
The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

Publisher: Randy Ingermanson ("the Snowflake guy")
Motto: "A Vision for Excellence"
Date: December 6, 2005
Issue: Volume 1, Number 9
Home Pages: <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>
<http://www.RSIngermanson.com>
Circulation: 3479 writers, each of them creating a
Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

What's in This Issue

- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!
 - 2) What? Another E-zine?
 - 3) Should You Have a Web Site?
 - 4) Who's Afraid of Tiger Marketing?
 - 5) PyroMarketing and a Free Audiobook
 - 6) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com
 - 7) Steal This E-zine!
-
-

- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!

Those of you who have joined in the past month (about 340 of you are new since my last issue), welcome to my e-zine! You can find all the previous issues on my web site at:
<http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/html/afwezine.html>

I'm adjusting the publication schedule for this e-zine slightly. You should expect it on the first Tuesday of every month, rather than "around the 1st of the month." The reason for this is that Tuesday is a great day of the week to send out an e-zine. (Tuesday is NOT a weekend and it's NOT Monday and it's NOT Friday. What more can I say?)

In this issue, I'll tell you about a new e-zine I just learned about that looks extremely promising.

I'm also going to talk a bit more in-depth about Tiger Marketing. If you are cringing at the thought of Tiger Marketing or ANY marketing, then this series is for you. Because the "tiger" in Tiger Marketing isn't some ferocious beast--he's more like Hobbes in the old comic strip Calvin and Hobbes. The whole point of Tiger

Marketing is to market your material to people who are interested in you and your stuff.

There are different ways to measure success, but selling 26 million copies of a book is considered a success just about anywhere. This happened recently for a book published in a NICHE market. The marketing director for that book has a website and he's written a new book discussing how he did it--using a technique he calls PyroMarketing. Sniff closely and you'll smell a Tiger, methinks. A burning Tiger.

2) What? Another E-zine?

I did a little investigating this past month to see what other e-zines are out there that specialize in writing fiction. There are a bunch, mostly small fry with a few dozen or few hundred subscribers. I found one e-zine that has several hundred more subscribers than the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, but it's been around for four years. At the rate we're growing, I'm guessing we'll pass it before our first birthday.

But there's a new kid on the block, and I'd like to recommend it right now. Heartily. But first, an aside:

Those of you who've been on my web site know that I have a list of 8 books that I recommend for novelists. One of those is a book on editing yourself, and it's universally considered the best book on self-editing out there. The book is called "Self Editing for Fiction Writers" by Renni Browne and Dave King.

Renni Browne is a former editor for Scribners, William Morrow, and Stein and Day. She's got an EXCELLENT editorial services company, The Editorial Department, with a web site at:
<http://www.editorialdepartment.com/>

The Editorial Department has just started a new e-zine for writers of both fiction and nonfiction. It has the high quality you'd expect from Renni Browne. I've already subscribed, and I suspect that you'll want to also. Just pop on over to the link listed above and you'll find it.

Enjoy!

3) Should You Have a Web Site?

I hang out on a few writing email groups. Recently, somebody posted a question on one of them that said, in essence, "I don't have any books published yet, so what would I have to offer on my web site that anyone would

care about?"

I thought that was an excellent question, so I posted the following response:

The only thing you have to offer--ever--is yourself. Your books will come and go and be out of print quicker than you will ever imagine. Your ideas--and mine--are not particularly original. Somebody else has said it better, smarter, funnier. Sad but true.

But nobody else has ever been YOU. You are all you've got. So your website should highlight you. Now forget that I said that. If you make a website that's ABOUT you, then you are going to get your mother and your three best friends to visit. Once. After that, nada.

Your website should be ABOUT whatever interests you. What makes you tick? Quilts? Treehouses? Antique cars? Stuffed alligators? Quilted antique alligator-flavored treehouses?

Whatever it is, I guarantee that somebody else is interested too. Put information about what you CARE about on your website and people will come. Write about it in a way that is genuinely YOU and they may decide they like you. Then again, they may hate you. Tough beans. That's the risk you take going public. If you want everybody to like you, then be chocolate. If you want people to know who you are, put your personality into every page on your website, WHILE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE. That's the key. Be yourself, but write about something else.

4) Who's Afraid of Tiger Marketing?

After the above post appeared on the email loop, I received a personal email from a friend of mine who saw it, asking me for some advice on her web site. She was gut-level honest, a feature that marks out real writers from amateurs. I realized that a LOT of people are probably asking the same questions and would like to hear the answers. So I asked if I could answer her publicly in this e-zine.

Like anybody, she's a bit nervous to have her site and her questions exposed to public view. However, I'm a persuasive devil, and she's graciously given me permission to quote her and to use her real name (so I can give you her web site to look at as you read my comments). So I'd like you to meet . . . Crystal Warren Miller. Her web site is at:
<http://www.crystal-miller.com>

Crystal had several questions all tangled together, so I'll shuffle them into the sequence that works best for me and I'll also edit them slightly:

Crystal asks: "So, there are a bunch of Crystal Millers out there--no joke! One is the mother of 8, homeschools and has a web site of domestic bliss and advice (yeah, well, obviously that one is NOT me.) Another Crystal Miller is a survivor of Columbine, a Christian and goes around speaking. Another Crystal Miller is a singer. I went by Cris Warren in high school, but then married Chris Miller, so I had to use my given name to avoid confusion. I would use a pen name if I need to. I never liked my name. Should I have a pen name?"

Randy sez: I like the name Crystal and I don't see any reason for you to go by a pen name. Honestly, I don't think you'll ever achieve total name-uniqueness unless you changed your name to something horrible and impossible to remember, like . . . Ingermanson. Ick, who wants to do that?

It's not like you're named Jane Smith. Now if your name was Anne Rice or Danielle Steel, then you'd have a problem. But as long as you're the only Crystal Miller who writes fiction, you should be fine with your real name. It's easy to remember and that's important for your future word-of-mouth hopes.

Crystal asks: "I really don't know what to do about my lame web site and how I should revamp it if my novel gets sold? Should I start gearing my web site to my WIP? Should it reflect the romantic comedy I'm working on?"

Randy sez: You have a reasonable web site address:
<http://www.crystal-miller.com/>

It would have been better if you could have got www.crystallmiller.com, but somebody beat you to it. But look! It's for sale for \$388. You might consider grabbing it now. I have a writer friend who has the same name as a porn star. Unfortunately, Little Miss Porno grabbed the web site name first, leaving my friend forever after to make red-faced explanations.

The broader question is how should you revamp your web site? I would suggest that you have several main sections to it. You could have one section that is mainly about you--your personal page, your books (eventually when they get published), and whatever else that the usual "brochure web site" has. Nobody reads brochure web sites, by the way, and yet most writers have exactly that and nothing more. It's like walking down the street yelling, "Hey, look at me, look at ME!" Sure, people might look. But unless you're famous or gorgeous or naked, nobody's going to look for very long.

So I would also suggest that you pick something you love and add a LOT of content to your web site on that. It should be related as closely as possible to the content of your books.

You're a Hoosier, Crystal. If your books are strongly Hoosier-centric, then add content to your site on life in Indiana. Make it unique. Give it your special voice. Make it interesting. A blog might be appropriate here, but be aware that there may already be a zillion Hoosier blogs, so who needs another one?

You're also a blonde, Crystal, and proud of it. You even collect blonde jokes! Maybe you could have a collection of "The World's Funniest Clean Blonde Jokes." (Might be a short list.)

It would not take a lot of effort to make Google notice a site like that. You could even start a "Blonde Joke of the Week" email newsletter. The question is: should you? That would take some effort. If your novels are strongly related to blondes, then it would make sense, because then people who come to your web site would also be interested in your books. You would want to redo your web site to highlight your blonde hair--put your picture on every page, add pictures of famous blondes, make the color scheme of the site match it all.

You're also a book reviewer. You could post book reviews on your site, specializing in one niche market of books. (No, don't review everything under the sun there. Review one type of book ONLY, and do a good job. Then Google will find you. Writing reviews may be hazardous for you, because you intend to publish novels. There's an inherent conflict of interest for a novelist who writes reviews of other people's fiction. So I wouldn't recommend it for you. I mention this because some of my e-zine readers might find the idea tempting. If you're a novelist, don't make a career of writing reviews! Glass houses and thrown stones and all that.

Finally, Crystal, you write humorous stuff. If you wanted to work hard at that, you might start a blog focusing on Erma Bombeck type humor. That would take some work too, but it would put you right out there, front and center, where the market could decide just how good you are. A blogger with 100,000 readers has an amazing marketing platform for a book on a subject related to her blog. Scott Adams, the Dilbert guy, has a hilarious email newsletter with over 400,000 readers. You can bet a lot of them buy his business humor books.

Crystal, you sent me a summary of the novel you're working on. It's about a youngish widow who lives in a small town in Indiana. I guess the category for this is hen-lit or wid-lit or something. Is your heroine blonde, by any chance? Maybe you should dye her hair if she's not. And you tell me that one of your test

readers said, "I laughed so hard, I wet my pants." See now, there's a great marketing hook: "Overly continent? Read Crystal Miller!"

So here's what I'd do if I were you, Crystal. I'd start a blog that plays to your strengths. Make it pants-wetting funny. Make it cater to women. Maybe make it focus on your bloneness. (Hey, Blondie made a career out of being a ditzy blonde, so why can't you?")

It's a pity you don't live in Mississippi. Then you could be the "Blonde Bombshell Biloxi Blogger." But you're a Hoosier, so you'll just have to deal with that. Maybe you could move to Bloomington?

All of this leads into your next question . . .

Crystal asks: "When you all have conversations about this web site/Tiger Marketing, I break out in a cold sweat and get a little nauseated."

Randy sez: Hey, I'm sorry about that! Tiger Marketing is supposed to be fun, not make you nauseated. The idea is that you pour your own personality into your web site, e-zine, blog, or whatever. You make it easy for people to find you. Then, when you have a book that delivers the same kind of stuff that's on your site, e-zine, blog, or whatever, you let those people know. And they either buy it or they don't, but at least they know you're there and they won't get mad at you for sending them unwanted ads.

Crystal asks: "Can you come up with a formula to somehow help writers to figure out who they should be as writers and on their web site? Something we could plug and chug. Something to give us a starting (or starting all over) point?"

Randy sez: I'm still trying to figure that out for myself! I don't think there's a simple formula. I think it's easier to figure it out for others than for yourself.

The only thing I can say is, be yourself, or some reasonable approximation to yourself. Don't choose some new persona based on what's marketable. Decide based on who you are and what you enjoy doing. Because if you go with some phony baloney persona just to make money, then you're a ho. And nobody wants to be a ho.

5) PyroMarketing and a Free Audiobook

Niches can be profitable. Which is a good thing, because EVERYBODY writes for a niche. Tom Clancy's

niche is technothrillers. The majority of Americans don't read technothrillers. John Grisham writes legal thrillers. The majority of Americans don't read legal thrillers.

Every book ever written falls into some niche category that most people don't read. What's a Tiger Marketer to do?

Well, see, that's the whole idea of Tiger Marketing --you only market to your niche. And that, if I've understood it correctly, is also the point of PyroMarketing.

What is PyroMarketing? It's the marketing method used to take Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, to sales of 26 million copies. And climbing.

You may be saying right now, "Who the heck is Rick Warren? And what is *The Purpose Driven Life*?"

That's my point. The hottest selling book in the world for the last couple of years is a book that a LOT of people have never seen, and it's written by an author a lot of people have never heard of. It's in a niche.

Rick Warren is a Baptist minister. No kidding, a Baptist minister. *The Purpose Driven Life* is his book on finding your purpose in life. The book was published by Zondervan, a Christian publishing company. Its marketing director was a guy named Greg Stielstra. The method he used is what Greg calls PyroMarketing.

You may not care a fig for Rick or Greg or the book or Zondervan or any of that. But I suggest that you ought to care about PyroMarketing, because it apparently works.

There are four steps to PyroMarketing. I won't steal Greg's thunder. Check out his web site at:
<http://www.pyromarketing.com>

There, you'll find info on Greg's marketing methods, and you'll be able to download an audio version of his latest book, innovatively titled *PyroMarketing*. Giving away free samples of your goods is one part of PyroMarketing.

Another part of PyroMarketing is keeping records of who you've given stuff to. As you can imagine, you'll have to give Greg your email address to get the free download. Greg's no dummy. He's using PyroMarketing methods to sell his book.

And I, for one am interested in his book, because . . . I'm interested in marketing. Here's the thing--Greg didn't find me. I found him. That's one of the other aspects of PyroMarketing.

And how did I find out about it? From a friend of mine,

who posted info about it on an email loop yesterday. And that's another aspect of PyroMarketing--giving people an easy way to tell others about your product.

Doggone it! I wasn't going to steal Greg's thunder, but I've gone and told you all four steps in PyroMarketing. But I bet you'll go check his site anyway, because all I've done is whet your appetite and now you wanna know more.

Or not. If you don't care, then you don't care and you won't go. It's no skin off Greg's nose. And that's the beauty of PyroMarketing. Greg's not doing the work of advertising his book. Other people are. Because people talk about what they're interested in.

Sounds a whole lot like Tiger Marketing, doesn't it?

6) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

I've spent my first month of full-time unemployment getting caught up with life. I had a great time at a mentoring-only writing conference in early November. Then I came home and tried to catch up on my accounting. Gack! My checkbook is ALMOST up to date (by which I mean, it's now got some checks recorded for 2005). And I've got some special projects going.

One of them is the Tiger Marketing plan for my next book, the one I just finished at the end of October. More on that next month, when I'm closer to rolling it out.

The other thing I've been working on is a project to make my Fiction 101 course much more widely available. I've now taught this course to hundreds of novelists at five different conferences across the country. The course is roughly 6 or 8 hours of instruction, and I also give out my 200-odd pages of notes. I've had a great time teaching it, but it struck me that if I could deliver the whole course over the web, it would save a lot of wear and tear on me. I had hoped to have Fiction 101 ready to roll out by now, but I'm a hopeless perfectionist, and I'm not done yet. When it's ready, I'll let you know. You'll hear it here first.

Meanwhile, a whole round of holidays is coming up. Take your pick of all those that apply: Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Happy Kwanzaa! Happy Boxing Day! Happy New Year!

See ya next year with more stuff on the craft and marketing of your fiction!

7) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth 2.71 times what you paid for it. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2005. Thhhpppttt! Pardon me while I spit out that lawyer-talk!

Extremely tasteful postscript: I encourage you to email this E-zine to any writer friends of yours who might benefit from it. I only ask that you email the whole thing, not bits and pieces. That way, they'll know where to go to get their own free subscription, if they want one.

If you email it to them, remind them tactfully that they should name YOU as the person who referred them, if they sign up. When my subscriber count reaches 5000, I'll hold a drawing for a brand-new iPod Nano. Your name will be entered once for each subscriber you referred. Subscribers who name themselves as referrers unfortunately don't get credit, so they might as well be honest and admit it was you!

At the moment, there are two places to subscribe:
My personal web site: <http://www.RSIngermanson.com>
My new web site: <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

Randy Ingermanson
Publisher, Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine
