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Strategies for Getting Published

By Brenda Townsend Hall

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Aspiring writers can't be blamed for balking at the apparently insuperable hurdles to becoming a published author. Modern technology has made the actual process of writing much easier than ever before. Perhaps this is why so many believe they can use their word processors to achieve fame and fortune. Unfortunately, the number of traditional publishers is shrinking rapidly as small houses are swallowed up by the big boys. Herein lies a mathematical problem of course: more writers chasing fewer outlets. It's enough to make you want to change your mouse for, well, anything that has fewer odds against success.

But before you throw in the towel take a look at your strategy. Yes, strategy. If you don't believe you need one, then stop reading this now but at the same time forget about becoming a published writer. The truth is that serendipity has very little to do with writing success. You need to plan your path. And if you're saying right now, so, okay what success have you had? Well, I can say with all honesty that my strategy is working very nicely. As I'll explain in the course of this article.

So what's the first step? Simply learn your craft. No matter how much talent you may have, you still need to learn a lot – about writing techniques and about outlets and markets for your work. Nobody need lack access to a creative writing class nowadays. If you can't attend one physically, then sign up for a correspondence course or access one on the Internet. You also need regular feedback on your work from other writers and you can do this by joining a local writers' group or by finding an Internet critique board. Believe me, you will see your style develop and your professionalism grow.

When you have knocked a few pieces into shape enter some competitions. Study them carefully. Local events are a good start. I won my first competition by entering an article in the local evening newspaper's competition. I was then able to point to this success when I started sending out my initial pieces for publication. You don't even have to win first prize to claim success. Being a runner-up still puts you ahead of the game.

Now start finding markets. Start small and look for magazines that specialize in what you do. I wrote a story I really wanted to publish but, not having a track record, I didn't expect it to get into a high-profile

Strategies for Getting Published

publication. I did, however, succeed with a well regarded magazine publishing only women's fiction. Okay they paid peanuts, but I had another success for my portfolio.

Next you need to look at ways of proliferating your published material. Don't go for any kind of vanity publishing: remember you want to be paid for your work, not pay somebody to publish it, and if it's good enough, you will eventually sell it. But do look at the new opportunities that modern technology affords. Electronic publishing is in its infancy and, although you may not feel the same about seeing your work on screen as you would about holding it in print form, e-publishing can at least raise your profile and that's what you need now as your next step. Having had a couple of print publishers expressing an interest in my first novel, I realized it had something going for it. Ultimately, when it came to the crunch, they turned it down, but I then had it accepted by an electronic publisher and then I won

an EPPIE award for it. As I had sold only electronic rights I didn't lose sight of finding a print publisher, as I explain later.

Use your strategic skills in placing articles on the Internet too. Even if you don't receive payment, you can use your work to your advantage. I placed a few articles on a high-profile site that allowed its contributors to post book proposals. The result is that a publisher has expressed interest in my writing a reference book.

I also run a website that is not only a means of publicising my work but offers various kinds of support for writers too. This is an effective way of putting yourself in the public domain.

Do I hear some groans of despair out there? I know not everyone feels at ease with web page design and domain names and the rest of it. It's okay. You can join a writers' online community and set up your web pages without needing any technical knowledge. And the cost is minimal. It's all part of the strategy because you can start to network. Networking is important. You need to build up a circle of people who can advise you, inform you, read your work and, eventually, commission you.

But, I hear you say, you're hardly a household name, so why do you claim this strategy has worked. No, I'm no J.K. Rowling and probably never will be. But this November I'll be holding my first novel in my hands, in print. Like a number of other British writers I stumbled across a publisher called Publish America. Now this is something of a ground breaker in publishing. It welcomes new authors. It's not the Rolls Royce of publishers, more the bottom-of-the-range, daily runabout model. It won't pay you an advance on royalties, it won't do any developmental editing (but then few traditional publishers do that now) and it will expect you to be active in marketing. But it is not vanity publishing and it will place your books in all the big online bookstores. As far as I'm concerned, this has taken me another step along my chosen route.

Of course I hope my next novel will be taken up by a mainstream publisher so I'm still following my strategy. And it's going to plan. I have just been 'highly commended' in a competition in which I entered an extract from my novel in progress. The next stage is to complete that (no small task), then to query agents and publishers. When I do so, I will have a lot more to tell them about my publishing history than if I hadn't worked out a strategy.

Brenda is a freelance writer specialising in the environment, sustainable development and EU issues.

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The Advantages Of Learning Blackjack Strategies

By Joe Goertz

Many people play blackjack, but they don't really call it that way, and they only play it for fun, without worrying about winning, losing or putting any thought into the skills involved in the game, since it is "only" a game.

However, there are some people who play blackjack in casinos, and they do worry about winning, since their money is on the line. So they can learn the lesson the easy way or the hard way: losing all their money or realizing they need some techniques before they go to a casino. Then they know that they have to learn more, instead of relying only on their luck.

If you're new to gambling, you might question why blackjack strategies are so important. The concept of the game is straightforward: beat the dealer's point total without going over 21. Sounds simple, but if it was that easy you can guarantee that it wouldn't be a casino game. There are some things that you can do though to improve your chances of coming out with a positive result.

Of course it's a game played with cards, but take a deeper look into the mechanics of the game and you'll find it's fundamentally a mathematical challenge. There is an element of chance to the fall of the cards but at the same time there is a limited number of cards that can be dealt. If you play your cards right you can gain an advantage over the house.

When I first started researching these strategies there was little published information available. Like any other topic now, there are numerous websites outlining blackjack strategies so I am able to keep abreast of the very latest trends in the game. The internet has not only changed the amount of information available on the game, it has also transformed how the game is played. Today you don't even need to leave home to indulge in the blackjack experience. This game along with many others is playable online.

Just as playing the game differs from home to being in a casino, the strategies that you would employ when playing these games will be different. It may seem like the same game but you'll need to make slightly different decision on certain card combinations. If you intend on playing online ensure that the strategies you research and use relate to that mode of play.

As with any form of gambling, there can be no guarantee that you will be a winner. There is a very real chance you could lose. The aim of understanding the strategy behind the game is to allow you to make informed decisions that will increase you odds of success. Proven strategies can make a difference.

More from this author at:



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