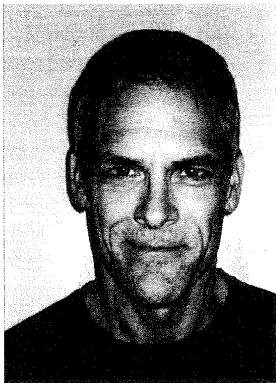




'write artistically act commercially'

says **Duff Watkins**



Culture is founded on the deep dung of cash.
D.H.Lawrence

*If you don't seek to publish what you've written, then
you're not a writer and never will be.*
George V. Higgins, author of 20 books

You don't need to be a psychotherapist – which I was – to see that some writers have a psychological problem with success. You don't need to be a businessman – which I am – to see what the problem is. Put bluntly, many writers scuttle their chances of success by steadfastly ignoring commercial reality.

Friends, writing is a business.

The commercial aspects of writing are not extraneous, irrelevant, or superfluous to producing good work. You may write artistically but you must act commercially.

Hear this: The entertainment industry is your customer and it's a large commercial endeavour. Writers supply the entertainment industry, which then publishes or produces their work. The industry operates by clearly defined, business based guidelines. It operates in an economic environment and faces financial constraints and pressures. That's commercial reality.

So, if you don't know what your customer needs, wants, or desires, how can you supply it? If you ignore your customer's problems, how can you provide solutions? If you're not interested in helping their business succeed, what bloody good are you?

Rescued by writers?!

Veteran actor/director Peter Sumner says, countries are understood by the stories they express.

Sure. But Matthew Liebmann, author of the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report Australian Entertainment & Media Outlook: 2005-2009, an economic analysis and forecast, asks "Where are the Australian equivalents of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Amelie* – films that are obviously from their country that made them, yet with big appeal overseas?"

The horizon is bleak:

- local film industry earns just 1.3% of the Australian box office
- cinema audiences diminish as people increasingly download or rent DVDs
- no growth in ticket sales expected over the next 5 years
- increased competition for the audience's dollar

Commercial problems require commercial solutions, says PwC, and the key is script development.

Writers can save the day? Great!

But only if they embrace these commercial realities:

- It's not creative vs. commercial. It's both. Writing is intended for an audience. Whether for love or for money, writers write to be read.
- Governments do not exist to support writers.
- Success is not mandatory. Fortunately, we work in a capitalistic society. Capitalism is market driven and competitive. There are supposed to be winners and losers. It's competition that produces the best goods and services (and writers). Even the Dalai Lama, a truly enlightened writer, reckons that capitalism is the best economic system available.

Molière joked that writing is like prostitution: first you do it for love, then for friends, then for money

- Look like a pro. Weirdly, authors spend more time, effort, and money on their character's appearance than on their own. Your image matters. Hollywood spends time and money on costuming because they know that an audience must believe what they are seeing. Same for writers. Your audience is whoever might purchase your work. So dress like a pro writer, not a homeless person.
- Act like a pro. Professional writers adhere to the bank robber's code: get in, get the money, get out, then plan the next job. Molière joked that writing is like prostitution: first you do it for love, then for friends, then for money.
- Provide solutions. Writing is a business because money is involved, livelihoods are at stake (if not yours, then the buyer's), and careers are on the line. It's a serious enterprise. The aim is to deliver quality work, on time, on budget, consistently. Basically, writers provide solutions to customers' problems.
- Show, don't tell. The director says to the actor, don't tell me, show me! The producer/publisher says to the writer, don't tell me, show me that you understand the constraints of my industry by giving me something that I can use, sell, go to market with, and thereby stand a chance to succeed in a highly competitive environment.
- Talk in their tongue. Communication is receiving, not broadcasting. Hollywood script doctor John Truby says speak in the language of the film maker, ie, speak in a language your customer understands. Make it easy for buyers to like, want, and appreciate your work. Good things won't happen until they do.
- Grunt in the grammar of business. Whatever languages you speak, at least learn how to grunt in the grammar of business since 'business' is the native tongue of all industries and is spoken globally. You don't have to speak or read it fluently; you just need basic conversational skills.
- The forgotten half-truth. We often hear about the labyrinth of gate keepers, agents, and editors, whose purpose is to screen you out. Half-true. The other half is that those people ache to receive a work that emerges from the pack of mediocrity. They crave it. They sit, waiting to be enthralled, wanting to be entranced by your words. So make it easy for them. Make it easy for them to approve, recommend, green light your project, or buy your work. Do this by providing them with commercially viable material.
- Success is a gestalt (a configuration of experiences and acts). It's due to many factors, many of which you have no control over. Write as well as you can, control what you can, influence what you can, then relax. Once your bet is placed and the roulette wheel spins, all you can do is enjoy the suspense.

If a young writer can refrain from writing, he shouldn't hesitate to do so.

André Gide

Finally, remember that you don't have to be a writer. Nobody asked you to become one. Nobody cares if you don't become one. But since you are, you might as well be fulfilled. Far better to succeed within the boundaries of commercial reality, I say, than to fail within the confines of a private fantasy.



Dr. Duff Watkins is Director, Asia/South Pacific, Cornerstone International Group- Consultants to Boards and Management. As a speaker he has made over 1000 paid presentations and has authored numerous articles for magazines and newspapers as well as two unsold, unpublished books. His doctorate is in psychotherapy and he can confirm that you don't have to be crazy to be a writer, but it certainly helps.
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Straight talk for Scribblers Sharon Mullins

- Be realistic about the remuneration you can expect for your efforts, and who should pay it.
- Publishers too are appalled at what the public will and won't pay for so don't take it personally if your work cannot be made into a financially viable print run.
- Understand that a commercial organisation has no moral obligation to lose money on your work.
- If you write for money, get used to producing what the market will pay for, even if it's not your main interest.
- If you write for non-commercial reasons, get used to the fact that other people may not pay money to read it.
- If you believe that commercial publishers are wrong, stupid, and inept and that you are a literary genius, then stop whingeing and publish it yourself. The market will soon prove who's correct.

Sharon Mullins is a Commissioning Editor for publishers.



Dress for Success Jean Woo

The problem is that your potential customers don't deduce things about you, they infer things about you. That is, they attribute moral characteristics and attitudes to you based on your appearance. These attributions can be positive or negative. But once formed, they stick. Thus image is important, so "dress for effect." Her advice to writers:

- Always aim to convey your trustworthiness to the other person. You must be seen as a person with integrity who can be counted on to provide solutions to their problems.
- Be memorable for the right reasons. Covers can sell or sink a book and your 'personal packaging' can sell or sink you.
- First impressions count – lots! The human brain is hardwired to form first impressions fast. So dress accordingly because your clothes send psychological signals.
- Attractive people persuade and influence more easily than their less attractive peers. So be attractive! And if you can't be one then at least dress like one.
- The next best thing to looking good is looking alike. You increase your chances of getting what you want when you dress similarly (not identically) to the person with whom you're dealing.
- Artistic dishevelment engenders neither trust nor excitement in potential employers. Neatness and alertness convey reliability. 'Reliable' translates into dependable, trustworthy, 'manuscript on time'.

It's a fact, your appearance either works for you or against you. Since you wear clothes anyway, you might as well wear ones that earn money for you.

Once a commercial lawyer, Jean Woo has been an image consultant for over 10 years. She is author of Executive Style (Prentice Hall) and is now co-writing Dress for Effect. Jean advises people on all aspects of their 'visual packaging.' Mention this article and receive a deep discount on her services. jean@personalbrand.com.au



Marketing 101 for Writers Robert Louis Galinsky

Too many writers avoid sales and marketing activities. But no marketing means no sale! 99% of Australian writers won't find an agent in the USA, and few domestic agents know what they're doing. So in order to earn a living by writing, you need to learn about the business of writing.

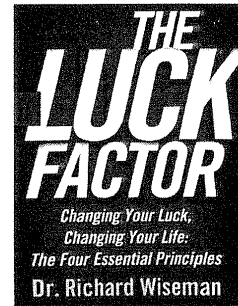
There really is a lot of work here in Oz. Every week I find someone who has a story to tell and will pay a qualified writer to tell it. CASH. NOW. No paperwork, no FTO or AFC bureaucracy, no waiting months to hear a 'no'. Just MONEY IN HAND. That's a working writer.

True, some writers find it difficult to market themselves. But you either learn or you live unpublished, un-produced, and unfulfilled. The good news is that you can learn to do it. It's only difficult because you avoid it.

Writers don't need funding and 'business assistance' as much as they need coaching on how to pitch, market, present, etc. I hate to say it but a mediocre writer who is a good salesperson will be far more fulfilled than a GREAT writer who never gets their works seen. Great writing doesn't count if no one sees it. Any writer can put it on the page, but a real writer gets it published (or produced).

Writers write because they love it. Now let your love also encompass the marketing of yourself and your skills. Self-promotion takes practice but then, so does writing. Not to experience this part of the love affair is the real tragedy.

In addition to writing Hollywood movies (Flatliners), American TV comedy and co-writing/producing the Australian film There's Something About Jesus (in production) Robert L. Galinsky helps writers take their ideas from concept to reality. screengems@ozemail.com.au



Learn to be Lucky! Robert Wiseman

Think that success depends on luck? Then create your own!

Psychologist Richard Wiseman [*The Luck Factor*, London, Arrow Books] has studied luck for years. He reveals the four proven ways you can increase your luck by up to 40% in 1 month.

- Create, notice and act upon chance opportunities in life-- Luck is not being in the right place at the right time; it's being in the right state of mind. Lucky people aren't reclusive. They initiate conversations with people and thus generate opportunities. No one gets lucky in isolation. So network! One chance encounter can change your life.
- Listen to your hunches-- Lucky people use intuition when making decisions. Intuition is a signal from the part of the brain that processes information non-rationally (not irrationally) and unconsciously. Intuition will never replace intelligence but it deserves equal time.
- Expect good fortune-- Lucky people expect to get what they want even when it's unclear how. Unlucky people expect and prepare for the worst. Lucky people believe the glass is half full, that there's a silver lining, and that things work out for the best eventually. That's why lucky people attempt to succeed even when chances of success are slim. Luck is mostly a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Transform bad luck into good – Luck is alchemy: turning bad into good. Look for the positive in the negative; see the bright side and imagine how it could've been worse. Lucky people don't dwell on misfortune. They let go of past rejections and focus on the future. You think thoughts anyway so they might as well be constructive thoughts.

Life is not a lottery. Our luck comes from the way we interact with the world and the people in it.

To increase your good fortune, simply start thinking and behaving like a lucky person.

Remember, serendipity is ubiquitous!