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
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](http://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*