwell Perkins taking a whole generation of writers under his wing. Some small publishers are trying to fill the gap, but it’s a tough row to hoe. Forget about it! And get over it.

Print-on-demand offers you the chance to get your work out to the people who really matter, readers! Let them decide for themselves on the merits and let your work earn its success. Hey- isn’t that kind of the American Way? I think so.

10 Point Attack List. The Business of POD.

1. Read and understand the Publishing Agreement.

You can go to X-Libris.com, 1stbooks.com, or

www.iUniverse.com and review each one's Publishing Agreement. Take the time to read and digest the publishing agreement. Print it out. Take the time to do that. It's fairly straightforward and you want see any wording tying up your rights for fifty years after you die! I suggest you highlight the dates for license termination, cancellation. Note that the royalty for printed units is 20% net to the publisher at www.iUniverse.com. Royalties are paid to the author for each quarter's sales at iUniverse with checks mailed within sixty days of quarter's end. NB: no royalty payment is made for direct sales to the author. The author keeps all other rights inclusive of film and subsidiary rights. All other terms are clearly spelled out including reasonable publishing license termination and agreement cancellation language as well. At X-libris.com, the agreement provides royalties as follows: "Your paperback and hardcover royalties are 10% of the retail price if sold through a

bookseller or 25% if sold directly to the reader by X-libris. Your electronic version royalties are 25% if sold by a bookseller or 50% if sold directly to the reader by X-libris.” Note that X-Libris offers hardback books while www.iUniverse.com does not. I’ve been told by on-line marketing publisher and hypnotic copywriter Joe Vitale that 1stbooks.com is very pro-author.

- 2. Discounts.** To the author and to retailers. This is a very important area. Understand that both chain and independent booksellers expect and operate with a discount system. Typically, the chains demand a 40% discount. Independents vary but expect some discount. Independents are aware that the typical POD publisher offers only a 25% discount. www.iUniverse.com offers a 40% on units purchased directly from them when the purchase is for an author signing. Once you’ve developed a good relationship with an independent and set up a signing, into Author

Events and schedule the event prior to your independent calling in his or her order. Be advised that the retailer must pay for the books by credit card at iUniverse. There's no invoicing.

- 3. Returns.** The retail book business is the only business I know of, whereby books may be returned to the publisher for a credit. POD doesn't play by these rules and retailers don't like that. It's a problem, but not insurmountable. Retailers know that POD books can be viable. But unless it's for a signing, the retailer may limit his or her order to 2-5 books. That's cool. Don't have expectations of huge numbers. You're just trying to get on the shelf so you will be read. But remind the store that a signing will get them a 40% and explain how you can help generate a good turn-out offer to send invitations, do a flyer to promote the event. You could also offer to sell them copies you've purchased yourself at 50% off and they get to

keep the returns. That won't help you with your royalties but it will show that you're serious about the book business and can help you down the line.

4. **Proof your manuscript.** Nothing will kill your book quicker, undo all your hard work in promotion and just ruin your day than typos and errors in your original manuscript. *Mary had a Little Lamb*. Remember?

5. **Electronically or by mail.** Submit your manuscript on any platform or by mail. It's that easy. Go to your POD publisher's website and follow the instructions. In the summer of 2000, the newness of the technology resulted in some glitches. Submission of my manuscript wasn't that easy and I had to re-submit several times. www.iuniverse.com has worked or maybe grown out of the glitches.

- 6. Have your back cover synopsis ready.** As you click through the submission process, you'll be asked to provide information for the back cover. Include a brief synopsis in journalistic style and your biography. If you know someone, an author, editor, professor or radio/tv personality who has read and enjoyed your manuscript, ask for their comments and put that on the back cover. You'll also be able to upload a personal photo. You may want to invest in a headshot.
- 7. Choose Your Publishing Plan.** I will submit this effort on the \$99 plan at www.iUniverse.com. I'll get 1 free book, a four-color cover, an ISBN, Amazon.com, B & N.com and all the rest. I used the more expensive plan but I will not use it again. I think POD publishers set out to have some sort of editorial process, but they found it just wasn't feasible. The more expensive plans include this "editorial" process which is really just a rubber-stamp type of deal that may make

the first-time author feel good to be “accepted” into the higher echelon plan. I cannot recommend the costlier plans. The \$99 plan provides everything I’ll need for this book and will get me an iUniverse PSA (Publishing Service Associate). This person will walk you through the key events in your journey to publication and can help you with any problems that develop.

8. Design Your Cover. Submit any Photographs.

You can choose your colors. You can give the design department an idea of what you want. Probably best to keep it straightforward, so the design folks can’t go too far astray. You can send photos you want to use. I’ve found iUniverse’s covers to be the best of the POD’s and to fit in seamlessly on retail shelves with the big boys’ titles.

9. The Proof Form. Okay. Imagine it’s a weekend.

Your spouse is sipping margaritas with the gals

on a junket in the beautiful, colonial town of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. The kids are all over the house and you are witnessing a miracle: the sudden appearance of your title's cover and book block filling your laptop's screen. You have a limited time to make a limited number (25) of corrections on the form and send it back. A day goes by before you've come down from the euphoric rush of seeing your manuscript in book form. The next morning passes before you get all the downloads done and learn how to operate the block proof and correction sheet. The kids are still kicking up their heels and the spouse is still seeing the sights in San Miguel. Your heart is racing, the hair on the back of your neck bristling as you stare at yet another, heretofore unseen typo. Get the picture? Make time for your final proof. Celebrate the moment you first see it with your best beloveds. Then let

all your loved ones know that you need time, space and quiet to concentrate.

10. Proof your manuscript. Did I say this already?

Nothing will kill your book quicker, undo all your hard work in promotion and just ruin your day than typos and errors in your original

manuscript. Run your spelling and Grammar

Check. Pay a copy editor, if necessary. Check

your local listings or look on-line, search writers

resources for a reasonable copy editor. Nothing

will kill your book quicker, undo all your hard

work in promotion and just ruin your day than

typos and errors in your original manuscript.

There. I said that again. Or was that an extra

cut-and-paste? See what I mean? Re-do's of

your manuscript can be done but there's a cost.

Get it right the first time. If you can't make all

the corrections in the limited space and time, it's

decision time. Press on regardless or back up

and punt? Start over and pay another \$99? It's

up to you. Best to get it right before you submit it the first time.

amazon.com.

You already have the ebook. Visit Amazon.com and put the paperback on your bookshelf today!

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Chapter 4

Enter the arena. Dare to fail! I saved the best for last. The writing process. The fun part! But just how does one write a compelling book? Moreover, what makes me think I can tell writers how to write a compelling piece of fiction? Why listen to me when they're are hundreds of books on the craft of writing available by folks with far greater credentials than I have? I'm not sure that I can. I know I can't share great insights into writing that haven't already been shared. I can tell you, however, I've made every mistake that growing writers make as they make their journey to publication. I've tried to learn from my mistakes and I've tried to keep the dream alive just as you have. I'm telling myself how to write as I convey some ideas on writing to you and recalling the thrust of this little red book, I want to keep it simple

and in a format those pressed for time can easily digest and readily utilize. This list is by no means definitive but I think it can help the grass-roots author compete with the name authors and the big publishing mills. Hopefully, you find some fresh ideas. Here goes !

10 point Attack Plan for a Compelling Novel.

1. **Turn off the Internal Censor.** Do whatever you need to do to knock out that little voice inside your head that insists that you can't write anything worthwhile. I've found that this censor is in place to keep you from trying to write for fear of failing. Nothing new there, of course. Here are some ideas to help you get rid of the censor: Imagine you're writing on paper towels, napkins or tissue. Better yet go ahead and write on a paper napkin a scene, some dialogue, a setting. You will revise and transfer it later, but just the idea that the paper is disposable helps

lower your internal censor's expectations and consequently, it's nervous, negative patter.

Collage or storyboard your story. Cut and paste pictures, drawings, newspaper articles, and notes on a poster board or stick these items to a bulletin board above your desk. This will help your story write itself somewhat as you use the images you've cut and pasted to ignite your imagination. The censor can't argue with a story that's coming to life on it's own. Take a notepad with you when you go out and let ideas come to you, rather than pressing too much while you're at your desk. Anything that lets you take yourself, your time constraints and your writing project less seriously can help turn off the internal censor and keep you writing through tough cases of writer's block.

2. **Write with your voice.** Trust who you are and that your unique world-view is worthwhile. Put your voice into every scene, every description,

and every bit of dialogue. The voice of a piece of fiction is what makes it distinct from other works. A work with a strong voice will always carry more weight than a piece that is contrived to meet someone else's expectations. It's a hard thing to define and harder to catch it and hold onto it. I'll say this about an author's voice. It's that moment when you are able to step back and put that little twist on a phrase, sentence or paragraph that really sums things up for you as the writer. The voice is distinguishable as it manifests itself in characters but it's distinct and certain throughout a book. Agents, editors, writers and most importantly, readers know when a novel has a strong, genuine voice and it's often the most compelling component of a novel. Go with your voice. As your writing skills grow, you'll learn how to focus the voice and how to sometimes temper it, but trust it.

3. **Conflict**. You've got to have conflict in every scene of your book. Introduce it early and often. If your book is a murder mystery, open with the death and throw as many obstacles as you can think of in your main character's journey to solve the case. Introduce conflict into all dialogue, and relationships between characters as often as you can. By that I mean that if one character wants cream in her coffee, make sure her partner and/or adversary won't give her the cream. It can be that simple. Conflict keeps a reader from putting your book down and keeps them entertained by your story and your voice. Your boss is riding you at work. Your spouse wants you to get off the couch and paint your kids' rooms. The kid brought home a failing grade and the dog dumped on the rug. It's everyday life and we take it for granted. I think that's why it's so often missing in manuscripts.

Once you've completed a scene, check it and re-check it for conflict.

4. **C.O.T.S.** Color, Odor taste and smell. I'm reminded of a quote credited to Walker Percy. It's said he instructed his students to "...describe the smell inside a Camelback-double on Magazine Street." For those of you not familiar with New Orleans, that's a shotgun house, usually in Victorian style, with a second floor about half-way back from the porch giving it its distinctive camel's hump or back. Anyway, I think Mr. Percy wanted to get his students to draw the reader into that setting through his or her senses. It means so much more for the reader to make a mental association through the senses, so give the reader his money's worth. Of course the old adage "show-don't tell" fits right in here. Your characters should smell the red-pepper scented crab-boil until it brings a tear to your character's eyes. Let the faint hum of a

streetcar disturb your character's telephone conversation and remind her of a tryst with a lover and so on. This leads right into the next point.

5. **Weaving**. Take the time to weave in C.O.T.S. as well as physical descriptions of people, places and things. Don't dump big chunks of description into scenes. You'll lose your reader! Subtly, weave the description into dialogue and action scenes. Take the time to weave as you go, but if not, step back and do it during revision. Also, weave in bits of plot and punctuate with characters' reactions that show motivation. Again, show-don't tell. You can give your reader questions through plot weaving and you don't have to explain a whole lot to the reader. They really don't like it when a writer does that and they'll put the book down if you dump plot explanations or back story in a scene.

6. **Scenes**. I like to think of a novel as a long train of boxcars, rolling along. Each boxcar is a scene. The boxcar is carrying the scene's cargo (Characters, conflict, COTS, weaving, plot, dialogue. The train has a beginning. Middle and end. One box car hooks to the next. Each scene has to have a hook at the end to join it to the next. I've just run across a scene setting I shared with my son awhile back. It fits in here. Taking this a bit further, fill the boxcar with whatever your imagination comes up with and then go to the next boxcar and fill it and then connect them and you have the chapters of a book. It seems like a project too big to get a grip on, but if you take it a little at a time you'll have twenty 10-page boxcars before you know it.

7. **Scene Outline**. This is just an idea and may not work for you. My son has expressed an interest in writing and I drew up a scene outline for him things to help him learn about writing and get

the basics without re-inventing the wheel like his old man did. He's filled in the blanks in the outline:

Outline Chapter / Scene

- I. The setting is: a dark battle field
 - A. Time, place, environment: colonial, Massachusetts cold and gloomy
 1. Details/brief description: Color, Odor, Taste Sight (COTS) gray, red, green, ocean air salty dark gloomy
 2. Memories from Character's Point of View: all you could see were bombs blowing everything up around you, bullets whizzing past your head in every direction.
 3. Quotes and dialog: "watch out" and "were all going to die"
 - A. Characters are:
 - 1.Details brief description of characters: Drake, is a very bright cadet and very skilled in war
 - 2.Memories from Character one of his friends died by a gunshot.
 3. Quotes & dialog:

B. Character Goals: he wants to win the American Revolution.

1. Details brief description of characters
George, who is very sloppy yet is competitive

2. Memories from Character father being taken away by British troops

3. Quotes & dialog: "Get away from me you ugly dirt bag I hate you!"

C. Scene Conflict always ! ticking time-bomb

1. Main character vs. self, nature & other characters-

a. Details brief description of characters conflict

b. Memories from Character conflict

c. Quotes & dialog conflict

8. Character POV. Remember, once you are seeing the world from one character's Point of

View, keep it that way. Sounds simple but it's easy to forget. Also, once you've opened up a character's POV, then you need to carry that character's story-line to the end of your novel and have resolution of that character's issues.

9.Inner story/outer story: The Inner story tracks the transformation your main character and other POV characters make as your outer story (action) progresses. Keep the inner story linked to the outer story. Do it subtly and weave it in as needed but don't go on for page after page. For instance your main character has a way with children and he kind of knows it but he can't give up the single life and settle down with his love interest. Offer the reader snippets that hint at the guy's love of children. The outer story is his journey with his love interest (with lots of conflict) toward settling down and raising a family. The more poignant or more genuine you can make those moments where inner

transformational moments and outer story meet, the better. Recently, I watched *Love is A Many Splendid Thing* on television. Jennifer Jones starts out as pretty tough cookie and a formidable catch for William Holden in the film. She's a widowed doctor in Hong Kong with a strong career, but right from the start, we see her caring for children and exalting warmth and commitment to family. She doesn't need William Holden, even if he is William Holden! But as she keeps reaching out to children and to her family in Chunking, her inner transformation takes place coincidentally with her outward courtship dance with Holden.

10. Hero's journey or arc. Okay. This topic is often the subject of entire courses at writers' conference and seminars. Most of you have this scheme pretty well pegged. Many of us grass-roots authors do not. I cannot hope to grasp and convey here its many complexities that renowned

writing teachers and scholars have chronicled over the years. I can't recite to you all the players, roles and stages in the hero's journey. I'll stick with the basics as I understand them and trust you'll find this helpful.

Basically, there's not much new in storytelling, going back to Greek mythology. If a writer strays too much from the tried and true methods which are based in myth and oral tradition, the reader will know it and drop your novel like Hercules dropped the Nemean Lion. I read *The Twelve Labors of Hercules* to my son a few years back over several nights. That's a good read for a primer on the hero's journey or story arc . In performing each labor, Hercules is **1.)** called to action (to bring Eurystheus the monster, man-eating lion's skin). Hercules is hesitant or reluctant but Jupiter's vindictive wife Juno makes Hercules obey Eurystheus. Then he **2.)** journeys to a special, faraway place to find his challenge. **3.)** He is

confronted with problems which set him back when he faces the challenge (Nemean Lion survived his club and arrows). **4.)** He hits rock-bottom physically and mentally (bring in inner story issues) and **5.)** faces his certain death. **6.)**He re-groups learns something about himself (faith, strength) and his adversary that makes him stronger, tougher, smarter and assists him to **7.)**overcome (strangles) his adversary. He then leaves the special world he's visited and **8.)**returns, transformed, wiser, stronger and triumphant with the dead lion over his shoulder. Theseus and the Minotaur, is another one. *Star Wars* Same arc but different circumstances and characters. You can incorporate the items listed 1—8 to your POD book and keep your reader turning those pages!

Chapter 5

The residual is a catch-all for things I may have forgotten. Do not submit a book that's going too retail for \$25.00. Unless you're a published author using POD to bring one of your out-of-print titles back to life, or it's an art book or a non-fiction expose, keep the price down by keeping the length down. Revise your book to fit into accepted genre word count or page range. A 65,000 to 75,000 word mystery is going to retail for under \$15.00. People can handle that much better and you can promote and sell your book more easily.

Don't be surprised or put off by the expenses associated with promoting your book. Keep your day job. Spend your money wisely and do as much legwork as you can for yourself. Just like any business keep good

records. Save all receipts. Keep a mileage log.

It all helps at tax time.

That's it. I'm done. It's September 20, 2001. 1:15 in the morning and guess what? The POD publisher's website is open for business! I plan to be proofing the book block and cover on-line in about two weeks. The book should go live about two weeks after that and be available for purchase. What are *you* waiting for? POD is new but it's changed the game and it's here to stay. Publish your next best seller. Do it now!

amazon.com.

***You already have the ebook. Now, click here
to put the paperback on your bookshelf today!***

Reading List:

1. Spiritual Marketing: A Proven 5-Step Formula for Easily Creating Wealth from the Inside Out

by [Joe Vitale](#), [Bob Proctor](#)

Paperback: 136 pages ; Dimensions (in inches): 0.39 x 8.02 x 5.02

Publisher: 1stBooks Library; ISBN: 0759614318; (March 2001)

2.The Sell-Your-Novel Toolkit : Everything You Need to Know About Queries, Synopses, Marketing & Breaking in

by [Elizabeth Lyon](#) (October 1997)

Blue Heron Pub; ISBN: 0936085401.

Comments: This book conveys the realities of the writing business with helpful insights, and invaluable case studies. Elizabeth Lyon is a writer's champion!

3.Publish Your Own Novel

by [Connie Shelton](#), [Lee Ellison](#) (Editor) (October 1996) Intrigue Press; ISBN:

0964316161.

Comments: This is one I found on an Internet search and I'm so glad I did. Although it came out before the advent of POD, it's how to approach business lessons, and common sense approach to marketing are

applicable to the POD business. I've dog-eared nearly every page of my copy.

[4 .Stein on Writing](#)

by Sol Stein (Paperback - January 2000) 320 pages (January 2000) Griffin
Trade Paperback; ISBN: 0312254210.

5. Zen and the Art of Writing

by [Ray Bradbury](#) Reissue edition (April 1, 1992)

Bantam Books; ISBN: 0553296345.

Comments: This is great reading and will help you turn off that internal censor.

6. Bird by Bird : Some Instructions on Writing and Life by [Anne Lamott](#)

Paperback - 239 pages (October 1995) Anchor; ISBN: 0385480016.

Comments: A warm and heartfelt book with realistic and practical tips for life and writing.

7. [The Writer's Journey : Mythic Structure for Writers](#) by Christopher Vogler

(Paperback - November 1998) 326 pages 2nd edition Michael Wiese

Productions; ISBN: 0941188701.

Comments: A must read for those motivated to write commercially viable fiction.

8. St. Jude's Secret

by [Daniel H. Jones](#) **Paperback** - 238 pages (October 1, 2000) Writer's

Showcase Press; ISBN: 0595131069 .

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0595131069/qid%3D985615951/102-6520922-0630503>

Final Comments

Here's my pitch. I couldn't resist.

Are you aware of what you eat and drink? You might think so, but the truth is that even "health food nuts" may not know when they are ingesting potentially damaging genetically engineered foods. Daniel H. Jones, author of [St. Jude's Secret](#), delves into sinister possibilities created by genetically engineered foods. Based on current research, his novel spins a gripping tale of drug smugglers, tampered coffee beans and muggy New Orleans night life.

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