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**Avoid the Coming Plandemic**

By Brian Jud

There is a marketing adage that says, “If you fail to plan you plan to fail.” Unfortunately, most authors and publishers fail to plan. For example, when asked to define their target market their response is, “Everybody.” When questioned on how they plan to market to *everybody*, their reply is to get into Barnes and Noble and then get active on social media. In other words, they plan to fail and open themselves to acquiring the inevitable plandemic.

The good news is that there is a way to prevent this affliction from occurring. Here are specific actions you can take to immunize yourself and avoid developing the plandemic - or cure it if you are already stricken.

**Inject yourself with passion**. Use your writing passion as the foundation for your marketing passion and convey your sense of purpose to prospective buyers. Your enthusiasm will help them believe they can transfer the power of your content to themselves. Have a big message, a big idea for how buyers can use your content. You inspire people when you have a dream that is bigger than theirs. According to Angela Duckworth, “I define grit as a combination of both perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Not just working hard, but also loving what you do.” The pursuit of happiness begins with the happiness of pursuit.

**Mask your negativity** to keep it from spreading. You cannot hang out with negative people and expect to live a positive life. APSS (Association of Publishers for Special Sales, [www.bookapss.org](http://www.bookapss.org) ) member Anna Mhlambi says, “Your life is what it is today because of words spoken to you, in years past, by yourself or someone else who was responsible for you… Have you allowed your dreams to die because someone has told you that you are not good enough? Don’t give up hope – because you can turn your life around.” Negative people love to tell you what they *really* think of your book.  But opinions are like noses – everyone has one and they all smell. You are influenced by the people with whom you choose to surround yourself. Some say *No*, some say *Now* and some say *Wow*. Choose wisely.

**Distance yourself** from two killer actions: selling only through bookstores. and restricting your promotion activity to social media. There are more books sold every year to non-bookstore markets. These include retailers such as gift stores, airport stores, supermarkets, discount stores, etc., (see *Convenience* below for information on how to reach them), and non-retail segments such as corporations, associations, schools and the military.

Do not rely only on social media for your communication with your target buyers. There are other promotional tools you can use at different times – online of offline -- to accomplish your marketing goals. Create a more effective marketing campaign by adding these four actions to your promotion mix: 1) publicity (press releases, media appearance, podcasts, blogs and reviews), 2) advertising and direct marketing can reach many consumers simultaneously with the same message and at a relatively low cost per exposure, 3) sales promotion using giveaways and sales literature to remind and generate awareness, and 4) personal selling at trades shows, networking events and through sales calls on non-retail buyers.

**Quarantine for five days**. Seek solitude to think about your goals for next year and how you will reach them. Breathe life into your endeavors by organizing these Seven Cs of marketing into a functional, practical living plan.

1. **Customer**. Who is your target buyer? Rather than thinking *everybody*, define your target readers with the Five Ws: **Who** are they (age, education, income)? Also think of non-bookstore buyers. **What** do they want to buy (pbook, ebook or other)? **Where** do they shop? **When** do they buy? And **Why** do they buy (the problem they want to solve)?
2. **Content**. When people ask you about your book, do you describe it as a 6” x 9” softcover book with X00 pages? Or does your description spring from your belief in your content and message, and how you can increase value to the reader? People do not buy books per se, they purchase what the information can do for them. They do not want a diet book but want to look more attractive and be healthy. Corporate buyers want to use your content to sell more of their products or motivate employees. Associations want more members. Schools want better students. Retailers want store traffic and higher profit per square foot. Librarians want to help their patrons. How can your content help people in each segment reach their goals?
3. **Convenience**. Three key factors for selling real estate or books are location, location, and location. Have your books available where your customers shop rather than only where you want to sell them. Do your buyers shop in discount stores, airport stores, wholesale clubs, supermarkets, pharmacies, or dollar stores? If so,distribute through Symak Sales Co Inc. (<https://symaksales.com>) or ReaderLink (<http://readerlink.com>) “the largest full-service book distributor in North America” to get your books placed on those stores’ shelves.
4. **Communication**. Writing your book does not get your message to people. Writing creates the message. You still must communicate your message to the right people at the right time. Get your target readers engaged with your communication by describing the benefits of your content. Customize your message to each target segment by not telling what your book is, but what it does. Connect with them through an irresistible message – irresistible to the recipient
5. **Cost**. Authors and publishers frequently misinterpret the concepts of price and cost. Price is what they consider necessary to cover their costs and provide a profit. Buyers do not care what the cost is to the publisher, but what the cost is to them. Is the value they get from reading your book worth the amount of money they spend to get it? What is the cost of available alternatives? Successful marketing recognizes that people are willing to pay more if they perceive the value worthy of the additional cost.
6. **Competition**. Some authors say they have no competition. If that is really the case, they should re-evaluate the size of the potential market. A book about *how to start your own country* probably has little competition, and even less opportunity for sales. Regardless of what you may think. every book has competition. In retail sales you compete for shelf space, media placement, airtime, readers’ wallets, reviewers’ time, etc. In corporate sales you are competing against budget money, coffee mugs and other sales-promotional products. Know how the value of your content stands in comparison.
7. **Context**. Do not fail to plan. Write to your passion but translate it into successful marketing performance with a plan. Organize the previous Six Cs into a purposeful, practical and functional living plan.

Planning is like laying track for a railroad. It establishes a solid foundation, provides a path to your destination and controls deviation. And it helps you to continue moving toward your destination when uncontrollable or unforeseen events occur. But just as the track does not propel you forward, neither does your plan. Your passion and productive actions provide the fuel for the engine, taking you on your journey to success. Start planning now so you can start the new year full steam ahead.

Here are two acronyms to help you sail the Seven Cs of marketing toward a healthy, plandemic-free future:

* Get **FITT** by increasing the **F**requency (daily action), **I**ntensity (passion), **T**ime (that you apply to marketing) and **T**ype (the assortment) of your book-marketing actions.
* **DARE** to do better every year: **D**iscover new markets in which to compete. **A**dapt your marketing plans to better fit your books, personality, goals and resources. **R**id yourself of negative thoughts that could be dragging you down. **E**mpower yourself so you do not let the naysayers hold you back.

I wish you success and happiness in whatever the future holds for you – or what you make it hold for you.

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Brian Jud is the Executive Director of the Association of Publishers for Special Sales (APSS – www.bookapss.org– formerly SPAN) and author of *How to Make Real Money Selling Books*. Contact Brian at brianjud@bookmarketing.com or www.premiumbookcompany.com and twitter @bookmarketing