

*Write Now!*

**“And then We’ll Get on Oprah……”**  
*Don’t Sound Like an Amateur: Know Your Market*



*The Author Series from Praeclarus Press*



One of the best parts of my job as a publisher is talking with aspiring authors about their work. I love seeing book projects in the formative stage. And I love being able to guide them along the way until they are finished products. I do this a lot, and in some of the oddest settings imaginable: in doctor's waiting offices, in airports, by the pool, or even standing in line at the restroom (Hint to aspiring authors: the last location really *isn't* a good time to chat.).

In these numerous conversations, I've noticed one thing pretty consistently: many first-time authors really have no idea who their market is. Basically, they'll pitch a book idea and then tell me about their marketing plan: "then I'll get on Oprah....." That's a lovely idea, but the truth is that you have a much better chance of being struck by lightning. In fact, a statement like that let's everyone know that this is your first-time out. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to avoid this common mistake.

- **Know Your Market.** One of the first things I advise new authors to do is make a trip to their local bookstore. After a couple of hours spent browsing, you will have a decent sense of what is out there and who is publishing similar titles. That will give you a short list of publishers to approach with your idea.
- **Know the Competition.** Any acquisitions editor will ask you about books on the market that are similar to yours. Be ready to give an answer. Also, be prepared to explain how your book will fill a particular gap in the existing market.
- **How You Will Reach Your Audience.** A final question that you need to be ready to answer is how will you let others know about your book? This is known in the book biz as your "platform." Do you speak at conferences on the topic? Do you write for any publications that reach your target audience? Do you have connections with any of the organizations involved in your area of interest? This is important because author promotion is vital to making your

book a success. Publishers are more likely to show interest in your project if they know that you have access to the audience you are writing for.

While this may seem like a lot of work up front, it's much better to do it now then to invest a year of your life in writing a book that no one will read because they don't know about it. Or because you went with a publisher who couldn't market it well. A working knowledge of your market is absolutely essential to selling a book project. I wish you great success in this phase of the process.

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