

# Your Book Publishing Coach Newsletter

*The insider's guide to writing,  
publishing, and making money with information products*

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\*\*\*\*\*MAIN ARTICLE\*\*\*\*\*

## When to Choose Your Book Title

**C**hoosing a great book title is part art, part science.

In fact, E. Haldeman-Julius, who conducted one of the largest and most meticulous studies of what makes a book title sell, concluded, "A good title is a work of genius."

Genius, however, can be cultivated.

Often "genius" appears when you do the exact opposite of what everyone else does. Marketing expert Dan Kennedy is fond of saying that if everyone else in your industry is doing the same thing, try the exact opposite. You're likely to succeed if you do exactly what others are not doing.

In this case, most people come up with their book title *after* they've written their book.

Or perhaps, as they write their book.

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I used to think this was not a bad thing—to let the title emerge, as it were, as you write the book.

Now, however, I believe that the best time to choose your title is *before* you write your book.

For several reasons.

**1. Choosing your title *first* will focus you on what the book should be about.** This will save you tons of time and effort. In fact, the focus you will experience once you nail down a great title and subtitle can shave months, even years off the writing process.

Writing a book is a big task. Most of us end up going off on tangents and chasing rabbit trails of information that we later will have to cut (which can be painful). When you know you have a winning title, you can use that as your touchstone for what needs to be in *this* book. If you get other ideas—fine. Put them in an Ideas file for later books. *This* book you're writing now needs to keep its focus.

**2. Choosing your title first by market testing will help you determine whether your idea will fly.** This is another way you'll benefit from doing the opposite of what most authors do. Most authors get excited about the idea, and the market testing comes *after* the book is out. If it sells, it's a winner. If it doesn't—well, you've wasted a chunk of your life and perhaps several thousands of dollars to get it into print.

The better way to know what to write about is by choosing and testing a title before you write your book. Then, make sure your book stays on course with this title.

**3. To refine the premise and promise of your book.** When you take the time to market test your idea and conduct research on your title, you will find out exactly the best slant to take. Often your original idea is fine, it just needs some refinement. Let your market tell you how to refine it—*before* you invest a lot into the book.

**4. Choosing your title by testing could build you a list of potential buyers.** If you have people participate in a survey, you can ask if they'd like to be put onto a list to be notified when the book will be out or, better yet, to be contacted again as you write the book, for further input. When people invest themselves in your process of writing and titling a book, they're much more likely to not only buy it, but tell their friends about it too. ("You've got to read this book. I was involved in the process, sort of, so I feel I helped write it. It's a great book about ....")

**5. Having a great title increases your chances of getting a traditional publisher to publish you.** Most traditional publishers can recognize a great title when they see one. If you approach them with a professional-looking book proposal that has a great title, a great marketing plan (which you will have, because you've already started the marketing

and done some great research), *and* possibly a list of people who are interested in buying the book—well, this does give you a definite edge over what publishers usually see.

What are you waiting for? If you've got a book idea, get to work on choosing a great title for it. A title that will focus you, galvanize you to envision your book clearly, put you in touch with your market, and possibly, attract a publisher who will pay you an advance to write the book, pay to publish it, and even help you promote it for a while.

Just please take my advice, and start with your title.

And if you need more help in choosing your best title and testing it ...

## Next steps ...

Once you've done your research as outlined above, there are 7 more things to do to come up with your winning title. For only \$7, you can access "7 Action Steps for Choosing Your Best-Selling Title" and find out:

- How to use your research to create templates of best-selling titles you can use over again, not just for your title, but for marketing as well
- 7 criteria for choosing your best title (and the minimum number you should shoot for)
- The different "jobs" your title and subtitle must do. Miss even one, and your book is likely doomed.
- 7 ways to test your titles and come up with the winner that you can be sure will sell your book—including one that will actually net you income before your book is even published
- The killer criteria that trumps all others when you test your titles

[Get your instantly downloadable PDF of "7 Action Steps for Choosing Your Best-Selling Title" now!](#) (Note: Since the Action Steps build on this article, it includes the above article for your convenience.)

\*\*\*\*\*INSIDER'S TIP \*\*\*\*\*

## "Magic Words" that Sell More Books

When I was a book editor, our team would do a "post-mortem" on books that went out of print. We'd try to figure out why the book didn't sell.

Rarely did we seriously consider testing a new title. If we thought the title was the problem, we would chalk it up to "let's find a better title the next time." Few people in publishing know how to test titles, or think to do so.

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Back in the late 1920s, a publisher name Emmanuel Haldeman-Julius had a better idea. When one of his "Little Blue Books" wasn't selling, he sent it to "The Hospital" before "killing" it (i.e. pulling it out of print). If the book was well-written and worth reading, he tried to revive it.

Since he sold these books by title alone, it wasn't difficult to figure out where the problem was! Not only did Haldeman-Julius try new titles, he kept meticulous records of the results.

Here are some of the results after treatment at "The Hospital":

- When *Gautier's Fleece of Gold* was changed to *The Quest for a Blonde Mistress*, sales jumped from 6,000 to 50,000!
- When the title of Oscar Wilde's *Pen, Pencil and Poison* was changed to *The Story of a Notorious Criminal*, sales more than tripled!
- The book *Patent Medicine* did not sell well. When changed to *The Truth About Patent Medicine*, however, sales more than tripled!
- Arthur Schopenhauer's *Art of Controversy* didn't do squat until he changed it to *How to Argue Logically*. Then the book enjoyed sales of 30,000 per year.
- You can guess what happened when Thomas De Quincey's *Essay on Conversation* was changed to *How to Improve Your Conversation ...*
- *Barnum, the Man Who Lured the Herd* became *P.T. Barnum and His Circus*. As such, sales doubled. Haldeman Julius found that a winning title for biographies identified the person in some appealing way. Interestingly, at the time *Casanova and His Loves* did not sell well (Haldeman-Julius surmised people didn't know who Casanova was). When retitled as *Casanova: History's Greatest Lover*, sales jumped from 8,000 to 22,000 per year (and, it could be argued, made the name of Casanova synonymous with "lover").

Haldeman-Julius's experimentation and testing resulted in his finding what he calls "magical words"—words that make people want to buy. (We would now say "magic words.")

Can you pick out some "magic words" from the above title changes? Here are a few ...

*"How to ..."*

*"The Truth about ..."*

*"The Story of .."*

*"Love"*

"Life"

"What You Should Know about ..."

"The Art of ..."

"The Secret to ..."

Do such "magic words" hold up today? You have only to check the best-seller lists to come up with an answer. Human nature seems to be human nature. While cultural changes obviously affect which titles will appeal, surprisingly little has changed since Haldeman-Julius's meticulous study.

"A good title is a work of genius," Haldeman-Julius concluded. Hitting upon a great title comes partly by instinct, but in my opinion, it's an *informed* instinct. The greats among copywriters are those who have honed their ability to recognize killer headlines. Like them, you can develop your skill in recognizing just the right words that could turn your book into a bestseller on title alone.

\*\*\*\*\***JUMP START YOUR BOOK**\*\*\*\*\*

**A**re you ready to start your book, eBook or information product NOW? Why wait another moment? [Visit the special Web page](#) and find out the 12 questions you must answer in order to write a book that sells.

Even if you don't have a clear idea of what you want to write, these questions—plus the audio training, "How to Start an Information Product from Scratch," will equip you to start this week! These resources will save you hours, months, even years of wasted time--and ensure that your book will sell. (You *do* want a crack at the best-seller list, don't you?)

Go now to <http://snipurl.com/jumpstartbook> and check it out!

\*\*\*\*\***MARKETING TIP**\*\*\*\*\*

## **How Long Should Your Book Title Be?**

One of the frequently-asked questions about book titles is, "Does the length of the title make any difference to the salability of the book?"

The short answer is: It's not so much the length as the quality of the title that determines the salability of the book.

"*Think and Grow Rich*" is one of the most effective titles in the history of publishing. As you can see, it's only four words long! However, those four words manage to:

- Tell what the book is about
- Make a compelling promise—you will grow rich merely by thinking the right way.
- It's on a topic that is of perennial interest to people (getting rich)
- The promise also piques interest. ("How can one get rich by thinking?")
- The title is easy to remember

On the other hand, here's another title that takes the *idea* of *Think and Grow Rich* and puts a different spin on it: *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind: Mastering the Inner Game of Wealth* by T. Harv Eker. This longer title accomplished the same things that *Think and Grow Rich* does, in more words. Still effective; this book has been a best seller for several years now.

If you compare book titles to headlines, then what copywriters have learned from their testing is that in general, longer headlines do better. I suspect this is simply because it often takes longer headlines to accomplish the purposes mentioned above.

My take on it is, attempt meet the 5-7 criteria of an irresistible title in as few words as possible.

This applies to nonfiction, by the way. With fiction, I think the main goal of a title is to pique interest and/or spark the imagination.

Look at the fiction titles currently on the New York Times best-seller list:

- You've Been Warned
- [A Thousand Splendid Suns](#)
- Pontoon
- The Wheel Of Darkness
- Bones To Ashes
- The Wednesday Letters
- Garden Spells
- The Quickie
- Dark Possession
- The Elves Of Cintra

Effective fiction titles seem to run short, but include some sort of curiosity factor that engages the imagination. Rarely do fiction titles include subtitles. The challenge with fiction, then, is to find a title that is compelling to the imagination and that also is faithful enough to the book that when people read it, they will not be disappointed.

So how long does a title need to be to sell the book? As long as it needs to be to do the job of an irresistible title—and no longer.

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## Get Your Questions Answered ...

If you have a question for Diane about writing, publishing and/or promoting a book, there's a new way to ask them.

Go to [www.askyourbookpublishingcoach1.com](http://www.askyourbookpublishingcoach1.com) and submit your question. (Note that this is an example of an open-ended Ask-type campaign. For more about that, see the articles on Virtual Book Tours at [www.wordstoprofit.com](http://www.wordstoprofit.com).)

I will be answering questions on my periodic free teleseminars. Even if you don't have a question but you would like to tune in, make sure you're on my newsletter list so you receive notification of the next teleseminar. You can listen in and hear the questions other people have and still learn a lot.

\*\*\*\*\***RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**\*\*\*\*\*

Want more help on choosing your best-selling title? Here's how to learn more ...

**1. [Ask your question about choosing a best-selling title.](#)** I will be answering them in articles (several of these were sparked by a question), on the blog, and/or in my TeleCourse, "[How to Choose Your Best-Selling Title.](#)" When you ask your question, you can also listen to the replay of the teleseminar, and get a free copy of 104 Power Verbs.

**2. Listen to the teleseminars on Choosing Your Best-Selling Title.** I did two teleseminars, one a Q&A and one a preview of the "How to Choose Your Best-Selling Title" TeleCourse. There's a wealth of information on these two calls. Access it here: <http://www.wordstoprofit.com/teleseminarreplays.html>.

**3. For more in-depth coaching, you can sign up for my 5-module TeleCourse, "[How to Choose Your Best-Selling Title.](#)"** You will learn a process for choosing titles that will help you not only with your book, but also with any information product you create and sell, as well as your marketing. I promise you, the information shared in this course is known only to the savviest of publishing professionals. [Check it out now.](#) (Note: This teleseminar is offered in the month of October 2007. You may sign up in this month and catch up, because there are replays available. After the TeleCourse, this link will take you to a page that offers the course in a different format.)

\*\*\*\*\* ON THE BLOG \*\*\*\*\*

### [Recipe for a Best-Selling Book](#)

I was in the doctor office, and as always, I carry a book with me in case I have to wait (typical).

The book was [The 4-Hour Workweek](#) by Timothy Ferriss. (Which, by the way, has already changed my life in significant ways—and I haven't even finished reading it! For instance, it's changed the way I handle email. )

The physician's assistant, Lauren, looked at the book and said, "Wouldn't that be nice?"

"Yes," I replied. "In fact, if it helped me get to a 4-hour work *day*, I'd be happy."

Lauren laughed. "Me, too. I think I'm going to get that book."

My copy was from the library. I often check out a book from the library first, to see if I want to actually buy it.

I bought it today. So did two friends of mine, after I mentioned the title and that I'm finding it very helpful.

The [4-Hour Workweek](#) hit several best-seller lists, and there are a number of reasons why. One is certainly the title. As Lauren said, upon seeing the title, "Who wouldn't want that?"

I hazard the guess that Tim Ferriss has probably sold a lot of books on his title alone. Why? His title promises something quite compelling that appeals to almost anyone. It gets the imagination going. "What if I could get my work done in only 4 hours per week? What else would I do with my life?"

I love [The 4-Hour Workweek](#). I also find it fascinating as a case study for how to sell books. [Ferriss's blog](#) has a [wonderful article about how he got onto the best seller lists](#). He doesn't talk about his title per se, but he does talk about the other important ingredient in making a best seller.

You have to deliver on the promise in the content of the book itself. In my opinion, Ferriss definitely does that.

Which brings me to my recipe for a best seller: [Compelling title](#) + great content + smart marketing = word of mouth "buzz" and publicity that sells books!

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