

Words of Paradise

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In this issue:

- *President's Column: The Importance of Having a Writing Business Plan - Leslee Ellenson page 1*
- *Marketing Updates/Contests page 2*
- *Got Motivation? - Eugenia Morgan page 3*
- *Hope - Lynde Lakes page 4*
- *How Do I Copyright My Work? - Carol Burnside page 5*
- *French Toast and Romance - Carol Burnside page 5*

President's Column:
The Importance of Having a Writing Business Plan
by Leslee Ellenson

John Steinbeck once said, “When I face the desolate impossibility of writing 500 pages, a sick sense of failure falls on me, and I know I can never do it. Then gradually, I write one page and then another. One day’s work is all I can permit myself to contemplate.” Sound familiar?

When you conjure up your Muse and apply a liberal coating of bum glue, do you sit down to write only to be confounded by the huge expanse of white paper before you? Do you stare into the void and pray that inspiration will strike and the words you jot down will be keepers?

Now here’s a really scary question. “How to you plan an entire writing career around dealing with that experience on a daily basis?”

One approach is to develop a Writing Business Plan.

Many of us have drafted Business Plans, or been asked to review and comment on a company’s formal Business Plan, but few of us have sat down before a blank sheet of paper and drafted our own.

A Writing Business Plan will be as unique as you are, but all Plans should cover the same key items. The easiest way to start brainstorming is by thinking through a series of questions, such as:

Why do you want to be a writer? (This isn’t a given. Think about it and put it in writing.)

As a writer, what is your Mission Statement?

Exactly what do you want to write and market over the next few years?

As a writer, what are your Publishing Goals?

Will you publish under your own name or under a pseudonym?

What genre or sub-genre do you want to explore?

Do you want to publish via self-publishing, print-on-demand, or conventional publishing?

What established publishers handle the genre or field you are writing in?

Have you researched the publishers and obtained their guidelines?

What word counts are the publishers looking for?

How is your work similar to other successful authors published in the genre?

How long have you allotted to finishing the manuscript or work?

What must you do to carve out a writing lifestyle that will support your goals?

Is your family supportive of your writing ambitions?

Are there any writing, computer, or business courses you need to take?

Do you own or have access to the books and reference materials you will need?

Do you have the tools and technology you need?

Do you have the skills to market your own writing?

Do you know how to write a brilliant query letter?

Do you know the difference between a synopsis and a chapter outline?

Do you have the skills to co-market with your publisher?

Will you be comfortable traveling and appearing at book signings?

How much money and time are you willing to invest before you earn your first dollar?

How much money do you need or want to earn annually from your writing?

Thinking through these questions is a good start. If you take on the challenge of drafting a Writing Business Plan you will have a unique blueprint for reaching the goal of seeing your name and your work in print.

Market Updates/Contests

Check out features offered by the following websites:

Q and As from agents: <http://fictionaddiction.net/askexpert7.html>

New publisher looking for cross-genre fiction — romantic suspense, science fiction romance, paranormal romance, romantic comedy, romance with anything else, or non-traditional romances:

Loose ID stories ranging in length from 15,000 words to 130,000 words. They're also interested in stories that use popular songs from the 1980s as a starting point. (Sounds like a fun writing exercise!) For complete details and a look at their contract, visit www.loose-id.com.

Glimmer Train call for entries, deadline: July 31st.

Competition: Glimmer Train's Very Short Fiction Award.

Eligibility: Open to all themes, all subjects, all writers, published and unpublished. Your original, unpublished story must not exceed 2,000 words.

First-place winner receives \$1,200, publication in Glimmer Train Stories, and 20 copies of the issue in which it is published. Second- and third-place winners receive \$500/\$300, respectively, and acknowledgement in that issue.

To submit your story, go to our site, www.glimmertrainpress.com, log in,

and click on VERY SHORT STORY AWARD. Reading fee (payable by visa or mc) is \$10 per story.

Entries will be accepted through July 31st. Winners will be called by November 1st. Top 25 list will be emailed to all participants by that date.

Got Motivation?

by Eugenia M. Kolasinski Morgan, Ph.D.

Eugenia is a Freelance Writer and Researcher in Human Factors/Ergonomics and a former professor of Engineering Psychology at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Aloha fellow RWA Chapter members! Did you start 2004 with any goals for your writing career? How have you been doing so far in achieving those goals?

If you've had trouble, it may be that you did not set yourself up for success with the ingredients necessary for high motivation. But just what is necessary for high motivation?

Several theories have been proposed to explain motivation and, depending upon the behavior you're trying to explain, some theories make more sense than others. In this article, I'm going to tell you about one theory in particular: Expectancy Theory.

This theory is often applied in work settings to explain job-related behaviors and career choices, but it can also be applied to other tasks as well including goals you set for yourself as a writer. Expectancy Theory Expectancy theory is most useful for explaining motivation related to a specific task and a specific outcome. Victor Vroom developed this theory based on the assumption that humans are rational decision makers who analyze the benefits and costs of different courses of action and then exert effort when they believe it will produce a desired outcome.

According to this theory, motivation is a combination of three different elements.

First is expectancy. This element has to do with whether or not you believe you can do the task.

The second element is instrumentality. This has to do with your belief about whether or not you will receive the outcome if you do the task.

Lastly, valence has to do with whether or not you value the outcome. According to the theory, motivation is a function of how high each of these elements is for the given task and outcome. Motivation is at its highest when all three are high.

For example, I have recently been helping my father with a biography he has written on Civil War Union General Charles P. Stone. The goal is to land a book deal (the outcome). To meet that goal, I first had to write a book proposal (the task). While working on the book proposal last year, my motivation took quite a roller coaster ride.

Let's apply Expectancy theory to try to understand why: First, consider valence. I definitely want to see my dad land a book deal and I value that a great deal so valence was high: check!

Second, maybe I'm just naively optimistic, but I really believe that if a writer can write well, has a good idea, and can pitch the idea well to a publisher, she will get a book deal eventually. Thus, I truly believed that if I wrote a good book proposal, we would eventually land a book deal so instrumentality was high: check!

Lastly comes expectancy and that's where the ride began. I only seriously embraced my Inner writer and considered that I could actually make a career of writing last year, and my writing to date has been limited to articles.

Thus, the experience with my dad's book was my first experience ever with writing a book proposal, and I discovered that writing a book proposal is a pretty involved, and sometimes difficult, process! At times I thought confidently, "Yes! I can do this!" but then sometimes I thought, "Ugh! I'll never be able to do this!"

When I was in a "can do" mood, my motivation tended to be very high: note that, in this case, all three elements in the Expectancy model were high. When I was in a "can't do" mood, however, I tended to suddenly find all kinds of stuff on TV that I wanted to watch rather than work on the proposal. In that case, one of the elements

was very low and, as a result, my motivation was low.

What?

We just saw how Expectancy theory can be used to assess motivation. Note, however, that in addition to using the theory to assess motivation, you can also use it to get some insight into how to increase motivation for a specific task and outcome.

So, for example, before I started working on my father's book proposal, I got a copy of Michael Larsen's *How to Write a Book Proposal* which spells out very specifically and straightforwardly how to write a proposal. When I was in a "can't do" mood, I noticed that I was usually having trouble writing a particular section of the proposal. When I referred back to Larsen's book to get directions and see examples, that usually increased my confidence in my ability to write the section and then, as a result, my motivation usually increased and I was back on track. Thus, I was able to increase my motivation because I increased my expectancy for being able to do the task.

Expectancy Theory in YOUR Life

Let's get back to those writing goals of yours. Focus on one of them. What is the specific task involved and what is the outcome you are trying to achieve?

Now, apply Expectancy theory to assess your motivation. How high is your expectancy: Do you think you can do the task? How high is your instrumentality: if you do the task, do you believe will receive the outcome? How high is your valence: do you value the outcome?

If each of these three elements is high, then your motivation should be high. Is it? If your motivation is low, it is likely that one or more of the elements is low. What can you do to tweak your situation, the task, or maybe even the outcome in order to boost the low element(s)? According to Expectancy theory, if you can find some way to boost the element, you should notice a boost in your motivation as well. Good luck! For More Information For More Information Feel free to drop me an email at

EMK_Morgan@webmajic.com if you have comments or questions on this article. If you'd like to learn more about motivation, check out the following sites: <http://choo.fis.utoronto.ca/FIS/Courses/LIS1230/LIS1230sharma/motive7.htm> - This site has info on 7 different theories of motivation http://www.cba.uri.edu/Scholl/Notes/Motivation_Expectancy.html - This site is devoted specifically to Expectancy theory

Hope
by Lynde Lakes

Hope, determination, and the need to express ourselves in the written or typed form are what binds very unique individuals into the synergistic whole that we call the family of writers.

Hope is the driving part of that equation that keeps us going through illness, adversity, and rejection. The reward is just around the corner; and we don't let pessimism get in the way. It is hope of publication that gives us the positive energy and momentum to reach for success—and determination that urges us to keep reaching for it.

Writers write and hope...write and hope; gathering new skills, trying new things. Those who stay with the journey and don't drop out, recognize the value of what they are doing, touching lives along the way, grabbing the lessons, and experiencing life with their eyes wide open to record the joys and sorrows of the world in their own special way. It is my wish that every writer who reads this gets the gold at the end of the rainbow, and the only way to keep going through the disappointments, is to never let go of the hope.

How Do I Copyright My Work?

by Carol Burnside

As a writer, you hear a lot about copyrights and protecting your work. At some point, we'll probably all wonder how we actually go about accomplishing the task of copyrighting. From the information I found, it sounds surprisingly easy.

The Library of Congress U.S. Copyright Office's website (www.copyright.gov) answers a multitude of questions with surprising clarity. I'll try to summarize for you here the steps to formally copyright your literary work, whether it is fiction or non-fiction.

Why do I say 'formally?' Because the second you write the words on paper or type them onto the screen, they are protected. From that moment on, only the author or those to whom the author has assigned the right can copyright that work.

The exception to this rule is 'works for hire.' These works encompass that which is created as a part of your job, or work that has been commissioned for a specific use. In those cases, the work created is the property of the employer.

If you'd rather have a formal copyright, here's how to go about it:

1. Make a complete copy of your manuscript, poetry, on-line article, or other literary text. a. The U.S. Copyright Office is not picky about the format of the manuscript, but prefers you make sure the work is stapled, clipped or bound in some way that can be stored for a long period of time.
2. Complete an application. a. A copy of the application can be downloaded and printed from the website given above. 3. Make out a check or money order in the amount of \$30 to 'Register of Copyrights.'
4. Insert the complete work, the completed application and the payment all in one envelope and mail to: Library of Congress, Copyright Office, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E. Washington, D.C. 20559-6000.

According to the Copyright office, there is no need to send your package by anything other than regular mail. If everything is received in acceptable form, your copyright will begin on the date the copyright office receives it, and you will receive a certification of registration within 4-5 months.

Specific questions on other kinds of copyrights can be found at the website given at the beginning of this article. For literary works, see www.copyright.gov/register/literary.html.

French Toast and Romance

by Carol Burnside

Have you ever made French Toast? Basically, it's bread, eggs and butter, right? But, you protest, it can be so much more. You can add vanilla to the eggs, sprinkle a little cinnamon or powdered sugar on top. Use flavored syrups, or margarine instead of butter.

My point? Many combinations of ingredients can be used and all end up as a batch of French Toast, but each offers a different taste experience. Have you ever written a romance novel? "They're all alike," some people say. "The writing is so formulaic, especially the category kind."

Excuse me? Did you say formulaic? If that's true, the French Toast made with vanilla and cinnamon would taste the same as the batch with powdered sugar and coconut syrup. No? Why not? They use the same basic ingredients. Well, just as a recipe cooked by two different cooks turns out differently, so do novels written by two different, yet equally skilled, authors.

All romance novels, whether category or single title, contemporary or historical, paranormal or suspense, begin with the same ingredients of boy meets girl, conflict, and a happy ending, but individually, are as diverse and unique as snowflakes.

Think about it. Two chefs make the same recipe for French Toast, using identical ingredients. But, do both batches taste exactly the same? Perhaps one chef prefers a hotter griddle, and his ends up crisper on the edges. The other chef double dips his bread in the egg wash, and his turns out a little soggy in the center. They've both made the same dish, used the required ingredients, but each batch tastes a bit differently from the other because of the chefs' individual choices in preparation. So, next time you hear someone talking about how formulaic romance writing is, defend your craft. Believe that you're an individual, and so is your writing. If you and I both sit down to write a contemporary romance featuring a marriage of convenience, your unique voice, the personalities of your characters, the twists and turns of your plot, the setting, and other ingredients will make it distinctive from the one I'll write.

Just as the chefs made individual choices in the preparation of French Toast, you and I will make different choices in the application of each element needed in our books. Even though romance accounts for 55% of all paperback fiction sold and is a billion dollar industry, the genre still seems to be the stepchild of the writing world. You probably won't hear anyone talking about how formulaic mystery novels are. Yet, you'll find certain common ingredients in any mystery: a crime, a victim, clues, and a sleuth trying to figure out the whodunit. Right? Although they use those same elements, no one would venture to say that an Agatha Christie book is the same as one by Mary Higgins Clark any more than they would say a Sherlock Holmes mystery was identical to a Nancy Drew. A case could be made that any genre has certain common ingredients, but romance seems to get the bad rap for what is portrayed as some nebulous, laughable formula.

Don't let anyone demean your writing, your hard-won fight to get your unique story down on paper and into the hands of the readers. Write on. Be proud of your genre. And the next time someone has the audacity to say that romance writing is so formulaic? Ask her how she makes French Toast.

