

The  
Wow

# e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

Volume 5 No. 4 April 2009

## To Agent or Not to Agent?

Judy Anderson of Bloomington, Minnesota, asks: “Do you think it is a good idea to find an agent? I am a Christian writer.” Great question, Judy! And it’s one that is hard to answer in a single e-newsletter issue. For that reason, we may answer via several editions.

First and foremost, we need to state that we have never used an agent, but Ken has completed a fiction book, so he’s in the process of querying agents right now. Fiction is much harder to shop on your own than nonfiction, the latter being our forte. To date, we have negotiated and secured 17 nonfiction book deals with publishers sans an agent. By using the formula and theories presented in our 57-page e-book *The Wow Principles #2: Creating Nonfiction Book Proposals that Wow Publishers!* (\$9.95), your chances to do the same are just as promising.

To address Judy’s question, when it comes to a specific genre such as Christian titles—which are very popular—securing an agent is a good idea if you want to approach the big publishing houses. Pay particular attention to the underlined section: over 80 percent of books being sold to major publishers are done so through agents, especially if they are topic focused. An agent will know who’s considering what genre and be aware of industry patterns and changes when it comes to certain genres. A *great* agent will have rapport with several publishing houses; networking is the name of the game, as is the agent’s reputation. Recommending a poorly written or uninteresting manuscript to that acquisition editor is something a seasoned agent would never do, and the reasons why are obvious.

Besides getting your work in front of an editor, agents also will negotiate your contract. Since an agent’s fee is typically 15 percent of everything you get, they’re going to look out for the bottom line, include subsidiary rights (movies, audio books, book clubs, et al). A top-notch agent will also negotiate “escalators” into the contract;

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## To Agent or Not to Agent?

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similar to a bonus, an escalator can include appearances on major media outlets and major book club deals. But when it comes to money, your agent will make sure you're paid per the royalty schedule—that's their pay schedule, too.

Most importantly, an agent is your advocate, your support system, your campaigner. Many authors don't have the wherewithal to play hardball when it comes to contract negotiations, which is typically the hardest part of the entire process. Think of it as "good cop, bad cop" whereas the agent does the dirty work and you focus on what you're good at—working with the publisher to polish your manuscript. You maintain the amiable post production work and your agent is standing guard, protecting your interests.

Now back to the underlined section in paragraph three: for every big publisher, there are a hundred smaller publishers who are excited to work with unpublished authors. If you're contract savvy and not afraid to negotiate, then keep that 15 percent you'd pay an agent and shop your manuscript yourself! And if need be, you can always hire a literary attorney to review your first contract if you're unsure: most attorneys can get through a contract in less than an hour. It's your hour, so ask questions and glean information and insight from them; it will be the best \$250-\$350 you've ever spent!

If you're interested in finding an agent, here are some great resources to check out:

*Guide to Book Publisher's, Editors, & Literary Agents* by Jeff Herman

*Guide to Literary Agents* by Writer's Market

*How to Be Your Own Literary Agent* by Richard Curtis

*Agents, Editors, and You* by Writer's Market Library

*Writer's Market Deluxe Edition* (they have a listing of agents)



Another great resource is Jeff Herman's website ([www.jeffherman.com](http://www.jeffherman.com)). An authority on writing and literary agents, Jeff's style is second to none. We haven't talked with him in awhile, not since he sent us the 2008 edition his book (listed above). Tell you what: we'll request an interview with him for a future newsletter. If you want to pose a question to Jeff having to do with literary agents, send it to us at [Questions@PublishingSyndicate.com](mailto:Questions@PublishingSyndicate.com). If we use your submission, then you'll win our *Wow Principles #2* mentioned above, just like Judy has for asking her question!



# The Wow Principles e-newsletter

**HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF!**

## *Cup of Comfort*

[www.CupofComfort.com](http://www.CupofComfort.com)



*For Mothers:* **Deadline: May 15, 2009**

*For a Better World:* **Deadline: June 15, 2009**

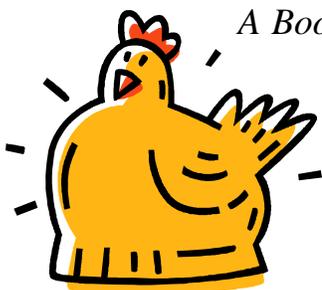
*For Couples:*  
**Deadline: October 1, 2009**

*For Golfers:* **Deadline: December 15, 2009**



## *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

[www.ChickenSoup.com](http://www.ChickenSoup.com)



*A Book of Miracles:* **Deadline: May 30, 2009 DEADLINE EXTENDED!**

*True Love (no teen stories, please):* **Deadline: May 31, 2009**

*NASCAR:* **Deadline: June 15, 2009**



*Teacher Tales:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**

*Endurance Sports:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**

*Not Really Retired:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**

*All in the Family:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**

*Dieting and Fitness:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**

*Thanks Dad:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**

*Thanks Mom:* **Deadline: June 30, 2009**



***Go for it! Get published!*** 

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