



Authors and Agents: A Strategic Alliance

My Manuscript is Done, Now What?

- Is it polished/edited/ ready to present?
- Do I know my market?
- Have I researched Christian publishers? Am I familiar with the publishing process and its vocabulary?
- Have I familiarize myself with each submission guideline?
- How do I acquire an agent? What does an agent do. . . exactly?

What Does An Agent Do. . . Exactly?

- They are your number one advocate for your work.
- They work through the agency proposal process with you.
- They keep a pulse on what editor's are looking for and what the current trends are and position your work accordingly.
- They submit the proposal presentation to strategically determined publishers.
- They keep correspondence up with editors and publishers for reminders, re-pitches, etc.
- They negotiate contract terms (ie. advance, royalties, ms due date, international rights, ebook rights, etc.)
- They provide valuable counsel regarding which publisher would be the best fit for you with your future writing career in mind.
- They will oversee the publication process and advise you throughout.
- They will serve as a buffer between you and the publisher—giving counsel and perspective.

- They will serve as an invaluable coach, cheerleader, advisor, and friend having your best interests in mind.
- They will be enthusiastic about your writing and topic
- They will offer constructive critique to improve your work
- They will make strategic business decisions on your manuscript based on:
 - a) If they think it will survive in the marketplace
 - b) Past experience
 - c) Current trends
 - d) Gut instinct

How to Look For a Reputable Agent

- Research agencies and agents by using directories and trade journals
- Ask other author's (especially published ones!)
- Create a list of agents that specialize in your genre
- Check them out on social media to get a feel for their personalities and interests
- Have a top 5 list or cast your net out wide?

Traits of a Good, Personal Fit

- Similar communication styles
- Established mutual candor
- Sense of humor
- Same goals
- Trust
- Would they be a personal friend?
- Comfortable with their personal style
- Mutual dedication
- Mutual efficiency

- Knowledgeable

How to Recognize a REAL Agent

A REAL Agent:

- Doesn't charge up-front fees (editing, evaluations, reading, etc.) 15% standard fee when ms is sold
- Doesn't usually advertise for clients
- Works with publishing houses you recognize
- Doesn't insist on only interacting electronically
- Doesn't sell "extra" services (ie, business cards, internet ad placement, etc.)
- Gets paid when you get paid, once your ms is sold
- Works hard right alongside you every step of the way
- Has a "track record" that is *not* confidential
- Is open for you to check their reputation in the industry, and with their authors etc.
- Doesn't make promises he/she can't keep
- Isn't looking for short stories or poetry
- Is professional as are their websites
- Invests fully in their authors

Preparing the Submission: How to Get Deleted

- *Think you are exempt from following the agencies submission guidelines.*
- Don't check to see what they've asked for-just give them what you feel they need.
- Be long-winded, general, and vague in your cover letter.
- Have *no* cover letter to your proposal.
- Don't stand out. Be boring, use clichés, be extra personal.
- Sound desperate.
- Emphasize you are a new author.

- Submit with confidence, not arrogance
- Apologize for anything and everything
- Tell me God told you to write it—so that settles it!
- Don't explain what makes your ms unique
- Have a non-existent platform
- Be general in your market audience and the book's felt need.
- Tell me you are the next J. K. Rowlings or C. S. Lewis
- Compare your work to literary masterpieces

From an Agent's Point of View

Not "Why should I read this? But, "Why *shouldn't* I delete this?"

- What is going to make me look at this twice?
- How captivating is the idea?
- How captivating is the writing?
- How captivating is their influence?
- The Three C's: Concept, Craft and Crowd

The Three C's

- **Concept:** How captivating is the concept? Is there a felt need in the market?
- **Craft:** How well is it written? How well are the sentences crafted? How well is the concept articulated? How well is it edited?
- **Crowd:** Social media platform, endorsements, circle of influence—growing or stagnant?

When an Agent Takes an Interest

- Requests the full manuscript or additional chapters
- Follows up with a phone call to chat personally
- An Agents questions:

1) Are you willing to take the time to expand your platform?

2) Are you open to revisions before pitching?

3) Are you willing to change the title?

The Agent/Author Partnership: It's a Beautiful Thing!

- Two heads are better than one!
- You have a solid partner in the process
- You have a cheerleader!
- You have someone who is knowledgeable, has your best interests in mind and the potential of becoming a life-long friend!

Conclusion

- This journey is a lot of work!
- It demands patience, self-reflection, good writing, a unique voice, humility and prayer for guidance.
- It requires flexibility and a trust in the process
- Requires an evaluation of your expectations
- Requires you to define "success"

Resources

- Writer's Digest www.writersdigest.com
- ChristianManuscriptSubmissions.com
- Michaelhyatt.com

Articles: *Advice to First Time Author's*

Before You Hire a Literary Agent

Ebook: *Agents Who Represent Christian Authors*