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Mission Possible: Get Published with Goals, Guidance and Persistence

By Stephen Earley Jordan, II

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You send me an e-mail. You tell me you've written over three hundred poems since you were 16 (in your teenage angst stage). You mention the novel you've completed and it's really good (it really is!!!), and the novel-in-progress. You mention how the International Library of Poetry has published one of your poems. (But, whom haven't they published?)

However, all your work is stored away, hidden from the public eye on a black little disk.

You have one mission: Getting published.

"How do I get published?" you finally question at the end of the e-mail.

At times, I ask myself the same question.

Is this mission impossible? To many, it seems that way. If you stick with me, I'll make the publishing process slightly simpler.

On this mission, you'll need three things: Goals, Guidance, and Persistence.

An unmentioned New York City college (as well as other schools, I'm sure) offered a course on "How to Get Published". Various bigwigs from major publishing houses in New York City were guest speakers on many occasions.

A writer-friend of mine felt it would be a great opportunity to network and finally understand how to get her works published in magazines, and various books. I was hesitant, and suspicious of the course's objectives, so I didn't follow the friend's lead. I was far from disappointed about my decision. You'll soon discover why.

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Getting published isn't as hard as you think. But, when you're a beginning writer getting published seems as difficult as James Bond jet-skiing along the River Thames with five barges heading his way.

As a beginning writer, I feel, the main priority should be getting your name out there in the public's eye. Understand that, at times, you'll have to accept the free issues instead of cash payment. Before you consider publishing though, you should reassure yourself a rejection slip won't lower your self-esteem and cause you to never pick up a pen, or stroke another key at your keyboard. Hey, trust me, rejections happen to everyone! Here are a few suggestions to better your chances of getting published:

Write, Write, Write. This is the obvious one. You need to write all the time. Too many writers say, "I have a novel about . . ." And the novel sounds spectacular. But, when I ask if I can read it, offer suggestions, the writers finally admit, "Oh . . . I haven't started on it . . . But the title of it is . . ." I despise working with an enthusiastic, talented writer who simply won't write. Don't waste your breath!

Whatever you do—write your work first, and then speak about it so you won't look/feel like a fool.

Edit, Edit, Edit. If you feel your work is perfect (or as good as you can make it), keep in mind—nothing is perfect! That's what editors are for! If you are a college student, ask a professor to read it at his/her leisure. If you're already in the workforce, ask a well-read co-worker to edit it. Or, since you've some extra cash to spare, hire an editor. Many places, like OutStretch Publications, for instance, offer extremely reasonable prices for editing/proofing services.

Share Works with Others. This is when a workshop comes in handy. Students—take a creative writing course. Or, if you're not in school, give copies to about 5 or 6 acquaintances in advance. Then, schedule a "reading" at your place. Allow the guests to give suggestions and talk about your work as if you're not there. Remember, all criticism is helpful criticism. Remember to ask questions about the shaky portions of your work.

Websites: Build a website and add your writing to it. Or, even easier, find some of the online places like poetryboard.com, or some of the AOL bulletin boards where writers you don't know can critique your work, and people like me (who have a publication) may find your work and ask for your approval for publication. (This is a very rare occasion, but it does happen.)

Here's the TRICK: Mass Mailings! If you happen to see 2, 3, 4, or even 5 publications that don't mind simultaneous submissions and accepts work similar to what you've written, send your work to all of them. Sure, sending out a mass mailing of submissions will guarantee more rejections, but you also better your chances of getting published. Remember, include SASE with each submission or 9 times out of 10 you'll never hear from the publisher/editor. (Some publishers like you to include your e-mail address nowadays for quicker responses.)

Keeping Track. Keep track of all of your submissions. Be organized. A simple database program is perfect. In the database, list 1) the date you submitted work, 2) the publication and its address, 3) the works you submitted, and 4) the date you receive an acceptance/rejection slip.

If, for some reason you DO get a rejection slip. So what? Just think of it like this: Perhaps the

publication wasn't right for your writing. Better still, everyone has his or her own opinion, so the editor simply didn't favor your particular style. Someone else out there probably appreciates your style of writing. Perhaps your submission was received past their deadline. Big deal. Send it somewhere else! Remember, though, writing can always be improved.

Now that you've read this, let me tell you something. This is everything my writer–friend learned from the writing course. Seems simple, eh? And, what's even better, unlike my friend, you didn't have to pay a course fee!

This mission doesn't seem so impossible now, does it?

Grab the goals of getting published, the guidance I just gave, the persistence with mass mailings and get yourself published.

Good luck with your publishing endeavors!

Stephen Jordan, a medical editor, has five years experience within the educational publishing industry. Stephen was a freelance editor with such educational foundations as Princeton Review, The College Board, New York University, and Columbia University. Away from the office, Stephen promotes his creative writing with his home–freelance business OutStretch Publications and his artwork. Stephen holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees in writing and literature from Alderson–Broaddus College of Philippi, West Virginia.

Focus On Your Mission!

By Jonathan R Taylor

Focus On Your Mission! by Jonathan R Taylor

...not just your goals. One of the tough challenges I see with many people is staying focused on goals. It's very easy to get sidetracked in our day and age. Concentrating on priorities becomes more difficult as we are deluged with all sorts of distractions. Today, we have more cable channels, talk shows, books, magazines, and newspapers than ever before – and this doesn't include the internet. We have more leisure time and expendable income than any other time in history and we have more activities to choose from.

All these things can be a benefit in their own time but they can also sway us from our true priorities in life. People who change direction with every new opportunity or idea that comes their way must ask themselves how committed they were to those original long term goals. Accomplishing goals in life requires focused commitment. A person will never succeed at anything if they continually move from one thing to another. The key to staying on track is first making sure you have a mission statement before you begin setting goals for yourself. If your foundation is unstable, it will be hard to finish the project. Dr. Stephen Covey says, "In order to deal with change in this day and age, we must first know what is changeless about ourselves." Once we discover our true calling and write a mission statement

that supports it, then it becomes harder for us to be shaken off course, despite distractions that surround us.

Once our mission statement is in place, we can then focus like a laser beam on the task ahead. If we go out on a bright, sunny day and hold a magnifying glass over a stack of newspapers, it will never start a fire – if we're moving the glass around. But what happens when we hold the glass in one place? The beam is concentrated on that one spot and eventually – voila!

Jonathan R. Taylor, specializes in helping people in every stage of their lives to find more meaning and purpose in their work. He believes that to find that purpose and meaning, a person's interests, skills, passions, and goals must integrate seamlessly with their work. To get more great advice, subscribe to Jonathan's newsletter at www.careercalling.com!

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