



## The Author's Career Cheat Sheet!

*Every career needs a push in the right direction now and then, and the best way to do that is to know exactly where you are and where you're headed.*

Hi there,

My name is Joe Mynhardt, and I'm the founder and CEO of Crystal Lake Publishing—Tales from the Darkest Depths, based in South Africa.

Yip, you read correctly. South Africa! If that doesn't show you anything's possible, nothing will. Best of all, Crystal Lake Publishing was started with just an idea, and a small desk computer in the corner of our tiny apartment's living room.

Today I'm living the dream of working full-time behind that very same desk (now with a faster computer). Better than that, I was able to leave a job that no longer offered me any intrinsic reward. The last few years were tough, but I had a goal in sight and nothing was going to slow me down. If you're an author, I'm sure you have your own goals and dreams.

I went from being an author to publisher, editor, and now entrepreneur teaching others how to best run their careers and avoid stagnation. Now that I have more time, I want to share what I've learned from others. I want to save you time so you can concentrate on what you love most, writing.

What follows is a very short recap of just a few things I've learned over the years, with the help of other industry experts and online entrepreneurs. I want to give authors the head start I didn't get when I started out. This is not a list of writing tips that simply tells you to 'Read Read Read' or 'Write Write Write.' This is about running your career like a business, building a brand and a platform. Getting more exposure for you and your work. See it as an investment in your career. If you'd like to learn more from the Crystal Lake team and myself, be sure to check out bottom of this PDF.

Like it or not, but as an author you need to be visible to your readers now more than ever. Your career is a business, and it needs to be promoted and marketed as such. It needs an image. A brand. Whether you're self-published or traditionally published, or have no book published yet, it's never too early or too late to learn more about the aspects mentioned below. These steps will put you on the right track no matter what genre you're writing in, or how long you've been doing it.

If you already have a publisher, make sure they're looking into these things, as well. If at any moment you find yourself with questions or need some more info, be sure to read the end of this document.

### Here we go:

- ▶ Learn about Wordpress, start your own website, and create a blog with strong content created by you or other industry experts. Don't just learn the basics, learn about every tool at your disposal.
- ▶ Play to your strengths. Are you comfortable in social gatherings, video chats, live interviews, social media? Look toward what you'll see as a perfect day when you're a full-time writer. Is Twitter part of that day? Or recording videos for YouTube? Be yourself right from the start and you'll find the right fans. I hope hours of writing is part of that perfect day.
- ▶ Make sure you have a Goodreads author page, as well as an Amazon author page (there are things you can add to your book that the editor or publisher can't even control). All connected to your Twitter feed, website, etc. Be active, and make sure you answer any questions sent your way via Goodreads' readers. Giving away two paperbacks of every book you release works well for getting eyes on your book, but giveaways don't end there. Check out the rest of the cheat sheet for more info on giveaways.
- ▶ Use the internet to the best of its abilities. Learn as much as you can about every single platform you're on. YouTube isn't just for watching videos about cats and screaming goats, you know? However, don't rely too much on building your social media empire. You might have 5,000 fans on your Facebook page, but that page doesn't belong to you. Facebook recently made it almost impossible for us to reach all our fans without paying for ads and boosts. Use social media to hook your readers and take them to your website, blog, and especially newsletter (platforms you own and control). We'll get to that in a bit.

➔ Do your market research before, during, and after writing your book. Check out the category you're targeting on Amazon. Which books are at the top? Read their reviews and find out what the readers like about these books, and especially what they don't like (particularly for non-fiction). If you don't know what your target audience likes and dislikes, it's like driving blind and hoping you'll reach your destination. Don't see this as 'writing to market'. This is about knowing who your market is, based on the story ideas already in your head (your genre or sub-genre). Don't let what's popular stifle your imagination.

➔ Quick tips on stimulating your imagination: get out of the house, meet other authors/interesting people, brainstorm with other writers, discuss ideas and not people, go to conventions, and live life. Conventions are extremely important for networking and creating opportunities. Plus, they keep you motivated and give you awesome stories and photos to share with your fans.



Learn about the possibilities of connecting your eBooks and your newsletter lists. That's right, you can have more than one newsletter list. Perhaps one for fiction and non-fiction. Offer readers free content to keep that list growing. Learn about copy editing and how to best write emails, sales pitches, and even email subject lines. Eventually, when you approach an agent or publisher, you can show them that you have a following of 1,000 or 2,000 fans awaiting your next book (not Facebook or Twitter fans—actual email subscribers). That's what publishers want to hear when they ask about your existing platform. If an author pitches me a book and mentions actual numbers like that, it's a lot easier to see that book as being a possible success, and that's before I even start reading it. Publishers and editors need to figure out how to market a book, not just look for something worth reading. These are the things that make some small presses (or some self-publishers) stand out above the rest. We don't just publish a book and move on to the next one. We experiment and try new things. I'm proud to say this is exactly what we do here at Crystal Lake Publishing.



Learn about landing pages on your website, especially the opt-in page you're using for the newsletter signups we talked about above. You can create your own using Mailchimp or whatever service provider you've got, or check out OptimizedPress and LeadPages.

Remember, your Amazon page is also a landing page, and if your conversion rate (from someone looking to someone buying) is less than 15%, you need to do something about it. Your book isn't invisible on Amazon, but what if only 3 out of every 100 readers who land on that page actually make a purchase? If your publisher doesn't want to update it, you can use Amazon's Author Central to at least add editorial reviews. And learn about html text so you can put those reviews in italics and the names of the reviewers or magazines in bold. It stands out nicely and looks professional. Here are two examples ([Gutted](#)) and ([Where the Dead Go to Die](#)) of Crystal Lake titles putting all of what we've just covered into practice.

Amazon is not just an online shop—it's a search engine. Be sure to learn everything you can about keywords, categories, and Search Engine Optimization (SEO). If you're using YouTube, it's extremely important to add keywords. Add as many as you can think of and fit in (related to the video, of course). Check out Wordpress and even Chrome plug-ins for authors and giveaways. Find one where folks need to give you your emails to enter (can you see that mailing list grow?).

Who you know does make a difference. Not because you use them as stepping stones, but because they can guide you toward windows of opportunity, just like you can guide them or introduce them to your other contacts. If you help them, most of them will help you. So, make friends with anyone who can influence your path, from reviewers and bloggers to podcasters, publishers, editors, and social media influencers.

➤ Share your writing experience with your readers. From social media posts, blog posts, photos, videos, vlogs on YouTube, Instagram, etc. Let them be part of the journey, through the good and the bad. Let them help you come up with character names, book titles and subtitles, or even cover art. By the time the book comes out, they'll already feel invested, and will be overcome with the urge to go full circle and read the book.

➤ Just like Amazon, YouTube is also best described as a search engine. Check out some YouTube plug-ins to help you best target your audience.

➤ Write a series with strong characters. It's a great career move and extremely profitable. Readers like to be entertained and spend time with their favorite characters in awesome settings, so give them what they most desire. It'll be a slow start, but in the end worth the investment. If you have a say in the cost of your books, make the 1<sup>st</sup> one free when you have three or four books in the series. You must always think long term. If you're self-publishing this, remember to get an editor, a great cover (all the books in the series must have a similar theme), as well as interior artwork to help build this world of yours on social media.

➤ Save time and use auto-responders and scheduled posts for Facebook and Twitter (once you have enough to share, of course). I have tweets going out while I'm sleeping, since the time zone difference between America and where I live is quite large (between 7 and 10 hours).

Since you now have a mailing list (or working on it), make sure you have a launch team/street team, as well. A group of people who'll not only promote your book on launch day, but read an advance copy of your book and leave a review on launch day. Early reviews are extremely important with a launch. The more the better. You can join Crystal Lake's launch team [right here](#).

Look at what other authors and publishers are doing, what readers are saying, but never copy. Be yourself and do it in your unique way. That's what will make you stand out. And if you don't stand out, it'll be difficult to be noticed, if not impossible. Remember, people who don't do things their own way end up disappointed in the life they've created, since it's not uniquely *their life*.

To further emphasize what I said above, subscribe to a lot of newsletters by small presses and self-published authors, even the big name authors. See how they do things and pick up some tips. Roll the ideas around in your head, paring them off with your strengths, and come up with something you.

Please don't post about politics or religion on Facebook. There's a place and time for everything, and when you're a public figure (no matter how small), everything you do is judged. So don't get involved in arguments. It doesn't matter how many people agree with you, you'll always lose a few fans or aggravate someone who'll end up smearing your name at conventions, etc. Perhaps even to publishers and editors. Now you know how internet trolls are born.

And that's it.

These are just a few basic things to look into. Use the same creativity you use to write in your marketing efforts. Results will vary from author to author and genre to genre, but you cannot just write and publish, write and publish. You'll quickly lose motivation when your books aren't selling. And be careful with social media. Don't overdo it. Don't be *That Guy* who keeps talking about how cool his book is. And emailing or messaging folks to buy your book is in really poor taste. BEWARE!

So, if you work on your voice and writing skills, practice and write every day, read like a machine, free your creativity, and follow most of the steps above, you'll already have a huge advantage over most authors.

Don't over-promote (social media is great, but we all know it has a lot of pitfalls, so stay focused). Don't be that guy! Use the majority of your time writing. That's your main mission. The rest of this stuff is vital, but secondary to improving your writing every day. You're a writer first! Just don't wait too long before you start promoting your career. Give your yet-to-be-written books the best possible launch they can get.

**Here's the biggest thing I've learned about being a writer/entrepreneur and life in general:**

Everything comes down to balance. Balance every aspect of your life and you'll stress less while still moving your career forward. Go and find that right balance for you (not everyone's the same) and keep producing at a sensible and productive pace that still pushes you enough to keep you motivated and committed. If you, for instance, neglect your family, you'll pretty soon find yourself without one. And don't think for a second you'll be more productive alone, unless that's what you're already doing.

Other than that, make sure you enjoy what you do. If you can't go a day without thinking about it, don't give it up.

Put your best foot forward. Be approachable, kind, honest, and respectable. You won't believe how many loyal fans we have just from replying to every single message, email, tweet, and even direct message on Twitter, etc. I thank people, comment on their blogs, email them on their birthday. Anything that helps them notice how important they are in your career. Don't think for a second your career is only about your writing talent. Not even close.

Remember, a career is not built on one book alone, so keep writing. Keep creating. Show readers the worlds that exist in your imagination. Create a world worth writing and reading about long after you're gone.

Thanks for reading this cheat sheet. I hope you take the time to look at some of the stuff we talked about. If you'd like to find out more about these aspects in detail, or learn a lot more than I've mentioned here, get in touch with me at [crystallakepub@gmail.com](mailto:crystallakepub@gmail.com) to book your spot on our month-long mentorship program, after which you'll join an exclusive mailing list where you'll get weekly updates related to the business side of publishing and writing for a living. Let me do the research for you, while you do what you do best. At the very least you'll spend less time doing research. The Crystal Lake editors are also standing by to help you with your written word, and if something comes along that we can't help you with, we'll find the person who can. You can check out our editing and mentorship programs [here](#).

Join now.

Best of luck,  
Joe Mynhardt  
Founder and CEO

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