

Steve Harrison's
Million Dollar Author Club

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month's audio interview

**Top Literary
Agents Reveal How
To Get a Deal With
a Major Publisher**

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STEVE: Hi, this is Steve Harrison with *The Million Dollar Author Club*. We're all about helping you get published, whether you want to self-publish, whether you want to get a major publisher, helping you on the path to becoming a million dollar author.

I am here in Philadelphia at my *Million Dollar Author Crash Course*, and behind me I have five esteemed panelists, four literary agents and one book distributor.

In these next 30 minutes, we are going to try to give you a lot of action-packed content that you can use to get a book deal and land a major publishing deal, or perhaps get your book in the bookstore.

I have over here on the left-most side Marilyn Allen from Allen O'Shea Literary Agency, Jeff Herman from the Jeff Herman Agency, John Willig from Literary Services Inc., and Kelly Skillen from PMA Literary and Film. And those four that I just mentioned are literary agents, and Justin Branch from Greenleaf Book Group, a book distributor.

First, I want to talk to the agents and I want to ask you. Just raise your finger. We will start with you, Marilyn, but if you want to chime in rapid fire, raise your finger and I will call on you.

People that are listening to this audio, people that are here listening live; they want to get a book deal. They want to get a major publisher, and they know they've got to have an agent. Let's talk real quick about what are the steps. Real quick, what are the steps, typically, that people need to take?

Marilyn, what is the first step?

MARILYN: Well, I think the first step is to get your thinking together and figure out what is your message, what are you going to tell the world that hasn't been said? What area are you an expert in? And then, I think you have to begin to look at the competition. How can you be different? And then, you need to build a platform. There are a lot of steps, but those are sort of the key ones to begin with.

STEVE: Okay. So, you've got to figure out what your expertise is. Assuming someone's done that, they know they're an expert on organizing, what else then would they need to kind of put into place? Go ahead, Marilyn. Go ahead, Marilyn. Jeff.

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JEFF: Well, it's been said that there's nothing new under the sun. And in some ways that's true, and in some ways it isn't, because the same as we all have different fingerprints, or so they say we do, we all have a different voice. And we all have a different perspective on what it is we know and the way we would express it.

So, the example was given a moment ago about books on organizing. There are many books on how to be organized, and there's been a lot that's said and a lot that's going to be said about how to be organized.

But if you, as someone who has expertise as an organizer, if you discover your own voice and your own way of conveying that information, then you will discover your own market, because people who want to be organized are not going to just spend one day of their life trying to figure out how to be organized or just buy one book.

My wife is always trying to be organized, and we have a very disorganized bookshelf filled with all kinds of books on how to be organized.

STEVE: Watch it, we're on video now.

JEFF: So, what you need to do is find your voice. Yeah. This, she'll never see. You promise...

STEVE: So, developing a niche. Let's say someone's done that. What's the next step? John?

JOHN: I think overall I'd try to encourage people to really think like a marketer, that being going into the bookstore, really looking at your competition, taking that passion that you have for your topic, but really kind of channeling that into what's going to be between the covers of your book. And that really goes beyond the writing.

It's also acknowledging about the writing if you need help with the writing, but especially as far as the features and benefits of your book. And we're finding, at least I find, that a lot of folks will send in their overviews or synopsis of their books to me, and I am fishing around for what are the unique handles on this book.

And I try to get people to think about when you see your book out there, visualize what are going to be those features that a publisher is going to be listing on the back cover of the book, and increasingly in some markets,

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what the publisher is even going to be talking about on the front cover of the book.

Now, even if you're self-publishing, you have to really be thinking along those lines. And again, we try to do that, focus people on those specific features and benefits to the point that in our proposals we encourage having a page that says Special Features and Benefits and a bulleted list of those, pulling them out, making it easy for everyone, myself, the editor, their marketing people, to see what are going to be those unique features about your book.

STEVE: If you can somehow get a quote from a major celebrity, whether it's Deepak Chopra or a major author, a Dr. Phil or..., is that something in and of itself that could actually make or break someone's chances of landing a publisher? Comments, anybody?

Go ahead, John.

JOHN: Well, it certainly gets their attention.

STEVE: Gets your attention, right?

KELLY: I don't think it's going to make or break anything. But it definitely gets people's attention. And it's something that, it trickles down. It gets the agent's attention, it gets the editor's attention, and it gets the attention of the book buying public.

People tend to buy books by the same authors over and over again. So, if there's an author that they love and admire and that author is recommending you, they're going to take that seriously. So, I think it's something we all pay attention to.

If the content's not there, of course, it's not going to get you very far.

JOHN: Kelly just made a great point. And that is, is that we all have a laundry list of bestselling authors, and you probably know them too. You love their bestselling book, and then you were very disappointed with the follow-up book or the third book that they're doing.

Ultimately, it's what's between the covers even for those bestselling authors that are going to drive that word-of-mouth enthusiasm that you have for an author, for people to buy that next book.

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STEVE: Now, Jeff, real quick, let me put you on the spot. If you can just real quickly, just in a few words, what are the steps for people just wondering, "Well, what are the steps I have to go through, if I am maybe watching this on video and I want to get an agent."

You've talked about having expertise. Okay, they've got that. They've got their niche. They have a pretty idea of what they want to do. Would the next step, I assume, be using a book like yours and actually finding an agent that seems to handle those types of projects?

JEFF: Before you even begin to pitch yourself to the agent, I think it's a really good idea to have your package and your pitch all put together and organized. And when we say that with non-fiction, you don't actually need the manuscript, you need the book proposal. And there are good books, including mine, on how to generate the proposal.

STEVE: Give a shameless plug, because you actually do have a phenomenal book on how to write a book proposal.

JEFF: Oh, you mean that book called *Write the Perfect Book Proposal* by Jeff and Deborah Herman.

STEVE: *Write the Perfect Book Proposal*. Actually, don't you have ten different book proposals in there?

JEFF: Yes, ten actual book proposals that have succeeded. And we walk you through each of those proposals with sidebars showing you what was strong, if we had to do over again what we would have made stronger.

STEVE: Okay, now let me ask you real quick, where is the query letter? People talk about book proposals and they talk about query letters, is that one and the same?

JEFF: Yeah, good question. Book agents and probably editors too, actually a lot of the time, would prefer to first hear from you, unless we're meeting you in a place like this, a venue like this, would like to hear about your project through what in the industry is known as a query letter.

But what it really is, is a pitch letter, in which you in a very dynamic way are introducing your project, which is your product, and yourself, which is certainly part of that product, to the agent with the intention of getting your foot in the door, so that the agent will then affirmatively respond to

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this pitch letter by saying, "Please, send me your book proposal or send me your manuscript."

Now, this begs the question, why not just automatically send the proposal? Why go through the query stage? And the reason is that the typical agency, once they're established and they're known in the community, is receiving anywhere from 100-200 unsolicited submissions a week. So, if everyone took the liberty of sending a proposal or a manuscript, that person's office would become very unmanageable, whereas, the pitch letter is a way for the agent to make a sort of due diligence, in effect, as to what he or she actually wants to review.

STEVE: Okay.

JEFF: As far as the proposal or the manuscript.

STEVE: Real quick, let me ask for a show hands. We're talking about a query letter. How many of you, is it acceptable to query you by email, if it's an email query? Okay, fine.

Do you have a preference, either way, is it email versus mail? Do you not care?

JEFF: On my website on our submission section, I ask people to just pretty much respond to two questions. The first one is, "Why, given all the choices that everyone has for their information, entertainment today, is somebody going to spend \$25 on your book?"

STEVE: Great question.

JEFF: Crystallize it, be concise.

STEVE: Yep.

JEFF: And then after that, "What about you and what you're doing, as far as your activities, that's really going to help support that book in the marketplace?" Once you're able to get that down, then I think we can move forward to the full proposal.

STEVE: Okay, real quick, just like one-word phrases. What needs to be in the query letter? Marilyn?

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MARILYN: I teach this at Gotham. It's an industry folklore, but in the query letter, the hook, the book, and the cook. So, the hook is, "I have the organizing system that Oprah uses." The cook is, "I am L.A.'s number one professional organizer." And my book, "I'll be the first person to tell you how to get your home completely organized in a year."

So, you're giving like the three key features.

STEVE: The hook, the cook, and the book. I like that.

MARILYN: Yeah, fast, fast, fast.

STEVE: Great.

MARILYN: So, we can get that, I think.

STEVE: Okay, other thoughts?

JOHN: We were talking about it at dinner. One way to differentiate yourself, because you have to understand that we're getting dozens of these a week is to open up the first paragraph in a very personal way, saying something that is very distinctive about that agent.

It could be that through using my book or other resources, or going to the bookstore and looking at books in which that agent was acknowledged by his clients, opening the first paragraph complimenting the agent about something that they've accomplished or something, because even though agents don't have egos, we all know that, they are very vain.

And I think that's just a good marketing tool, is to maybe open that first paragraph in a way that's really going to grab that person's attention, and the way to grab a person's attention is to start talking about them, as opposed to you.

STEVE: It's a great point. We were talking over dinner about how people just don't do that. They send letters and they don't have your name on it, or they haven't personalized the letter, saying, "I saw this book that you did and this other book and I really enjoyed them, and here is why I'm contacting you."

Great point.

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But now I'll start with you and give you a chance. Let's talk about the proposal. Just real quick, some elements, things that need to be in that book proposal. Kelly?

KELLY: Once you get to the proposal stage, you need to be able to distill your idea in a very short summary. Then, you need to give a greater overview of your project, kind of stepping the reader, who, at this point, is me, through the project. You need to do a chapter breakdown. You need to do an outline so we can actually see the book.

Now, this is hard stuff because it's hard to make a synopsis, an outline, and chapter breakdowns interesting and fresh. But you have to try because, basically, especially with a non-fiction project, you're going to be selling this on the basis of a proposal, not on a full manuscript. So, you have to make that manuscript, which may or may not even exist yet fully, come alive in the mind of the reader.

You will have to include sample material, one to three chapters at the very least. And in addition to that, you need your market research.

STEVE: Your market research, what type of information does that include?

KELLY: This has fallen on the shoulders of the authors more and more. Once you have an idea and you've distilled that idea and you think it's the greatest idea, you've got to go out and do some market research. You have to find out everybody who's written a book even remotely close to your topic and how those books have performed.

This is sort of a double-edged sword because, if you've written something that no one else has done anything like, that may be an advantage. Then again, maybe no one else has done anything like it because there's no market for it. Maybe there's a good reason that there's nothing else like that. So, that's something you have to think about.

STEVE: Quick question. How does somebody that's watching a video or in this room, how do they research how a certain a book has done? Clearly, they could see if maybe it was a *New York Times* bestseller. But are there any other tips you'd give about how they could do that, or what's expected in this aspect of it?

Anyone want to weigh in? Any agents at all here? Tips, ideas? Go ahead, Marilyn.

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MARILYN: It's hard to do, but there are recaps on the Internet of bestselling books every year, that kind of thing. You can often tell on Amazon rankings. Sometimes they're misleading, but it's the number one book in a category. You can read some of those rankings at www.barnesandnoble.com

You can talk to store clerks. They'll often know. You can usually get a good indication if it's piled in the front of the store that it's selling. You can judge the category. You can see the Pets section is huge and growing. Those are the kinds of things that are going to get you started on knowing the genres that are moving.

STEVE: Great. Jeff?

JEFF: I'll just add to that, that if a book is successful or not, especially over time, it would be self evident just by the fact that if you are in that community, you will be hearing about it again and again, and if you Google that book, you'll see that it comes up many times in recurring ways.

STEVE: Great.

KELLY: Authors' websites and also publishers' websites may have that kind of information too, talking about awards the book has won, the way the book has performed, so you can always check out that. The Internet is a great resource.

JUSTIN: Another way you can do it, too, is you can go to a bookstore and go to the copyright page and just open it up and see when the book was published.

Bookstores have a very low tolerance for books that don't sell. They come back very, very quickly, so look and see what's still out there and see what's resonated with people.

STEVE: Good deal and we're going to get to you in one minute on book distribution. I appreciate your waiting patiently. I just want to close in on book proposal.

Is there anything else that needs to be in the book proposal that would really help folks?

JEFF: Well, certainly publishers are looking for marketing departments outside of themselves. The marketing is outsourced in an unusual way, and very often you, the author, are expected to be also the marketing department.

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For instance, if I get a proposal or in the cover letter and I see that the individual has attended a program like this, that says a lot to me and I'm sure it says a lot to my colleagues, because it means that you've invested a lot of intellectual and financial resources into learning what you need to do to be your own marketing department.

JOHN: We typically break that out from the author bio section, so we'll have all about you, and then the author's promotion and publicity plan and what you're planning to do after that. And then, you get to the competition section. I typically try not to get too overwhelmed with the competition, three, four, five titles. My goal is to render the competition moot by doing everything as well as we can on the front end of the proposal.

STEVE: In terms of platform, that's a word that people hear a lot. Agents want an author with a platform. Publishers want an author with a platform. Can you take a stab at defining what platform is? John?

JOHN: It's just another way of really talking about five or ten years with the amount of volume that's in this marketplace. So, we're looking for authors that are going to help generate that kind of enthusiasm and word-of-mouth in the crowded marketplace.

STEVE: Okay, so keywords that would be really helpful, and let's start low. Let's just say like the minimum, little phrases that would be darn important to put in your proposal that would show platform. Marilyn?

MARILYN: One of the key things I think is audience. If you're writing a book about celiac you demonstrate that you have 25,000 people on a mailing list, you gave a seminar, whatever. But you have the ability to reach celiac people around the country. Obviously, anything, any speaking that you're doing, your website, Internet is huge, radio show obviously, connections in the media. I find sometimes even local home town newspaper relationships and morning show relationships, all of that is really key to helping you start the grassroots effort for your book.

STEVE: So, we're talking about ongoing, like do you have a regular column in some publications? Do you have your own show? We're also talking about do you have a list of like 20,000 email addresses?

Now, if you don't, you can still put a platform together because to use your example, you can say, "I've already negotiated with this celiac foundation that they have agreed to send out an email to 100,000 of their members all over the country to promote the book, and they've given me a forward."

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And then this other person that you've put together, or maybe a certain company that sells some type of product, they have agreed to let people know about the book. So, you're using, then, other people's platform, so you can see the push.

MARILYN: Exactly, and I've gone to the University of Maryland and I've established a relationship with the country's leading celiac professor. A lot of this can be built. I think the keyword here is community, kind of figuring out the world you're talking about.

STEVE: Perfect point, okay. All right, let's talk now about book distribution. A lot of people, they've got a book. Let's assume, Justin that they've published it and it looks really sharp.

It's got a market. It's edited well. It's got a great cover. It really looks super. But they want to get in the bookstore.

JUSTIN: Right. The big thing, it gives the platform, is a big piece of it. But when we evaluate a submission, when it comes into our doors, we're looking at the content. It's going to be, obviously key to it. The packaging, despite what all of our mothers taught us, everyone judges a book by its cover.

Price point is going to be really, really important to buyers. They're very, very sensitive to that. And platform is a big piece of it, too.

And certainly, in making sure that this book, like I said, is focused. It fits into a specific genre where there is not a shelf for business/self-help/health. That is not a category that we can pitch to.

So, if these things are in line, then we want to find an author that that's not the end of the road for them, this is the beginning. They want to be a part of it. All of our authors are very collaborative and they want to be involved in it. They're bringing new ideas, and it inspires us to bring new ideas. And we're always looking for new ways to motivate people to come into the stores and motivate buyers to bring on more copies.

STEVE: But this tells you, they are telling you exactly how to pitch them, what they're looking for. And he just identified some categories he's not interested in. And so when you meet them later, it's real important to be able to tailor what you have to say to them.

Let's talk about success stories. Give us some visions of when the stars aligned and everything went right, tell us, real quick, about some pictures

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of people that you just got a big advance for, something really happened successfully. Let's hear some inspiring stuff.

JUSTIN: All of our authors are independent publishers. They publish either themselves or we use our own imprint agreement, Book Group Press. We had two *New York Times* bestsellers in this past 2007.

STEVE: What were those books?

JUSTIN: *The Exceptional Presenter* by Tim Koegel and *The Last Link*, both business books. Tim's book is really interesting because, *The Exceptional Presenter*, before he was kind of targeting in on the speaker market, but once we started to reach out more, everyone's presenting. It's us speaking up here; it's you speaking in a conference room.

There's such a large audience, so we had to really figure out how to get the buyers to buy in and see that, and then, how we could package it in a way that would open it up a lot more, so instead of speaking to just a small group we're speaking to a large audience and really making it something people can use on a daily basis. And it worked out really well.

STEVE: Super. Super. Kelly?

KELLY: Well, there are a lot of big glitzy success stories I could probably share on behalf of my boss, Peter Miller. He's gotten huge advances for first-time authors and also has high profile clients.

But I am going to tell you something that may fly in the face of everything that you've kind of been hearing over the last day so far. And that's that it's very important that you do everything right and that you come prepared, and that you have a platform, and you have access to the public and to the media, and all of those things.

But the last five clients that I've sold books for actually had no platforms. Nobody knew them, they'd never been published before, and they had no reason on earth to think that they would ever actually be able to earn a living as writers. And they all currently are.

STEVE: So, what did they have in common?

KELLY: They had one specific thing in common. I tried to identify this when I first started out. As an agent, you're trying to figure out, "Okay, what succeeds

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and what doesn't?", because the market is so up and down and it seems like it's very hard to predict what will happen.

All of my clients whose books that I eventually sold, when they came to me, even though they were unpublished and unsuccessful up to that point, treated writing as their calling and as their job. They were completely professional. They took this seriously. They worked a schedule. They wrote 9-5. Or if they had a 9-5 job, they worked from the time they got home until midnight. They kept to their schedules. They approached me as a professional. They had researched me. They took their writing seriously as a business, not just as an art. And they acted like professional authors before they had ever been paid for a single word.

So, that's something that I would say I look for almost exclusively in the new people that I take on.

STEVE: Great. John, can you give us...?

JOHN: I'll just reinforce that, not so much as being an agent, but I do carry it over. When I was an executive editor I had the pleasure of meeting a very young professor at Stanford. His name was Jim Collins, and Jim hadn't published a book yet. I met Jim and we hit it off. And he gave me his manuscript, and I took it home with me. And I read a couple chapters.

I got back to him. I said, "Jim, this really doesn't seem to reflect you and the person that I met when I was visiting at Stanford. You have to decide if you're going to be writing for the Stanford academic community, or if you're going to be writing for a larger, big business book community."

And Jim thought about it, and then came back to me and said, "John, what I've done is essentially I've made my first few chapters fish head," now if anybody knows about fish, "those chapters, wrapped it up newspaper and I threw it away. And I've sent you a new manuscript."

A new manuscript came in and it became the basis of his first book which was titled *Beyond Entrepreneurship*. For those of you who haven't recognized the name Jim Collins, he's gone on to write *Built to Last* and now *From Good to Great*. *From Good to Great* has been on the bestseller list for years now.

And it's that taking of advice from folks other than your inner circle of family and friends and relatives, about your writing and about what you're

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doing. I think it's very key to this process that Kelly also brought out, I think very well.

STEVE: Great point. Jeff?

JEFF: I think sort of the perfect combination is when you can combine all the elements of the so-called platform, self-marketer, author with outstanding content and an outstanding voice.

It's true in this business that you can buy a book deal with the largest publishing houses. They're not out there advertising that in *Writer's Digest*. I mean you're not going to see an ad from Random House or Simon & Schuster, "Come give us \$100,000 and we'll publish your book."

But the point is that, on any given year a number of people walk in and get mediocre or less books published simply because, from a mercenary point of view, it makes sense for the publisher.

STEVE: Is that because they're agreeing to buy a certain number?

JEFF: It could be that, yes. They're basically subsidizing the deal one way or another so that the publisher knows the money is coming into the bank.

That's one way to do it. But if you can combine that with the actual content, then you'll have a book that sometimes can succeed even if the marketing falls apart simply because of the excellence of the material. And I have authors, both now and from the past, who did not have the proverbial platform. And that's always been a challenge.

But we made it work and made them succeed for other reasons. For instance, a few years ago there was an author who pitched me; the first thing that caught me was the title of the book. It was called *Pregnancy Sucks*, which I thought was a provocative title. And I started reading it and it was very irreverent and very funny but at the same time very true. Not that I've ever been pregnant, that I can recall. But it reminded me of situations that I've observed in others.

And we were then able to move that into an entire series, book series, called *The Sucks*, we didn't have any other name for it, so we called it *The Sucks* series. And then, she basically did one with her husband, *Pregnancy Sucks for Men*. And that sold like 100,000 copies and it was actually competing with hers, which caused some tension between them. They're

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still married, and they're from California and they're still married. Which I think is cool.

Then, she went and did one on *Breastfeeding Sucks* and it's like there's this whole thing going on and on now for her. But she did not have a platform. And in fact, she still doesn't have a platform. She doesn't have time to want a platform. That sort of goes in the face of what this is about. But if she had a platform instead of selling 100,000 copies, I think she would've sold 500,000 copies.

STEVE: Real quick, show of hand, how many of you think it's a good idea for a first-time author with a new book idea to say to you, "I really see this as a series of three or four books." If you think it's a good idea, raise your hand.

Okay, so it doesn't sound like that's a good idea.

Let me ask you this question. We're going to wrap up. Want to just ask you for last, if you think about people you've met, because in a couple minutes people are going to get a chance to meet you, and obviously they need to tailor their comments, like I said, speak for just about three or four sentences and then let them talk. But you're going to tailor to what they've written. But give us a little bit, just tips for when people are meeting you in a few minutes, any success stories that people could learn from.

Marilyn?

MARILYN: I've signed up some great clients through the years coming here. I love the passion. I love to be seduced by fresh ideas and interesting new thinking. And sometimes too, I think I can help you get your ideas a little bit further along. You may need to consult with an expert in your field to bring them on. But just bring it on. I look forward to meeting all of you.

STEVE: Jeff?

JEFF: I think we're all here because we know that there's a great talent pool here and that you're investing in your talent. As far as pitching, maybe consider the possibility that some of us or at least one of us may have ADD. So, it's hard to keep listening and listening, so think about almost as if you're giving a presentation not just pushing, pushing. Think about how to present your information, your idea and what it is you want from this relationship in a way that it can be consumed and understood and held on to.

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- STEVE:** Good. I like three sentences to start it off. John?
- JOHN:** Well, in previous conferences I held up this book before. Carolyn Warren, I met at Publicity Summit, published with John Wiley & Sons.
- STEVE:** So, she met you, she was a first-time author?
- JOHN:** First-time author.
- STEVE:** So, she met you at my events. What did she say to you? Do you remember the conversation? Or, what kind of stood out?
- JOHN:** It was that she was an industry and they took this whole theme that was an industry insider and she was essentially going to be exposing what mortgage rip offs were within the contracts. That sounded very timely to me.
One thing led to another. She had, again, a laundry list of other ideas. I said, "Look, Karen, let's go with this. Let's build it up, sell it." We did it to John Wiley. It sold very well, and now we're into probably our second or third book with John Wiley & Sons.

Jim Trippon I met here, a book on investing in China. Hector Seda, a book on home repair. Chip Cummings, another author.
- STEVE:** So with Jim Trippon, he got signed with what publisher?
- JOHN:** John Wiley & Sons again.
- STEVE:** John Wiley. How about Hector Seda?
- JOHN:** Adams Media. With Hector, we also have in the audience, Harvey Deutschendorf.
- STEVE:** How's he doing?
- JOHN:** Harvey's doing great. We met just about, was it last conference a month ago or two months ago?
- STEVE:** October?
- JOHN:** October, yeah.
- STEVE:** So, you met in October. And what's happened so far?

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- JOHN:** And Harvey came and he had his book already, well published as far as review copies. We met and he hadn't yet flipped switch, as far as doing that self-publishing and inventory. And it definitely caught my eye, I really enjoyed meeting Harvey, as I'm sure all of you have or will, and took on the project.
- Despite having the book, we needed to develop the proposal for it, because that is the internal document that the publishers need to circulate around. We developed that. We have the pitch letter to the publishers, and we are now being seriously considered by seven publishing houses.
- STEVE:** Wow.
- JOHN:** Ten Speed Press, Josie Bass, and a laundry list of others.
- STEVE:** What's the topic on? What's the book about?
- JOHN:** It's on emotional intelligence. *The Other Kind Of Smart, Using Emotions*. There it is.
- STEVE:** *The Other Kind Of Smart, Using Emotions*. I love it.
- JOHN:** We're very optimistic that we're going to get our deal in the next couple of weeks.
- STEVE:** Kelly, how about you? You've got to events. You've gone to panels. You've met people here and there. Is there anything that you could just recommend that people do or don't do when they meet you?
- KELLY:** Writers conferences are funny things, because on the one hand you're here to learn, you're here to figure out how much you don't know and, hopefully, you take steps towards improving on all sorts of fronts. On the other hand, there's the carrot that gets dangled, meet the big New York agent or editor who's going to sign you on the spot.
- And those are kind of two separate things that are going on there. I have signed clients at writer's conferences. Almost none of them were ready when I met them. But I recognized something, there was some potential. So, I understand that a lot of you may not be ready yet. And that's okay, I get that.

Steve Harrison's *Million Dollar Author Club*

I definitely want to find projects that I can sign and sell. But at the same time, I hope I say something to you that will help you at whatever stage that you're at become better. So, don't be afraid to approach.

STEVE: Good deal, awesome. Yeah, that's good. Don't be afraid to approach. Even if you're not sure you want a major publisher, go ahead and pick their brains and get advice.

Justin, how about you? When you've met people or what advice would you give people that are coming that will be meeting you in a few minutes?

JUSTIN: This is great because you do get to get inside of people's head and figure out what they're looking for and what's going to connect with them. Inevitably, you'll sit down and then you'll think of everything except for the one thing that you really, really wanted to say. And you'll remember it in the car on the way home.

So with that, send me an email tomorrow or the next day, whenever. We'll follow up and have another question then. But one thing is to just bring a lot of enthusiasm to it. This is obviously something you've worked really hard on, you're passionate about it, and bring that passion. And then obviously, we're looking for things that at the end of the day we can sell for you and sell for us.

So, things that'll connect to help us really understand the market and why they're going to be ready to gobble this up.

STEVE: Great. Let's give them a warm round of applause. Thank you.

Steve Harrison's ***Million Dollar Author Club***

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1.) What types of books are you currently looking for?

Practical Nonfiction—I'm interested in books from people with strong marketing platforms, new ideas, and built-in audiences. I have a strong interest in business, health, careers, and sports.

2.) What types of books are you NOT looking for?

We don't handle fiction, children's, poetry, or any academic works.

3.) What are some of the best known books you've done?

Paul and Sarah Edwards' Work from Home Series; Ann Louise Gittleman's Fat Flush, Skip McGrath—Mr. EBay books; Kevin Kennedy's Twice Around the Bases.

4.) When you meet with our people what questions should they be prepared to answer?

What is the competition? How will they market their book? What is the audience for the book?

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1.) What types of books are you currently looking for?

As we start our 16th year in business, we continue to look for quality projects in the business, personal growth, finance and investing, health and aging, history, science, sports topic areas and remain open to new presentations in other non-fiction categories re: true crime, politics, reference/gift books, etc. I'm especially interested in story-driven narratives in all areas.

2.) What types of books are you NOT looking for?

Fiction, children's books, chick lit, memoirs, religion.

3.) What are some of the best known books you've done?

Currently we have a number of books selling well including *The Elegant Solution: Toyota's Formula for Mastering Innovation* (Simon & Schuster); *Lincoln's Wrath: Fierce Mobs, Brilliant Scoundrels, and a Presidents Mission to Destroy the Press* (Sourcebooks) which just came out in paperback, and others that can be seen on our website www.LiterarySErviceSInc.com under the New Books section. We have represented a number of NY Times and Wall Street Journal bestsellers including *More Than a Pink Cadillac*, *FireFighting*, *Survival of the Savvy*, etc.

4.) When you meet with our people what questions should they be prepared to answer?

#1. Why is someone going to spend \$25 on your potential book vs. all of their other information and entertainment choices?

#2. What features of your potential book clearly differentiate you from the leading competition and are they highlighted/easily identified in your manuscript? By the way, this is the true beginning of marketing.

#3. What professional activities are you doing that will help support the book's message in a highly crowded and competitive marketplace? If you are a speaker, how many speeches do you give a year/# of attendees? If you have a e-newsletter, how many people subscribe to it?(for email blasts on your book)...etc.

5.) Anything else our attendees should know about you?

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I'm beginning my 30th year in publishing, having worked with academic, professional and trade publishers before starting my agency in 1991. I admire authors who have done their 'homework' (vs. telling me how passionate they are about their work), possess at least a whiff of humility and have a sense of humor.

Steve Harrison's ***Million Dollar Author Club***

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Jeff Herman founded The Jeff Herman Literary Agency, LLC, in 1987 while still in his twenties. The agency has sold many hundreds of titles to publishers, and is one of the most dynamic and innovative agencies in the business.

Herman's agency has a strong presence in general adult nonfiction, including business, general reference, commercial self-help, technology, recovery/healing, and spiritual subjects.

Herman's own publications include, *Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Editor's, Publishers and Literary Agents* (more than 350,000 copies sold), and *Write the Perfect Book Proposal: 10 Proposals That Sold and Why!* His books are considered to be among the best tools available to writers. He's also the co-founder of his own *indie* house, Three Dog Press (3dp).

Herman speaks throughout the country about all aspects of how to get published and be a successful author. He's been written about in dozens of books and publications, including *Success*, *Entrepreneur*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *Forbes*, *Associated Press*, and *The New Yorker*. He's also been on many television and radio shows.

Previously, Herman worked for a New York public relations firm where he designed and managed national consumer marketing campaigns for Nabisco Brands and AT&T. Prior to that he was a publicist at Schocken Books, now a Random House imprint, where he promoted the bestseller: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

Herman graduated from Syracuse University with a Bachelor of Science degree. He was captain of the school's award winning debate team and a leader in student government.

SAMPLE TITLES SOLD

A Man Named Dave
E.P. Dutton by Dave Pelzer
Dare to Win!
Berkley, by Mark Victor Hansen and Jack Canfield

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Heart and Soul: A Psychological and Spiritual Guide to Preventing and Healing Heart Disease

Villard Books, by Bruno Cortis, M.D. with Kathryn Lance

Joe Montana on the Art and Magic of Playing Football

Henry Holt & Co., by Joe Montana

Prescriptions for Drug Alternatives: Natural Options to Common Over-the-Counter and Prescription Drugs

John Wiley and Sons, by James Balch, Robin Balch and Mark Stengler

The Hidden Parables

Tarcher Books, by Todd Michael

The Evolution Angel

Tarcher Books, by Todd Michael

Divine Revelations

Simon & Schuster, by Susan Shumsky

Scientific Prayer

Ten Speed Press/Celestial Arts, by Susan Shumsky

The Entrepreneur Next Store

Entrepreneur Press, by Bill Wagner

JK Lasser's Taxes Made Easy for the Home Based Business: From EBay to Mary Kay

Lasser/Wiley, by Gary Carter, CPA

The Elvis Cover-Up; He's Alive, He's Coming Back, You Decide

The Anonymous Press, by Gail Giorgio

The IQ Myth: Successful Intelligence

Simon & Schuster, by Robert Sternberg, Ph.D.

A Setback is a Setup for a Comeback

St. Martin's Press, by Willie Jolley

Everyday Calm (gift book)

Chronicle Books, by Darrin Zeer

Cryptogram Puzzles

Random House, by Terry Stickels

Steve Harrison's *Million Dollar Author Club*

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1.) What types of books are you currently looking for?

I get a lot of literary fiction queries, so I'm looking to balance my list with serious nonfiction, current events, edgy pop culture, and memoirs that manage to be both specific and universal at the same time, or present an insider's view, such as *The Nanny Diaries*.

2.) What types of books are you NOT looking for?

I can't sell books that have been done to death and offer nothing new; I won't rep anything that lacks passion, or by an author obviously trying to cash in on a recent publishing "trend."

3.) What are some of the best known books you've done?

I'm known for mostly up-market fiction, like James Boice's *MVP*, but I've sold a fascinating East meet West diet book called *Feed Your Tiger* and I repped the memoir of porn star *Sunset Thomas*—so my taste is eclectic. PMA's best known client may be Vincent Bugliosi, author of the definitive true crime book *Helter Skelter*; we've just placed two books for him and there's a movie deal in the works.

4.) When you meet with our people what questions should they be prepared to answer?

Given the short attention span of agents, editors, and the public at large, what have you to offer that's different, that's worthy of attention? How do you intend to create enthusiasm for your project that others will share? Can the essence of your project be distilled into a single sentence?

5.) Anything else our attendees should know about you?

Working with Peter Miller, I've learned a lot about how to make a good project great and how to make a difficult project sell, but at the end of the day, none of us really knows what will hit and what will miss. Consequently, I only take on projects I love. My best advice to authors: get us to love your work.

Steve Harrison's *Million Dollar Author Club*

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1.) What types of books are you currently looking for?

We are looking for books that we feel have the potential to compete in crowded bookstores. We only accept 3% of the submission we receive, and that's because we're careful to bring in only those books that can sell well in a retail environment. That said, when we evaluate a submission, we not only look at where it is now, we look at where it can be with the proper editors, designers, marketers, and salespeople behind it. Every submission has strengths and weaknesses, and we spend a lot of time evaluating how we can leverage the strengths and fix the weaknesses.

2.) What types of books are you NOT looking for?

What we are not looking for is typically dependent on what bookstores are not buying at the moment. Right now, bookstore budgets for new children's books are shrinking. Adult fiction by new authors is also a difficult sell, as is poetry. However, we do accept books in these genres when we feel they have the potential to beat the odds. We're never looking for books from authors who are not driven to make their book great. Selling books is a team effort and there are many moving parts. Everyone, including the author, needs to be committed to success.

3.) What are some of the best known books you've worked with?

We had two New York Times Best Sellers in 2007. *The Last Link* by Gregg Crawford and *The Exceptional Presenter* by Tim Koegel both made the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and the USA Today Best Seller lists. We also work with New York Times best selling authors Vince Poscente, David Lieberman, and Steve Alten. Our gift book line includes many popular titles such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *Family Feud*, *the Battle of the Sexes*, and *the Beat the Parents* quiz books

4.) When you meet with our people what questions should they be prepared to answer?

What is your book about?

Who will want to buy your book and why?

What do you plan to do to drive consumers into the bookstore to purchase the book?

Do you have a platform or plan to build one? Please describe.

What is your timeline for the book?

5.) Anything else our attendees should know about you?

I'm always happy to answer questions.