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**How to Sign With a Literary Agent**

**By Suzanne Falter-Barns**

**How to Sign With a Literary Agent by Suzanne Falter-Barns**

If you're interested in publishing a book and gaining a market presence and income from it, you'll need a literary agent. They are the grease that keeps the oft-rusty wheels of publishing moving. Every day, they eat lunch or talk to editors and acquisition people in publishing houses all over the world, all the while pitching them on the new hot 'properties', as your manuscript will be called.

Generally speaking, you need an agent (though there are literary lawyers and others out there who would disagree with me.) I've had four agents, some fine, one useless, and one downright criminal (though eminently likeable.)

Here are some tips I can pass along that will help your search for this important part of your team.

\*Make sure you're selling something marketable. It could be you're the only person out there who wants to read about your Aunt Tillie's days as a pickle packer. Before you approach an agent, find out what problem your book solves and who it will appeal to. Research similar titles on Amazon.com and look for gaps in the marketplace. Go to bookstores and see what's hot (and what's not.) What's not is on the remainder shelf; what's hot is placed up front and center, with massive piles of the book in sight. Give an agent a good reason UP FRONT to get excited (before they even read your mss)

\*Make sure your book idea or manuscript is in top shape. There is no substitute for excellence... it helps! You've got to have an awesome concept, and an even better title.

\*Make your book proposal as professional possible. (Book proposals are only for non-fiction books, those other than novels.) You'll want to include a lot more than just what the book's about. You'll need to include any market research you've done on who'd buy the book, ideas for unusual places the books could be sold, or ways to tie it in with 'special sales' (that's pub-speak for big wholesale orders) to certain industries, or connections with your workshops, speaking gigs, web site, etc.. You'll also want to include an impressive bio, merchandising ideas, a sketch of the competitive marketplace and publicity ideas. (If this sounds daunting, worry not. See my blurb at the bottom.)

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\*Establish your credibility. If you're writing fiction, let them know you've either had unique life experiences that will make your book especially interesting to the media. (If you're writing about your white water rafting exploits, did you have a great experience related to this you could spin on air?) If you're writing non-fiction, are you a PhD or do you have a masters, or lots of great professional experience? It's tougher to sell a great book written by someone who's got no credentials in the field to back them up ... but it can be done.

\*Hook up with a star. Can you get a celebrity endorsement, or a testimonial or foreword from a highly placed industry star? This will help an agent feel they can sell your work.

\*Find the niche no one has explored. They're out there, even in your chosen field. This is especially true for non-fiction, though niches apply to both genres. The best niche comes from your own passions

and interests... what's really You?

\*Do not send your manuscript! Send a one page letter describing your project and why you are the person to write it, plus your proposal (non-fiction only) or a few sample chapters of your manuscript (fiction.) Offer to send the rest right away if they are interested. Make sure everything is spell-checked, double spaced, with correct margins, etc..

\*Hand pick the agents you submit to. **DO NOT SEND MASS MAILINGS TO AGENTS.** It won't work, and is a waste of time and money. Instead, research who to approach and pick the 5, 10, 20 or so who actually sell your type of work. Agents stick to niches themselves, and one way to find that niche is in various resource guides like Writer's Market, the LMP (Literary Market Place ... in all big libraries), or the Writer's Digest 2002 Guide to Literary Agents. (I have several other techniques I share in my Self Help Author's Crash Course, which is on sale at the moment. See below.)

\*Make your letter great. Your pitch will be placed in a pile with the other cold submissions that arrived that day (maybe 25 -50) and an assistant will thumb through them, spending about 10 seconds on each one. This means if you have a personal contact, you mention it in the first sentence. Trim your description of your book into a meaty, mouth-watering paragraph. Add a bit on why you are the person to write it. And **BE SURE** to let them know you hand picked them, out of all the agents out there, because of the great work they've done for authors X, Y and Z. In fact, you predict they will have similar success with your property, as they did with Book X they just sold to Q Publisher, etc. In other words, make it personal, a little witty, and smart

\*Don't use old contact info ... and call to see that the agent you're contacting is still at the address you have before you send anything

\*Don't ever pay an agent to evaluate your book. This is not how standard agents work, and is illegal.

\*Give the agent one month to evaluate your work. Then follow up by phone or email. Many will tell you how they like to be contacted in guides such as The Writer's Market and those listed above. Continue to follow up, until such actions are ridiculous. You'll probably get some kind of response, especially if you're letter is great

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\*Follow up and ask for referrals. If you're lucky, you'll get the intended agent on the phone. They may seem interested, but just won't commit. (A standard line is "I'm not taking on any new clients right now.") So ask if they know any agents they might recommend, or someone who is expanding their operation. Then send a thank you note if their info has been helpful. Agenting is a small world, and many people stay in it for life. They'll remember when you reappear at their door years later. And this time it may open

\*Be persistent. You may have to go through several lists of hand-picked agents, before you get the bite you need.

\*Work your personal connections. Be exhaustive, thinking of anyone you know who might connect you with other agents, or even authors. Most authors will want to see the project you're pitching, and may not feel comfortable sharing their contact with you... but many may.

For information on how to create your own publisher-ready book proposal that agents will sit up and

pay attention to, drop by Suzanne's site, <http://www.getknownnow> and get her free listing of 25 Top Self Help Literary Agents. To reprint this article, please use with this bio box in tact. Thanks! ©2005 Suzanne Falter-Barns LLC.

### **Hiring a Letting Agent**

**By dan the roommate man**

#### **Hiring a Letting Agent by dan the roommate man**

You may be interested in finding tenants to occupy your property while you're temporarily away from your home. Many people feel more comfortable hiring letting agents to manage their property for them. By hiring a professional to take care of their home, the homeowners don't have to handle typical tenant dilemmas.

#### Choosing a Letting Agent

A personal recommendation is always the easiest way to find a good letting agent, but if you don't know anyone who has used one, you'll have to look for one on your own. While you can go any "Joe, Letting Agent", it's advisable to find an agent who is a member of a professional body or association. For example, members of the Association of Residential Letting agents (ARLA) have been operating for two or more years, have Professional Indemnity Insurance, hold separate accounts for their clients, and only take commissions from landlords (not from tenants). The extra experience and support of a large organization can't hurt!

#### Once You've Found One

Once you've established a relationship with the chosen letting agent, they will typically ask you to sign

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an agency agreement. This agreement generally covers the agent's right to let the property on your behalf and manage it during the tenancy. Make sure you read through and understand the agreement. Do not sign anything you aren't sure about. If you don't agree with a clause in the lease, let the agent know. You may be able to delete that clause before you sign. If the agent refuses to compromise with you, find another agent. You want a good, agreeable relationship with your letting agent. After all, he or she will be looking after your home while you're gone!

It is a good idea to compile a list of things you feel should be looked after during your leave. For example, if you do not want the tenants to use the wood burning stove during their stay, make sure you put that in writing, get the agent to sign and date it, and keep a copy for yourself.

### Let The Agent Handle It

Once you have signed the agreement, and the letting agent knows what you want out of him or her, leave all matters to him or her. The agent doesn't want you continually involved with the new tenants or interfering with their role as property manager. You have hired this agent to handle these things for you... so by all means, let them do their job!

However, if you are incredibly unhappy with the way your agent is managing the property, then you may interfere. This is best done by writing a dated letter and sending it to your agent explaining the problem. Keep a copy of this letter for yourself in case it's needed for future reference.

It is a good idea to keep all documents and correspondence with your agents in a folder clearly marked

"Letting Agents re (address of property)" or something similar. All letters sent to the agents should be dated and signed and you should keep a copy.

Since 1989 dan the roommate man has helped 1000's of people find roommates. Need help? Contact him at 800-487-8050 or [www.roommateexpress.com](http://www.roommateexpress.com)



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