

MASTERING BOOK HOOKS FOR AUTHORS



**How to Capture Reader
ATTENTION and Book Sales
in 30 Words or Less.**

R O B E A G A R

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About the Author

Rob Eagar is one of the most accomplished book marketing experts in America. He's personally coached over 450 authors, consulted with top publishing houses, and helped clients hit the *New York Times* bestseller list three different ways, including new fiction, new non-fiction, and backlist non-fiction. He even helped a book become a *New York Times* bestseller after 23 years in print!



Rob's consulting firm, Wildfire Marketing, has attracted numerous bestselling authors, including Dr. Gary Chapman, DeVon Franklin, Lysa TerKeurst, Wanda Brunstetter, and Dr. John Townsend. In addition, he's consulted with imprints of the world's best-known publishers, such as HarperCollins, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, and Penguin / Random House.

Rob is the author of *Sell Your Book Like Wildfire* along with numerous resources including *Find Readers and Sell Books on a Shoestring Budget*, and *Mastering Book Hooks for Authors*. For more information, visit:

<http://www.startawildfire.com>

Endorsements

"I recommend Rob Eagar to any author looking to take their book campaign to a higher level."

Dr. Gary Chapman

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Five Love Languages*

"I give Rob Eagar my highest recommendation. If you want to increase book sales, make him the first person you hire."

Lysa TerKeurst

4-time *New York Times* bestselling author

"Rob Eagar gets great results and strategically places authors in the right spaces. I'm happy with what Rob did for me, and I highly recommend him."

Dr. John Townsend

New York Times bestselling author of *Boundaries*

"Rob Eagar provided effective marketing strategy and worked closely with my team to execute new promotional ideas. I highly recommend Rob."

DeVon Franklin

CEO of Franklin Entertainment and *New York Times* bestselling author

"Rob revolutionized how I market my novels and connect with readers. His Book Marketing Master Class gave me more fantastic ideas that I knew what to do with."

Dani Pettrey

Bestselling novelist with over 300,000 copies sold

"Rob Eagar's expertise helped me develop a new brand and create an exciting new website. It was beyond my expectations and included everything I asked for and more."

Wanda Brunstetter

6-time *New York Times* bestselling novelist with over 10 million copies sold

What is a Book Hook?

What if you could convince people to buy your book with just one sentence?

What I told you how to do it in three easy steps? Would you want to learn how? Of course, every author would be curious to know the answer.

That's the power of a hook. And, it just worked on you (ha!)

Imagine the ability to quickly grab people's attention in 30 words or less. How much more effective would your marketing efforts be if you had an amazing book hook?

A hook is a statement or question designed to generate immediate curiosity and make the reader desire to know more.

However, I'm going to be honest with you up-front. Creating a book hook is not always easy. Recently, I challenged a group of 15 authors at various levels to send me good hooks to review. No one passed the test. I received numerous attempts. But, every author sent statements that were bland, vague, or downright boring. Even established authors struggled with the exercise.

When I told the group that none of their hooks were effective, some complained that creating a good was just too hard. Their tone implied that hooks aren't important enough to warrant the mental struggle. One author even asked me, "What's the big deal? I've already sold a lot of books without creating hooks in the past."

This author's perspective brings up a valid question, "Is a book hook actually important?" Let's analyze the purpose of a book hook, then you be the judge.

What is a hook supposed to do? One thing only. Get people's attention.

ATTENTION!

That's all. Attention is the word that matters.

In other words, you're not simply creating a hook. You're creating a simple way to get people's attention.

Now, ask yourself, "Is getting people's attention important to selling more books?"

Heck, yeah. Think about it. How do you expect to sell something when you can't get a person's attention in the first place?

Attention is everything.

It's next to impossible to sell a book to someone who is distracted, dispassionate, or disinterested.

I've been there. I can remember numerous occasions when someone found out I was an author and asked, "So, what's your book about?" I got all excited and launched into reciting the main points of my manuscript. But, about 30 seconds into my response, I could see the other person start to look around the room, or look down at their phone, or even worse, watch their eyes begin to glaze over.

It's a miserable feeling when you feel another person's attention begin to slip away.

There's that word again – attention.

On the other hand, think about how much easier it is to sell a product when you HAVE someone's attention. You can feel the enthusiasm, the interest, the desire to know more.

I don't mean to sound depressing, but consider how many more books you could have sold in the past if you had more people's attention? Let's look at the basic math.

Attention = Book Sales

More Attention = More Book Sales

Lots of Attention = Lots of Book Sales

I'm not trying to be cute or sound trite. It's the reality that every author faces. If you want to sell more books, learn how to get more people's attention. That's why a hook is so important.

Creating a hook might be difficult, but that doesn't mean you should downplay the importance. I know you can do it. How do I know?

Writing a book is one of the most difficult tasks in life. Yet, you found a way to push through the challenge and get the job done.

What if you could increase your book sales just by creating a great book hook?

Do I have your attention?

Word of Mouth is Lazy

Before we look at the specifics of creating a book hook, there's one more important purpose to consider.

Selling a book by yourself is hard. Selling a book using word of mouth is much easier. Wouldn't you agree? Every author dreams of readers telling their friends, "Oh my gosh, you have to get this book...it's amazing!"

However, few readers are professional marketers. Instead, they're accountants and managers and teachers and parents and average Joes. These people aren't trained in marketing, nor are they interested in promoting your book as their job.

Most readers, though, are happy to recommend a book if it makes them look good and doesn't require too much effort. Notice that last phrase, "doesn't require too much effort." This reveals an often-overlooked fact about word of mouth.

Word of mouth is lazy.

That's right, word of mouth is laaazzzzzyyyyyy.

I learned about this concept in a wonderful book called, *Word of Mouth Marketing*, by Andy Sernovitz (I highly recommend that you buy a copy... see my word of mouth?!) In his book, Andy says:

Word of mouth is lazy. You must help it along if you want it to go anywhere.

Digest that quote for a moment. Word of mouth is naturally lethargic, which creates a problem for authors. Here's why.

Many writers assume that after they write a book other people are going to love it as much as they do. They expect readers to go buy 10 copies and give them all away, or go tell all of their friends to buy books. Word of mouth is going to be easy.

That's not the case. In most situations, word of mouth is lazy. People are busy. People don't always know what to say. People forget to tell others about your book, even when they like it. That's why it's ultimately the author's job to help make word of mouth grow.

What's an easy way to help boost more word of mouth? A book hook. Here are two reasons why.

1. A book hook give readers something worth talking about.

Never underestimate the connection between word of mouth and a reader's ego. People like to be the first to tell their friends something cool. People are more likely to recommend a book when it makes them look good. People are more likely to mention a book when it helps cause interesting conversation. A book hook naturally fits that need.

2. A book hook trains readers how to spread good word of mouth.

A book hook can be easily transferred from one person to another. For instance, when your book hook convinces someone to buy your book, your hook also trains that person what to tell their friends. If they want to spread word of mouth, they can simply repeat your memorable book hook to someone else. That makes life easy.

Remember, word of mouth is lazy and ego-driven. But, a book hook helps you overcome both of those issues.

Language is the Power of the Book Sale

More than ever before, authors can access incredible technology to help market their books. However, we can get so caught up in the software, machines, and screens that we lose sight of our actual customers, who are human beings.

People don't buy books because of technology. People buy books because of the words that the technology brings to their attention. Here's the fundamental truth to remember:

Language is the power of the book sale. A book hook is your secret weapon.

Computers don't make people buy books. Computers just present words for people to read and decide if they want to buy a book. Therefore, the better your marketing language, the better the odds you'll grab a reader's interest.

Your book hook may appear on a screen served up by a machine. But, it's the words people read and the emotions they feel that convince them to spend the money to buy your book.

When you consider all the places where your book hook can appear, which I'll explain later, there are a lot of opportunities for using language to help capture book sales.

How to Create a Book Hook

What if you found out your book was going to get turned into a movie? You'd be thrilled, right? Watching a book come to life in theaters is every author's dream.

Ironically, that dream is actually the secret to create a book hook. If you want to create an effective hook, imagine your book as a movie.

Seriously, remove your author hat for a moment and think like a screenwriter.

In Hollywood, a screenwriter's career is based on how well he or she can pitch a movie script starting with a powerful hook. In addition, whenever you see a movie poster or watch a television commercial, there's usually one sentence displayed meant to grab your attention.

Most screenwriters know that if you can't "pitch" your movie to a studio in one sentence, then you don't have the hook figured out yet. You've got to boil everything down to one concise idea that commands attention.

For example, below are three hooks for popular movies that came from books. Notice how the hook works for the movie concept as well as the original book idea.

What if a man with amnesia has forgotten he's the world's most dangerous assassin?
The Bourne Identity by Robert Ludlum

What if scientists unleash huge dinosaurs on earth by cloning them from prehistoric mosquito blood?
Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton

What if a high-end law firm turned out to be a front for the Mafia?
The Firm by John Grisham

Most movies come from books. So, if a hook can be created for a movie, then a hook can certainly be created for a book. The trick is to look at your book from a screenwriter's point of view.

What If You Write Non-Fiction?

Okay, I know every non-fiction author reading this is probably thinking, "Rob, are you crazy? I write non-fiction. Your movie analogy doesn't apply to my genre."

Not so fast, my non-fiction friends. I agree that my movie analogy may seem easier to apply for novelists. But, it works effectively for any type of book.

For example, what if you write non-fiction history, education, religion, or self-help? Imagine your book will be turned into a feature documentary.

I love watching documentaries, especially the popular "30 for 30" sports documentaries on ESPN. They use a great technique to promote their films. When you see the television commercial, a narrator begins by asking the question:

"What if I told you ____?"

For each "30 for 30" documentary, ESPN fill's in the blank after the "What if I told you" question with a provocative statement. Below are several examples:

- What if I told you Muhammad Ali wasn't the greatest?
- What if I told you history isn't always written by the victors, but the losers?
- What if I told you that sports is sometimes a matter of life and death?
- What if I told you running a marathon is easy?

For a sample of ESPN's "30 for 30" documentary hooks, watch this YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJRisjTCuGE>

Notice how your curiosity is captured by the question, "What if I told you ____?" It's a simple technique that's incredibly powerful, even for documentaries.

Here's another approach for non-fiction authors, especially business, self-help, or educational books. Review your manuscript and make a list of the most contrarian teaching points.

Identify the most counterintuitive parts of your instruction or advice. Note where you write something that would make people think, “Wow, I’ve never heard that before...” or “I’ve never heard it put that way before.”

Contrarian teaching points work well in combination with the “what if I told you” technique. Notice how the following statements fly in the face of accepted beliefs:

- What if using debt to grow your business is the fastest way to turn a profit?
- What if I told you inviting conflict into a relationship builds more closeness?
- What if overcoming harmful habits has nothing to do with your self-control?

Take a non-fiction contrarian point and turn it into a provocative book hook.

Let’s switch gears to examine other non-fiction genres. For instance, what if you’ve written a memoir or an autobiography? Use the same “what if” movie documentary approach. Imagine your book as a dramatic tale on the silver screen. How would you make people curious about your story using one question or statement?

Hooks for Fiction

Obviously, if you write fiction, you can use the “what if I told you” technique that I just described for non-fiction authors. It’s easier to picture a novel as an upcoming major motion picture, such as a thriller, a romantic comedy, or a horror film. Again, think like a screenwriter and consider how you would pitch your “movie” to a studio.

Typically, a good hook for a novel should present a heroic quest and the implied conflict the protagonist will experience. You can break down your story into these questions to help develop a hook:

1. What makes the main character unique?
2. What type of quest or journey does the main character undertake?
3. What kind of conflict does the main character experience during the quest?

Use these three questions as a starting point for your “what if I told you” question. Just like a movie script, if you can’t sum up your “pitch” into one sentence, then you don’t have the hook figured out yet. It’s worth the extra effort to keep refining and honing your “what if” question.

Every great book hook has this quality in common: You want to know how the story, the history, or the non-fiction advice plays out.

In the next section, let's look at several examples of effective fiction and non-fiction hooks to understand the goal you're trying to achieve.

Examples of Fiction and Non-Fiction Hooks

You may find it easier to learn how to create a book hook by seeing the difference between good and bad examples. Let's start with what NOT to do. Read the following questions and ask yourself if they grab your attention:

- *What if you could wake up every day motivated and excited about your job?*

This hook attempt is too vague and generic. You can't tell what makes the book unique.

- *What if I told you everything you know about love is a lie, but the truth may be more than you can handle?*

This hook attempt sounds unrealistic and trite. It feels too much like an infomercial.

- *What if a teenage girl accidentally time traveled and fell into the body of a rebellious medieval woman who witnessed a murder and fell in love with a nobleman all the while trying to find a way home before she disappears forever?*

This hook attempt is too long. You're confused and lost attention by the sentence's end.

- *What if I you could dance your way to a lasting relationship?*

This hook attempt is too ambiguous and needs more detail to grab someone's interest.

- *What if the sinister visit from her deceased high school teacher wasn't a dream?*

This hook attempt just doesn't make sense to anyone but the author.

- *What if this book of poetry will be the most exciting thing you will ever read?*

What if I told you this hook attempt (actually sent to me by an author) just comes across as a desperate plea for attention?

Use these examples as clarification for what NOT to do. If your hook attempt is vague, trite, or confusing, it will just be an attempt – not an actual hook.

Also, avoid the mistake of using generic, sensational language to create emotion or intrigue for your hook that isn't there. For instance, empty phrases, such as, "like you've never heard before," "you won't believe it," or "the best ever" don't add value. They just water down a hook to meaningless mush.

A common problem for non-fiction authors is trying to teach the reader with a book hook. This misstep typically affects academic, religious, or business authors who are too enamored with their methodology or curriculum. They struggle to get out of their own head and view their book from the perspective of a skeptical reader.

Remember, when most people first see your book, they are apathetic, cynical, or distracted. They don't care about your methodology, your seven steps for success, your proven plan, or your sacred insights. That's why you need a hook to get people's attention.

However, the purpose of a hook is NOT to teach. Rather, the purpose of a hook is to TEASE the reader's interest in your book.

A great hook is easy for people to grasp. There is no confusion or lackluster response. Instead, readers' feel an emotional desire to know more about a book.

Let's look at several effective hooks as exemplars to follow. Use these hooks as guides. Don't get lazy and just copy what you see. Use your creativity to develop your own hook.

Also, avoid trying to guess the name of the book or movie. That's not the point of these examples, so I removed the original titles. Focus on using these samples as inspiration to develop your own hook by employing the "what if" question technique.

Examples of Fiction Book Hooks:

- What if the first man to walk on Mars suddenly realizes he'll be the first to die there?
- What if an angel visited a suicidal man to reveal how his town would look without him?

- What if four Jamaicans enter the Winter Olympics as a bobsled team...but have never seen snow?
- What if a man with amnesia has forgotten he's the world's most dangerous assassin?
- What if a high-end law firm turns out to be a major front for the Mafia?
- What if a heartbroken man receives a mysterious e-mail from his dead girlfriend, who may or may not be alive?
- What if your life is just a computer-generated illusion and every experience you've ever had was machine manufactured?
- What if a cop must choose between saving the life of his family or thousands of strangers?

Examples of Non-Fiction Book Hooks:

- What if a woman had led the civil rights movement, instead of Martin Luther King?
- What if you could be totally debt-free in 12 months, no matter how much you owe?
- What if you could train your brain to win?
- What if the amount of rainforest equal to 31 million football fields disappears each year?
- What if a belief in God leads to strange emotions that an atheist never feels?
- What if the biggest people-pleaser can learn how to say no without feeling guilty?
- What if everyone speaks, but not everyone is heard?
- What if a poor, petite, abused Latina immigrant rose to become one of the most powerful women in America?

Notice how these “what if” questions grab your attention. You may not agree with the premise, but it’s hard to deny the desire to know more. That’s the purpose of a book hook. Make people curious. Make them wonder. Make them fascinated.

By the way, if you’re short on word count when displaying a book hook, you can drop the “what if” part at the beginning and turn it into a statement. For example:

“What if four Jamaicans decided to enter the Winter Olympics as a bobsled team...but have never seen snow?” can be shortened to:

“Four Jamaicans enter the Winter Olympics as a bobsled team...but never seen snow.”

“What if I told you everyone speaks, but not everyone is heard?” can be shortened to:

“Everyone speaks, but not everyone is heard.”

In many cases, a concise statement can pack even more promotional punch than a “what if” question.

Now that you’ve seen the difference between enticing hooks and bland attempts, let’s examine the various ways to grab a reader’s attention in the next section.

What if I told you that your book hook is useless unless people actually see it?

Where to Use Your Book Hook

Once you have a good book hook, where do you use it? EVERYWHERE.

Your hook only has power if readers see it. That’s why a hook should be displayed prominently wherever people see information about your book. Here are four key places to make sure your hook appears:

1. Display your hook at the top of your back cover copy.

On a physical book, feature your book hook as the first sentence on the top of your back cover copy. When browsing at bookstore, many readers look at the front cover then quickly flip the book over to read the back cover copy. Make your hook the first words people see on the back cover. Use a larger font, bolded text, or a different color.

As an aside, there are some instances where your hook might serve as an effective subtitle. If so, you can feature those words on the front cover along with the main title.

2. Feature your hook at the top of your book's Amazon page.

Amazon is the largest book retailer in the world. Every day, millions of people search, browse, and buy new books. Their website has the power to display your book hook to more readers than anywhere else.

Make sure your hook is the first sentence featured at the top of your book's product description page on Amazon. Put the words in a bold text for visual emphasis. In most cases, Amazon only displays an abbreviated paragraph of 30 words or less. Beyond that tiny amount, people have to click on a "Read more" link to access all of a book's promotional copy.

In other words, people won't read the full marketing text if the first paragraph doesn't grab their attention. That's why your hook is important. Fortunately, Amazon allows you to use HTML code to make the top section stand out with bolded text and line breaks.

3. Display your hook on your author website.

When people visit your author website, do they see your hooks or just your books? If you only display your book covers with boring text, you are literally losing sales and word of mouth opportunities every single day. Put your book hook at the top of every book page or marketing copy on your website. If people don't see your hook, then you don't have a hook.

4. Mention your book hook out loud

Back cover copy and websites are important places to display your hook. However, the best way to get immediate interest in your book is to use your hook during conversation with other people.

For example, use your book hook in casual discussion with friends, during a media interview, during an elevator ride, during a pitch with an agent or publisher, etc.

In public, you no longer have to fear the question someone might ask, "What's your book about?" Confidently reply by stating your book hook.

If most people tend to respond without interest, take their indifference as a signal to start over and create a better hook. Do not ride a dead horse. It's better to jettison a bad hook that doesn't work and develop something better.

There's no bad place to display or recite a great hook. Use it everywhere all the time. People won't tire of seeing it or hearing it. More importantly, a great hook helps people spread word of mouth by knowing exactly what to tell their friends.

Make a Powerful Hook for Your Book

Let's recap everything you've just learned into three simple steps. Here's how to create a powerful book hook:

Step 1: Imagine your book is a movie and think like a screenwriter.

Step 2: Develop a "What if I told you ____?" question.

Step 3: Display your book hook and use it everywhere.

What if I told you a simple secret to help revolutionize your book sales?

Now you know. It's a book hook.

Thank you for reading this guide. I wish you the best on your author journey!

Rob Eagar

Wildfire Marketing

<http://www.startawildfire.com>

Take The Next Step In Your Author Career!

Now that you have read *Mastering Book Hooks for Authors*, you know how to grab a people's attention to help sell more books.

As a marketing consultant, I've coached over 450 authors and helped clients hit the *New York Times* bestseller list three different ways, including fiction, non-fiction, and backlist. In addition, I've worked with well-known publishing houses, spoken at industry conferences, published two books, and achieved success as a self-published author.



I'm fortunate to make a living doing what I love, which is helping authors. But, it wasn't always easy. I started out like most authors with no platform, no experience, not much money, and a whole lot of questions. I spent many years figuring out how to sell books from scratch, build my business, learn what works, and what doesn't. But, you don't have to learn the hard way like I did. I'm here to share the most up-to-date strategies and tactics to sell more books and increase your author income.

Take the next step in your author career and work with me directly. Click on the links below for more details about my personal consulting options:

1. My **Book Marketing Master Class** is the premiere choice for authors who want rapidly increase book sales and personal income:

<http://www.startawildfire.com/consulting/book-marketing-master-class>

2. My video e-course, **Find Readers and Sell Books on a Shoestring Budget**, goes into much more depth and covers many more topics than this short e-book:

<http://www.startawildfire.com/store/sell-books-shoestring-budget>

3. Get tough book marketing questions and want an expert's opinion? Purchase a **Private One-hour Author Consultation** with me and get your questions answered:

<http://www.startawildfire.com/consulting/one-hour-consultation>

**Work with me and learn how to
sell books like wildfire!**