



SELF-ESTEEM AND THE SUCCESS OF YOUR BOOK

BY ROB EAGAR

***Bonus article based on Rob Eagar's [Sell Your Book Like Wildfire](http://bookwildfire.com)
(bookwildfire.com)*

What if the success of a book has more to do with what's in the author's psyche, rather than what's written in the pages? After working with over four hundred authors, including several bestsellers from different genres, an unexpected pattern caught my attention. In many cases, I found that an author's success hinges more on their self-confidence and mental state than the content of their book.

For example, I've observed that authors who exhibit high self-esteem tend to be more creative with their marketing plans, they follow through on promotional tasks, and they actually sell more books. In contrast, writers I've met who exhibit low self-esteem tend to struggle with implementing new marketing activities and staying consistent. Predictably their book sales languish. I'm not saying there is a direct scientific correlation, but there is a pattern that bears discussion.

Why does an author's self-esteem even matter? Most people buy a book without ever meeting the person who wrote it. The problem is that there

are real consequences when an author allows a lack of confidence to affect her book-marketing efforts. For instance, she will be more likely to:

- Avoid building a community of readers, both online and off.
- Balk at developing peer-to-peer relationships with influential leaders.
- Eschew finding and contacting large reader groups who could buy books in quantity.
- Ignore spur of the moment media opportunities, such as tying into national headlines.
- Shun speaking engagements or promoting the book to larger audiences.
- Exhibit inconsistency with key marketing tactics, such as blogging, posting on social media, or sending newsletters, and give up too easily.

In his book, *Million Dollar Speaking*, Alan Weiss says, "There is no music if you don't blow your own horn." This statement is profoundly true for book marketing, whether you're a first-time or established author. You must believe in your own message strongly enough to promote your book above the noise of all the competition. Yet this can happen only when you feel an ardent confidence in your manuscript accompanied by an enthusiasm to tell other people about it.

Oddly, self-esteem issues tend to plague fiction and religious authors more than others. I've met numerous novelists who are downright frightened to promote their book in public. Likewise I've met religious authors who stridently avoid marketing their books because they harbor the misguided notion to appear humble. They make pious statements, such as "It's not godly to draw attention to myself." Attitudes like these, however, are usually a disguise for a low self-esteem. The reality is that these authors don't want to attract attention because they struggle with an internal sense of low worth.

I'm not making this point to advocate shamelessly plugging your books. Some people go overboard and develop a negative reputation for being too pushy. You probably know some of these individuals, and they're a total turnoff. On the contrary, my point is that readers appreciate authors who believe in their ability to provide answers, inspiration, or entertainment.

When an author acts like he's too scared to promote his own book, he sends the signal that his book must not be worth purchasing.

If you're an author who struggles with self-confidence, there are steps you can take to improve your marketing efforts and increase book sales. In some cases, chronic feelings of low self-esteem may require counseling. However, in most situations, you can strengthen your mind-set by dealing with the following questions.

1. Do you truly believe that your book provides tangible value for your readers?

When you know you can do it, it isn't bragging when you tell other people. If you know your novel will give readers a great experience or challenge their perspective, you don't need to be shy about promoting your fiction. If you know that your nonfiction book will help someone overcome a problem or gain important insights, you don't need to market with a timid attitude.

In the world of public speaking, audiences tend to feed off of the energy of the presenter. Likewise many book readers will take their cue from the confidence, or lack thereof, that the author displays—either online or in person. So if you know that your book provides tangible value, you are better off asserting that value. Otherwise people may think your book isn't worth purchasing, because you don't act like it's worth purchasing.

2. Has your message actually worked in your own life, or inspired you? If so, can you recite clear examples of the results?

One of the best ways to verify the value of your book is to use yourself as the test case. If writing your novel gave you a deep sense of personal satisfaction, would it stand to reason that readers would enjoy the experience of reading it? If the topic of your nonfiction book forced you to rethink or find new answers to a challenge, would others get the same benefit?

If the author doesn't encounter any benefit from writing the manuscript, it's hard to imagine the book will offer value to the world. Most professional painters would not put their artwork on display and publicly say, "I hate it." Most professional chefs would not create a favorite entrée and think, "This food is terrible." As an author, you are also an

artist who should release your work to the public with joy and anticipation. This doesn't mean everyone will love your book. But if you benefited from the creative experience, you can bet many people will appreciate your efforts.

3. What makes you comfortable recommending a favorite restaurant or product to a friend? Does that same feeling occur when you mention your book to someone else?

How often do you recommend a new product or local store to your neighbor? Most people do it often in a way that feels very natural. Why does that process seem so easy? We believe that we're looking out for the other person's best interests. We want our neighbor to enjoy the same good experience we enjoyed. Our satisfaction is increased when we help others obtain the same good result we experienced.

Imagine that you encourage a neighbor to visit a new restaurant because the cuisine is excellent. In that moment, are you trying to be a shy-ster? No, you're looking out for your neighbor's best interests. You had a good experience at the restaurant, and you want your neighbor to have a similar good experience. You're attempting to transfer your happiness so that someone else can share it.

If marketing your book feels unnatural, look at the situation as if you're making a product recommendation to a friend. It doesn't matter that you authored the book. If you know that it will help people, then you know you're looking out for their best interests. Hence there's no need to feel guilty or shameless about promoting your work. You're not trying to make a buck off people; you're trying to help them.

I'm not trying to sound pie in the sky and overly spin this issue. Remember, even shy people recommend things to their friends. So if you feel uncomfortable recommending your book to others (that is, marketing), you have to question if you truly believe your book is beneficial. If you know the value is real, then there's no reason to feel ashamed about getting the word out.

4. What's the worst that could happen if you tell more people about your book?

Some authors are terrified to promote their books, because they're more afraid of labels than success. I've met authors who insinuate that the act of marketing makes you look desperate or pushy, and that religious people shouldn't draw attention to themselves. These beliefs reveal a fear of other people's wrath, which to these authors must be more important to avoid than writing a book and reaching as many people as possible.

I'm no psychologist, so I can't explain the mental and emotional factors that contribute to this mind-set. But, frankly, this kind of anxiety makes me wonder, "If writing a book is such a huge sacrifice of time, money, and energy, why would you let other people hinder your success because you're afraid of what they might say?"

I'll never forget one of the wisest comments my mother ever made to me: "You will never be at peace in life until you get to the point that you don't care what other people say." Obviously my mother wasn't advocating a careless disregard for the opinions of those who are close to us. Instead I think she meant that the more you learn to tune out the noise from those who don't matter, the more liberated you will feel. Liberation spurs confidence. And the more confident you become, the easier it is to market your books effectively.

Consequently, if you're a good writer, don't let feelings of low self-esteem prevent you from helping or entertaining the people who need your books. Just because someone might say no, doesn't mean you're worthless or a bad person. Be proud of the way you're trying to help society. Toot your horn a little. What's the worst that could happen? You just might sell a lot more books.