

## **Belief Goes a Long Way for a Writer**

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During a recent discussion in one of my writer's groups, the topic of book signings, marketing, shyness and belief came up. Some authors expressed that they find signings or sales to be difficult, 'embarrassing', nerve wracking experiences. They don't like them or don't want to do them. Others felt it was a necessary part of a writer's life.

This was my reply:

I understand where you're coming from. My husband is like you and many others. If he had to live off his sales, he'd starve too. Thank God he's into the labour side of things. It's true that some people are more natural at selling, some can learn how easily, and some are just overly pushy...We all know the arrogant salesman or telemarketer who won't let us hang up.

Personally, I've always been good at sales...well, as an adult. But I always set my boundaries and had to believe in the product/service, no matter what it was, charity fundraisers, vacuum cleaners, dayhome directories (which I published myself years ago), Pampered Chef, cosmetics, security systems, vehicles, to name a few. Then I had to believe in myself, that what I had to sell was what many people (not all) needed. That's what got me the sales--not shoving a book in someone's face saying 'Hey, buy this! It's the best book you'll ever read!' (which incidentally is the 'technique' of an author I know).

Years ago, my husband had gotten out of the Armed Forces and had gone into car sales until he could figure out what he really wanted to do. Every night he'd come home and tell me how difficult it was. And this was coming from a guy who lived and breathed cars. He knew them inside and out. I barely knew how to drive one--and only if it was automatic.

The more he complained about his job, the worse it got. Until one day, I'd had enough. I told him to quit, but he refused. Then I said "Learn how to be better and believe you can do it." He said, "You have no idea how hard it is to sell cars. You should try it." Well, one thing led to another and finally I told him I was going to apply for a part-time job at a different dealership. He laughed and said they wouldn't even hire me. So I took the challenge and told him that I thought it was believability that was holding him back from sales. He didn't believe he could do it, therefore he couldn't.

He was right about one thing. I know nothing about vehicles. The next week I started a part time job at a Jeep dealership.

Then my husband said, "It took me weeks to sell my first car. It'll take you months."

On my third day I sold a brand new, fresh off the lot truck...I think it was a Ford F150 or

something. :) Did I push my 'sales techniques' down the buyer's throat? No. I stood beside him, believing I could sell cars, while he said "Great, this has blah blah blah..."

When he asked me a question, I said, "I'm new here. Let me go verify that for you." Belief sells! Honesty sells.

I quit after 2 weeks. I had taken the job to prove a point. After that, my husband's sales started to improve. Now, that doesn't mean that he turned into a fabulous salesman, because he didn't. It was still out of his comfort zone. But he learned to improve by believing he could do it--even if only temporarily.

I know many authors who have a published book (traditionally and self) that don't do book signings. I asked one of my friends why, and he said he just didn't feel comfortable doing it, he 'hated' doing them and then later he grumbled that his sales were low.

People pick up on your attitude. That's why it's key to LOVE those book signings. Unfortunately, you just can't have it both ways.

I know some authors who write more as a hobby. They have a self-published book and don't care how many they sell or if they sell. They did it more for themselves. And that's fine, if that's all they want. Although, I can guarantee that if they started seeing bigger paychecks rolling in, a few of them would change their perspective.

To each their own. I think it's important to understand your individual goal. If all you want is your name on a cover of a book and to sell a few copies to family and friends, that's your choice. Go for it! If your hobby is to self-publish a book every couple of years without any editing, that's your choice too, but don't be surprised if people complain. But if you want this as a career, there are things you must do in order to succeed. Like always learn. Learn more about writing, editing, marketing.

If writing is your passion and you want New York Times best selling status or to catch the attention of a highly motivated traditional publisher, I believe you have to put yourself out there, step out of your comfort zone and grab onto the belief that you CAN do it. If you want it badly enough, you'll make it happen.

And that's the key! I have a friend who is an artist. Her dream is to sell her paintings for tens of thousands of dollars each. I asked her what she was doing to get there and she said 'not much'. She'd only finished a few paintings. I asked how she was going to market them, she didn't have a clue. I asked if she could envision her art gallery opening with hundreds of people attending. She couldn't. I believe that when my friend can see that art gallery show, imagine, envision, taste the wine, hear the people's comments, that's when she'll believe it herself. Then and only then will she be on the right track to success. She has to develop a 'whatever it takes' attitude first.

Now consider that all I've said above is coming from the shyest kid there ever was in a BC kid. The kid who sat in the back row, who had zero self esteem. Sure I became very

good at sales. My last professional J.O.B. was managing a sales department for a large security company and writing copy. I also became a motivational speaker for a major international organization. I overcame my shyness because I had to--I wanted to. And I wanted to be the 'best at everything I do. And since writing has always been my intense passion and I want to be very successful at it, I overcame my nervousness of book signings because there was no other choice.

It all boils down, I think, to one key question: How badly do you want it? Then it's up to you to define what 'it' is. Are you happy with your success? Satisfied with your sales? Want more?

We choose our success; it doesn't choose us. And we all have different definitions of what that success is. So for those who are happy with the odd signing and a bit of spending money, that's great. For those who want more, choose more. Then find ways to get it.

I totally respect where some authors are coming from, but I'm hoping this reaches a few that are looking for some inspiration to become more motivated with book signings or marketing in general.

This is what award winning author Alvin Abram, author of *Why, Zaida?*, has to say: "Selling yourself is selling your product. I practice reading out loud every day. I try not to say uh, you know, or any such repetitive remark. It takes practice. I, too, was an introvert until I realized that I was a bottle with a cork that wanted to explode. If you want to sell, pop your cork, forget about the word *can't* and do."

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Cheryl Kaye Tardif, a Canadian mystery author, is the author of three published novels: [Whale Song](#), an emotional mystery (ISBN 9781601640079, "A wonderfully well-written novel...would make a wonderful movie," *Writer's Digest*); *Divine Intervention*, a scorching psychic suspense; and *The River*, a terrifying techno-thriller. <http://www.cheryltardif.com>