
The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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Circulation: 20841 writers, each of them creating a
Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

"Fiction Writing = Organizing + Creating + Marketing"

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

Those of you who have joined in the past month (nearly 600 of you signed up in May), welcome to my e-zine!

You should be on this list only if you signed up for it on my web site. If you no longer wish to hear from me, don't be shy -- there's a link at the bottom of this e-mail that will put you out of your misery.

If you need to change your e-mail address, there's a different link at the bottom to help you do that.

If you missed a back issue, remember that all previous

issues are archived on my web site at:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezine>

What's in this issue:

The successful novelist needs good organization, good craft, and good marketing. In this issue, we'll talk about each of these in turn.

* Is your plate full? So is everybody's. Want to know a systematic way to clear that pesky plate off, bit by bit? Read this month's column on organizing your writing life, "Doing Things Different on 'Different Day.'"

* One of the most common mistakes beginning writers make is "head-hopping." But is that bad? If so, why do so many famous writers use it? Find out in this month's column on craft, "Head-hopping For Fun and Profit."

* I always enjoy reading a book that makes me think differently about something I already knew. I know a fair bit about internet marketing, but I recently read a book that gave me some new ideas. Want to know what's got me excited about this book? Read my book review on the book INBOUND MARKETING.

Are you reading my blog? Join the fun here:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/blog>

2) Organizing: Doing Things Different on "Different Day"

If you keep a To Do List, you've probably noticed something evil that happens over time: Certain hated tasks never get done.

Maybe you've put off changing the oil in your car for the past six years. Maybe you haven't ever balanced your checkbook. Maybe you've been meaning to get the cat fixed.

We all have things we hate to do. We put them on that pesky To Do List. We schedule them on the calendar. We promise ourselves we'll get them done "next week." Then we somehow find that other things are more important, and the hated tasks get shoved aside until they turn into problems. A blown engine. A bounced check. A basket of kittens.

I recently thought of a sneaky way to get those things done. Maybe not all of them, but some of them. And getting even a fraction of them done earns you partial credit. In life, partial credit is even more valuable than it was in high school algebra.

Here's the trick, and it's so simple you'll scream: Pick one day of the week (which we'll call "Different Day") and schedule a bunch of your hated stuff on that one day. Don't schedule anything fun. Just put the icky jobs on the list. When that day comes around, you'll find yourself with a whole day to deal with the oil change, or with the checkbook, or with Fluffy. "Different Day" is the day to do things differently.

This is new for me, but it's an extension of something I've been doing for a long time: I don't particularly like accounting, but it's something that has to get done, and I'm better at it than my wife is, so I'm the family accounting hack.

When bills come in, I write down the amount of the bill and the date it's due on the outside of the envelope. Then I stuff it in the Bills file folder. Every Saturday, I make it a routine to do the accounting. I have a list that I must do: Pay the bills. Update Quicken to include all the checks written during the week. If it's the first Saturday of the month, I also balance my personal checkbook and prepare for my monthly meeting with my corporate accountant.

The only exceptions are those few weekends in the year when I'm out of town on a Saturday. Then I have to do the accounting the first full day I'm back home.

It's not fun, but by making it a weekly routine, the accounting never piles up.

I've recently realized that accounting isn't the only thing I hate. I also hate anything to do with computer administration. Or telling people, "No." Or fixing glitches on my web site. Unfortunately, none of these have anything to do with accounting, so they don't get done on my weekly accounting day.

That needs to change. So from now on, I'll be making Friday my "Different Day." My plan is to work so hard on the icky stuff on "Different Day" that I'll knock down some of those line items on my To Do List that have festered there for months or even years.

What about you? What are the tasks you hate most to do? Make a list of all of them. Now look at the list and do a quick triage. Ask these three questions about each line item:

- * How important is this task? If it's really not important, then kick it off your list because you're never going to do it, so stop pretending you will.
- * If it's important, can you delegate it to somebody reliable who will actually do it? If you can, then do so. Now.
- * If it's important and you can't delegate it, then

stick it on a list of "Tasks I Hate More Than Anything." Then pick one day of the week when you'll work ONLY on tasks on that list.

Imagine what might happen if you did this every week. In a few months, you'd knock off all the icky tasks that have been clogging up your To Do List for years.

"Different Day" just might make a big difference in your life.

3) Creating: Head-hopping For Fun and Profit

When I was writing my book WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES a year ago, I identified six common viewpoints used in fiction. One of these, "head-hopping," is a point of view in which the author gets inside the heads of multiple characters within a single scene.

The technical editor on my book objected to the term "head-hopping" on the grounds that it's a pejorative term. He suggested I use a less objectionable word.

My response was simple: "Head-hopping" is a standard term. Everybody calls it head-hopping, and I can see no reason to call it something else merely because somebody might object to it. The reason it's a pejorative term is because head-hopping is almost always a bad idea. If I were to call it something else, pretty soon, the new term would also become pejorative because it would still be a bad idea.

Head-hopping is one of the most common choices of POV by beginning fiction writers, and it almost always screams, "I am an amateur."

Beginning writers often object, "But wait a second! What's wrong with head-hopping? Tom Clancy does it in all his books. Margaret Mitchell did it in GONE WITH THE WIND. Jane Austen hopped heads all the way from Netherfield to Pemberley. Any number of massively talented authors have hopped heads. If head-hopping is so bad, why are all these bigshot authors getting away with it?"

That does make things murky, doesn't it?

We'll start with the second question first. If the bigshots did it, why can't you?

Let's remember that many famous authors have been alcoholics over the years. Just because somebody with massive talent was able to produce books while crippling themselves with a destructive habit, it

doesn't mean that you can get away with it.

It's possible that you, too, have massive talent. (Do you? Think hard before you say yes.) If you don't, then hobbling your writing might prevent you from getting published at all. Even if you do have massive talent, why in the world would you want to put yourself at a competitive disadvantage with the hundreds of other massively talented writers in the world?

Now to the first question. What's so bad about head-hopping?

The answer to that question is complex. There are cases, in fact, where head-hopping makes sense, although usually in those cases, it's not actually head-hopping, it's an omniscient point of view. We'll get to that in a bit. But let's consider first where it DOESN'T make sense and why.

The purpose of fiction is to give your reader a Powerful Emotional Experience. (I coined this term several years ago, and it's rapidly becoming a standard term among writers, for the simple reason that it makes loads of good sense.)

The most common way to give your reader a Powerful Emotional Experience is to use your most devious arts of deception to persuade your reader that she is one of the characters. This is often called "reader identification." You want to make your reader experience the story from inside the skin of one character, (the point-of-view character).

As the story moves along, every emotion that your POV character feels, your reader feels too. If you're writing a thriller, your reader feels the terror of sneaking unarmed into the terrorists' safe house to rescue his five year old daughter. If you're writing a romance, your reader feels the thrill of her bodice ripping as she falls in love with the dashing hero. If you're writing a historical, your reader feels the despair of being a slave in ancient Athens.

To do that well, you must get all the way inside the skin of that POV character. You must see what she sees; hear what she hears; smell what she smells; touch what she touches; taste what she tastes; feel what she feels; and think what she thinks.

You can't do that if you're in two heads at once. This is a prime example of the old adage, which applies in so many ways in fiction, "One plus one equals a half."

If you want to create a Powerful Emotional Experience by getting inside the skin of a character, then stick to one POV character in each scene.

But there is more than one way to create a Powerful Emotional Experience. Tom Clancy is quite adept at

giving the reader the God-like feeling of knowing everything. In many scenes in Clancy's work, the reader sees all; hears all; smells all; feels all; knows all.

This can work on a big enough stage, where the stakes are high enough. On a battlefield this strategy works great. When there's any kind of sequence of events that is world-wide in scope, this strategy also works great. If something horrible is happening in an inanimate object, such as a submarine's nuclear reactor, then this strategy is the only game in town.

When the stage shrinks down to a few characters in one room, this strategy reeks like a rat. Why? Because the reader doesn't want to be some disembodied omniscient being when there's a convenient body to inhabit.

Your reader doesn't want to be two people at once. That's confusing and disorienting and just plain weird. Your reader wants to be one person in each scene. It's fine to be some other person in the next scene, but your reader wants continuity within each scene.

Not all readers can voice this. But they can feel it. If you're hopping heads, your reader's head gets a little pop with every hop. That forces you to work that much harder to make the emotional connection between the reader and the character of the moment.

Yes, massively talented authors today still get away with head-hopping. Some of them also get away with abusing alcohol or beating their wives or never changing their underwear. The smart writer doesn't copy bad ideas, not even from massively talented authors.

Your annoying mother really was on the right track when you were twelve years old and she asked, "If everyone else jumped off a cliff, would you?"

The notion of Point of View wasn't well understood in Jane Austen's day. Neither was the notion of germs. In Austen's time, if somebody had a fever, doctors bled them a bit. Today, doctors have a much better arsenal of tools, and a doctor who bleeds his patients is almost certainly a quack.

Authors also have many more tools now. Use them. Jane Austen would have been a better writer if she'd understood Point of View. So will you.

Even when you're massively talented.

The biggest mistake that I see authors making in marketing their book is based on the idea that "marketing is all about me."

It isn't, except in the very rare cases where the author is a celebrity, in which case the quality of the writing doesn't matter. If Bill Clinton or Mother Teresa or Albert Einstein wrote a novel, it would fly off the shelves, whether it was any good or not.

Most novelists aren't celebrities, and so we need to market our books, not ourselves. (If you do that well enough, you'll become a celebrity and THEN you can market yourself.)

The second biggest mistake I see authors making in marketing their book is based on the idea that "marketing is all about my book."

It is and it isn't.

It is, in the sense that the success of a book depends in some way on its perceived quality in the market.

It isn't, in the sense that you don't persuade people that you have a great book by telling people, "I have a great book." The problem is that "telling" doesn't work any better in marketing than it does in fiction. "Show, don't tell," is a good maxim in marketing, just as in fiction writing.

What works in marketing is to show people that you have a great book, instead of telling them.

How do you do that? That's what makes marketing hard. I recently read a book that gives you a strategy for doing exactly that.

The title of the book is INBOUND MARKETING. The subtitle is "Get Found Using Google, Social Media, and Blogs."

Be aware that INBOUND MARKETING is not about marketing fiction. It's a general-purpose book on marketing and it's all about using the internet to get found by customers who are interested in your product, rather than trying to go out and find customers and persuade them to be interested in your product.

Traditional advertising methods are "outbound marketing." You buy time on TV or radio or you buy space on a billboard or a newspaper or a magazine and you shotgun out a message about your widget and you just hope that people who want widgets happen to see or hear your message just at the time when their desire for a widget is causing them to pull out their wallets.

Outbound marketing is horribly inefficient, because the vast majority of people don't give a flip about widgets

and they get annoyed when somebody makes an unwanted sales pitch about their great widget.

If you don't want a widget, you don't want a widget. Outbound marketing can never change that.

"Inbound marketing" is all about making it easy for customers who already want a widget to find the best widget-makers. It's far, far easier to sell a widget to a customer who wants one than to a customer who doesn't.

The internet makes it fantastically easy for anybody to find a widget. Google will find you all the most popular pages about widgets. Blogs will give you a wide range of opinions on which widgets are good and which ones suck. Facebook and Twitter will give you comments by real-live widget users, happy or unhappy. LinkedIn will connect you to the leading experts in widget making. YouTube will show you videos of people using widgets, mocking them, or in some cases, blending them to bits. Amazon will show you all the current books on widgets. Wikipedia will tell you how to make your own widget.

The book *INBOUND MARKETING* explains all the strategic principles needed to help you get found by hungry customers who want the widget you happen to make.

The tools customers use to find widgets are constantly changing. What doesn't change is that you can't make people come to you by using the old outbound marketing methods with these new tools. Building a brochure web site is outbound marketing. Writing a blog in which you constantly pitch your book is outbound marketing. Flogging your book on Facebook or Twitter or LinkedIn or YouTube is outbound marketing.

Inbound marketing, by contrast, is all about creating what Seth Godin calls "REMARKable content" -- content that's worth remarking on. I have traditionally called this simply "great content". I like Seth's term because it gets to the core of the matter. If people are remarking about your product, then they are creating word of mouth.

And that's the key for novelists. Just about everybody in publishing agrees that the most powerful force in the marketing universe is word of mouth. If you can get people talking about your book, and if they like it, then your marketing job is done. (If they don't like it, your book is toast, but we're assuming here that your book really is a great piece of work.)

The book *INBOUND MARKETING* explains the strategic principles of creating REMARKable content and then making it findable. Understand that this is not a tactical book. If you want tactics, then look for one of the popular Dummies books on SEO, Facebook, Twitter, Podcasting, or whatever particular tool you want to use.

Tactics are great, because they teach you HOW, but I always believe in learning strategic thinking first, because it teaches you WHY. Once you know WHY, learning HOW is a cakewalk because you're motivated to work through all the details.

INBOUND MARKETING is, in my opinion, a REMARKable book. The authors have succeeded in getting me to remark on it here. The reason is simple. They've given me a number of good ideas that I'll be putting into practice on my own web site.

If you'd like to know more, here's an easy link to the Amazon page for INBOUND MARKETING:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/blinks/inbound.php>

Full disclosure: The above link contains my Amazon associates code, which will earn me a referral fee if you click on it and then buy the book. I only make referrals to books that I like, but if you prefer that I earn no referral fee, then feel free to go direct to Amazon and search for INBOUND MARKETING.

5) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

My new book, WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES, has been selling well since it began shipping last November and is one of the most popular fiction writing books on Amazon. You can find out all about WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES here:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/info/wffd>

If you've already bought the book and like it, I'd be delighted if you wrote an Amazon review. Thanks to those of you who already have! I appreciate you!

I've also been gratified at the response to my latest software product, "Snowflake Pro," which makes it fast, easy, and fun to work through the steps of my well-known Snowflake method for designing a novel. You can find out more about Snowflake Pro at:

<http://www.SnowflakeProSoftware.com>

I teach at roughly 4 to 6 writing conferences per year, depending on my schedule. My schedule for this year is now mostly filled in.

In early August, I'll be doing a small group mentoring workshop at the Oregon Christian Writers Conference. More details when they're available online.

Immediately after that, I'll be attending the Willamette Writers Conference. I won't be teaching; I'll just be hanging out and learning. Won't that be fun?

In October, I'll be teaching an all-day series of lectures for an RWA group (RWA = Romance Writers of America) in Houston. More details soon.

Also in October, I'll be teaching an all-day series of lectures for the Denver Romance Writers. I'm not sure why romance writers like me so much, but I'm pretty sure it has nothing to do with my grizzled hunky look.

If you'd like me to teach at your conference, email me to find out how outrageously expensive I am.

If you'd just like to hear me teach, I have a number of recordings and e-books that are outrageously cheap.

Details here:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/info>

6) Randy Recommends . . .

I don't take paid ads for this e-zine. I do, however, recommend people I like.

I'm a huge fan of Margie Lawson's courses, both the ones she teaches in person and the ones she sells on her web site at

<http://www.MargieLawson.com>

Margie is a psychologist who applies what she knows about human psychology to writing fiction. I believe her material is brilliant. Check her out on her web site!

I've also become a fan of Thomas Umstatted's terrific uncommon-sense thoughts on internet marketing. You can read Thomas's blog at:

<http://www.AuthorTechTips.com>

Thomas is especially skilled at helping authors create an inexpensive but powerful web site using WordPress blogs. I am a huge fan of this approach, since it gives the most bang for the buck in an author site. Find out more about this at:

<http://www.UmstattedMedia.com>

7) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth at least 40689 times the price. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2010.

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. Otherwise, you'll be getting desperate calls at midnight from your friends asking where they can get their own free subscription.

At the moment, there is one place to subscribe:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

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<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>.

Download your free Special Report on Tiger Marketing and get a free 5-Day Course in How To Publish a Novel.

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