



WILL A BRAND FENCE ME IN?

BY ROB EAGAR

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

Some authors are concerned that creating a brand will limit their ability to write books on a wide range of subjects. They don't want to limit themselves. However, this mind-set can actually do more harm than good.

If you avoid creating a brand in the attempt to write on a wide variety of disconnected topics, you will eventually become a "jack of all trades—master of none." When you're a master of nothing, people find it hard to take you seriously. Experts are rarely good at everything. Rather they take one set of issues and focus on becoming highly proficient in that area.

For instance, James Patterson doesn't write cookbooks. He writes thrillers. Patricia Cornwell doesn't write romance. She writes forensic mysteries. Tom Clancy doesn't write science fiction. He writes military adventures. These successful authors remain bestsellers because they've built a brand around their area of expertise and stuck with it. If they veered into other genres, it would confuse their audience and hurt their book sales.

Can you write for more than one genre? Yes, but it's much easier when you've built a strong brand first. Once you're known as an expert for some-

thing, the public may offer you some leeway to explore other fields of interest. For example, John Grisham has written off-brand books about sports and Christmas. And he can do this because he's a well-known author. Once you have an established brand and a regarded name, you can make a left turn with your brand and try new ideas.

Success follows expertise, because experts are superior at providing their audiences with results. People view experts as leaders that they can trust, and that trust creates the comfort level to buy their books. Therefore, if you fail to establish expertise as an author, you will have a hard time establishing trust with a large following of readers.

Creating an author brand isn't meant to limit your opportunities. Instead it's meant to help you discern which book projects will make you the most successful. Staying true to your brand will let you know which books to write and which book ideas to turn down. I have clients who write both fiction and nonfiction, but every book they write fits under the umbrella of their brand.

Your brand should be a reflection of who you are and the expertise showcased in your books. Be yourself, and don't try to please everyone or write on everything. Otherwise you may lose yourself in the process and wind up with no identity at all.