



Publishing Nonfiction Books on Spirituality

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MODULE 1

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLISHING SPIRITUALITY NONFICTION BOOKS

Workbook B

The Author Platform

To get noticed by a traditional publisher or even by a prospective consumer of your independently published book, you need an author platform. That is why establishing your author platform has to come well before you've published your book. An author platform will shape the identity of your book and ultimately, your branding. It is what you will stand on so that your published book gets noticed. The taller your platform, the more visible you are to your book's target readership. That's why traditional publishers care about platform. Even if you're self-publishing, the measure of your platform is a strong if not determining indicator for the success of your book sales.

Your platform is a lot like your goodwill (to use lingo from trademark law). It is the reputation you have cultivated over years of professional work. It is a collective sum of your experience, education, knowledge, credentials, and public opinion that can convince a prospective reader to buy your book, read it, and trust what you have to say.

There are so many reasons why it's important to establish your author platform before you've written your book or while you're writing it. In this day and age, you're not likely to get your book submission accepted for traditional publication if you don't have an already established author platform. Waiting to do that after you've finished writing a book is too late (well, maybe I shouldn't say "too" late, but it's definitely late). An established platform will also make it much easier for you to land expert segments and media appearances to promote a self-published book. Those appearances will be critical to sales for your book.

The prompts in this workbook will help you to start thinking about your author platform and brainstorming ways to enhance it. The final section in this workbook will help you get started on putting together your media kit, which you may need to submit to media outlets when trying to secure media appearances. Of course, you don't need to have public speaking engagements, *and* teaching experience, *and* previous publications, *and* media appearances to establish an author platform. Pick and choose to tailor the best-fit platform for you and the subject matter of your book.

The author platform is so critical to the success of your book that we are going to revisit the topic in the final module of this study series.

Professional Credentials

How many years of experience do you have in the field you are writing about?

years

Summarize your educational background (specifically as it pertains to the field you are writing about).

List any professional awards you have won.

List any licenses or certifications that would be applicable to the field you are writing about.

Note any professional association memberships and/or leadership roles in professional organizations.

Public Speaking Engagements

List any previous speaking engagements.			
<i>Date of Event</i>	<i>Event Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Title of Your Talk</i>

If you have nothing to fill in the above table with, then it's time to get started, especially if you're interested in going the route of traditional publishing. Public speaking venues for authors and experts are categorized into three tiers, which are as follows:

TIER 1 VENUES	TIER 2 VENUES	TIER 3 VENUES
<input type="checkbox"/> National Conferences <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Festivals <input type="checkbox"/> State or Private Universities <input type="checkbox"/> City/Metropolitan Libraries	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Clubs <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Community Colleges <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Retreats	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Bookstores <input type="checkbox"/> Local Town Libraries <input type="checkbox"/> Trade Shows <input type="checkbox"/> For-Profit Colleges

Those new to establishing an author platform will want to begin with the Tier 3 venues, and then work your way up. Ideally, you will want to have public speaking engagements under your belt in all three categories of venues. Do not dismiss any tier and do not focus all of your energy on only one. Start identifying actual venues and events that fit into the above categories that make sense for someone in your position to speak at.

Brainstorm future public speaking engagements while you write your book, that way you are building upon your author platform at every stage of your progress to completion. At the conclusion of this course, presuming you will then have a published book to promote, we are going to revisit the author platform through a second workbook. The author platform is so vital to the success of your book that it needs to be covered twice—once from the standpoint of having no book yet, gearing up to becoming a published author and again from the standpoint of being a published author, out to promote your new book.

For now, use the subsequent prompt to start thinking about public speaking engagements pre-book publishing and how you can begin building an author platform now, while you're still ahead of the game. Recall that character you profiled at the end of Workbook A, the one you are

writing your book for. Also recall that character’s friend. Design speaking engagements and events for these two individuals. The following prompts can be used to help you brainstorm each event. Follow the prompts as a guided brainstorm each time you need to come up with a new speaking engagement. Let’s refer to your profiled character and friend as your Target Audience.

List six ideas for a speaking engagement or event.

Conceive of six specific topics you could speak about at an event, which can be covered during the time length you have set for the event. Also note the venue that you envision your event to take place at. Then weigh the topics against each other and circle the one that resonates with you the most, which is the topic you will be brainstorming for your speaking engagement. Reserve the remaining ideas for future event ideas. Start by focusing on Tier 3 and Tier 2 venues.

①	②
<i>Venue:</i>	<i>Venue:</i>
③	④
<i>Venue:</i>	<i>Venue:</i>
⑤	⑥
<i>Venue:</i>	<i>Venue:</i>

To start, use Handout 2 to guide you through brainstorming your selected speaking engagement idea. Handout 2 will help you turn your general concept into a structured talk.

A Regularly Released Publication

The following section of this workbook assumes that you do not have a regularly released form of publication yet and are now seeking to establish one to help build your author platform. This regularly released publication can be in the form of a blog, a vlog or a YouTube channel, a weekly newsletter that you send out, or a podcast. Also, consider querying a monthly or quarterly magazine in the field that you are writing your book about and present a column idea to that magazine to see if they might bring you on board as a regular columnist or to write a series of articles that will be published over several issues of their publication.

When you are starting from scratch and gearing up to launch this regularly released publication, I recommend that you line up at least 10 ideas and have completed those 10 publications for your soft launch. Then for your hard launch, when you promote and publicize your new publication, there will be ample content for your audience to view. If you are pitching a column series to a magazine, then chances are the editors will ask you to submit a couple of completed articles and a detailed outline and overview of all articles for the series. For a column series with an established publication, you don't necessarily need 10 ideas; instead, think about the number of articles in your series that would be most appealing to the editors of the publication.

If you're writing blog posts, a good reference point is 500 to 700 words; for magazine articles, 750 to 1,500 words. For a video, as a general rule of thumb, try to keep it under 15 minutes, because that will be the approximate attention span of your viewer. Podcasts can range between 30 minutes to an hour.

The following tables in this workbook are intended to guide you through brainstorming at least 10 different article ideas. If you are launching a blog or YouTube channel from scratch, then I urge you to push yourself to come up with 10 ideas and complete all 10 tables. Otherwise, use the tables at your reasonable discretion, based on the specifications of your regularly released publication. Another reason to brainstorm 10 right now: if you can't think of 10 now, when you're fresh and energized, then that could be an indication that a regularly released publication is not sustainable for you, in which case better to know now than after you've initiated launch.

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #4 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

Brainstorm of Idea #5 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

Brainstorm of Idea #6 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

Brainstorm of Idea #7 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #8 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #9 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

<i>Brainstorm of Idea</i> #10 <input type="checkbox"/> Check box when post has been completed.	Tentative Title for Post	
Summarize the Topic Idea		
Envision Companion Images for Post	Main Take-Away Point of Post	

Teaching, Consulting, Ministry, Life Coaching, Etc.

Among the bestsellers under the “New Age & Spirituality” category of books on Amazon.com, of the top 300 books, skipping over books by the deceased, 265 of those 300 titles were by authors whose biography included some reference to teaching, consulting, counseling, ministry work, or life coaching. (At least that was the figure when I last checked for myself.) Keep in mind that of the remaining 35 titles, such references were simply not mentioned in the biography, and doesn’t per se mean that these folks aren’t in fact teaching, consulting, counseling, ministry work, or life coaching. (Although not counted, many of the books by dead people were also by some form of spiritual teacher.)

Must you teach, consult, counsel, do ministry work, or be a life coach to publish a “New Age & Spirituality” book? Of course not. But these sure are interesting correlations. So let’s think about adding “teacher” to your author platform. By “teacher” here, I’m trying to cover any of the roles previously listed, e.g., consulting, ministry, or coaching. Teachers teach. Think about what workshops you can add to your professional qualifications to establish yourself as a teacher. If you aren’t a teacher already, then this section will help you brainstorm workshop ideas to get you engaged with your community and to present yourself as a teacher who is qualified to write the book you’re writing.

Brainstorm workshop or seminar ideas.

The speaking engagements we brainstormed about earlier are in a lecture format where the audience is passive, listening to you. Workshops and seminars engage the audience actively. There may be hands-on activities or exercises where the audience is subdivided into groups and are asked to engage with one another. Conceive of four workshop or seminar ideas to develop later.

Tentative Workshop/Seminar Title:		Tentative Workshop/Seminar Title:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Held Online	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Held Online	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Event
Notes:		Notes:	
Tentative Workshop/Seminar Title:		Tentative Workshop/Seminar Title:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Held Online	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Held Online	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Event
Notes:		Notes:	

Previous Publications

Recall and list out all prior article publications related to your professional field or the subject matter of your book. I'm going to get a bit snooty here and say to only log notable publications. "Notable" means it is peer-reviewed, run by an editorial board, and/or typically requires a submissions process.

Your prior publications			
<i>Title of Article</i>	<i>Publication</i>	<i>Issue/Volume</i>	<i>Date of Publication</i>

What is your story?

Tell me a story about how you came to be passionate about the topic of your book.

Apply the elements of good fiction. Write this as a narrative. This is a mini-memoir. Include interesting details or anecdotes and get the reader or listener to envision the scenes of your story. It is helpful to begin thinking about your story now, because you will be asked this question over and over ad nauseum, and each time you tell it to your interviewer or audience, you better tell your story with energy, like it's the first time you've ever told it.