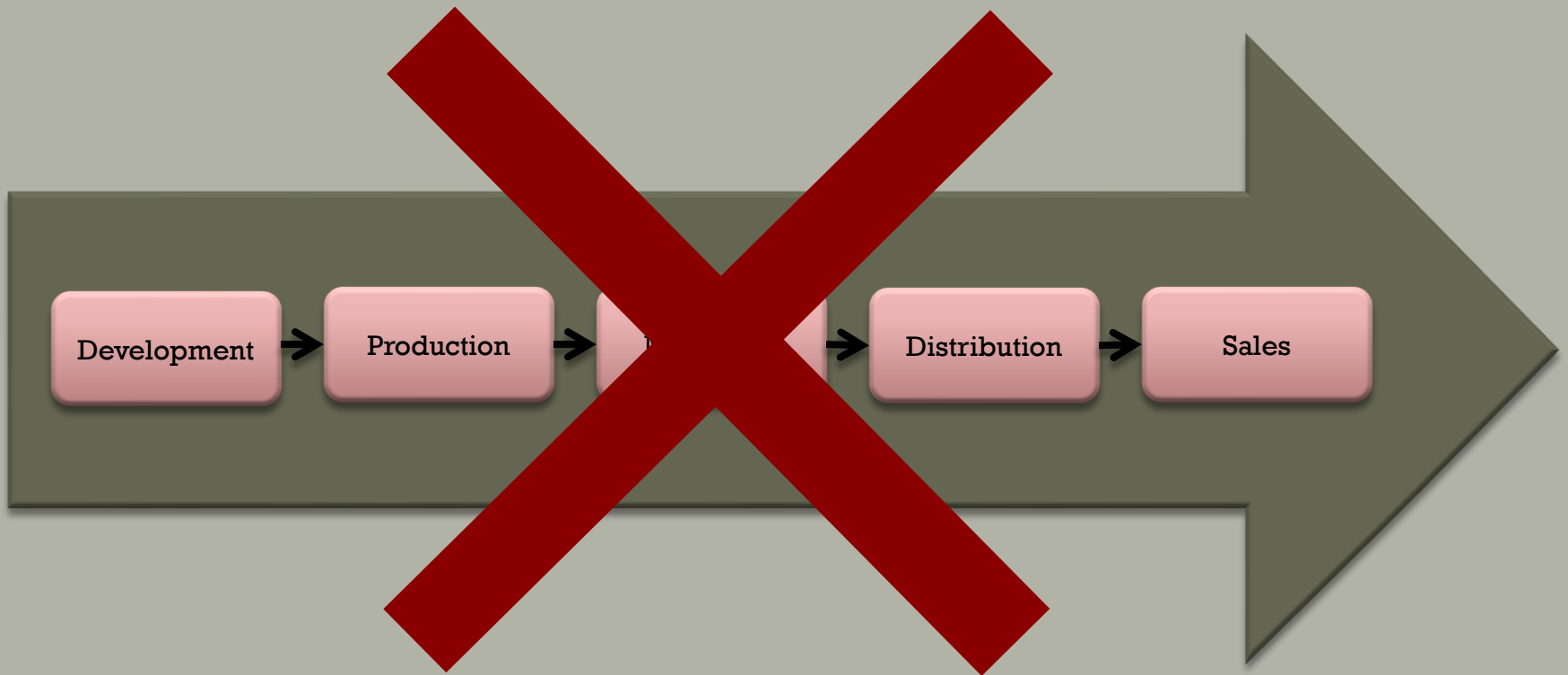# Publishing University 2017:
Cliff Notes from Portland

Gerardeen M. Santiago, Ph.D.
Daniel G. Primbs

Aionios Books

5/6/2017

What is publishing today?

Development → Production → [?] → Distribution → Sales

Publishing today is **NOT** linear!

… a (reverse) Mandelbrot set of growth spirals emerging from chaos.

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

WRITERS

Trad Publishers

Indie Publishers

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
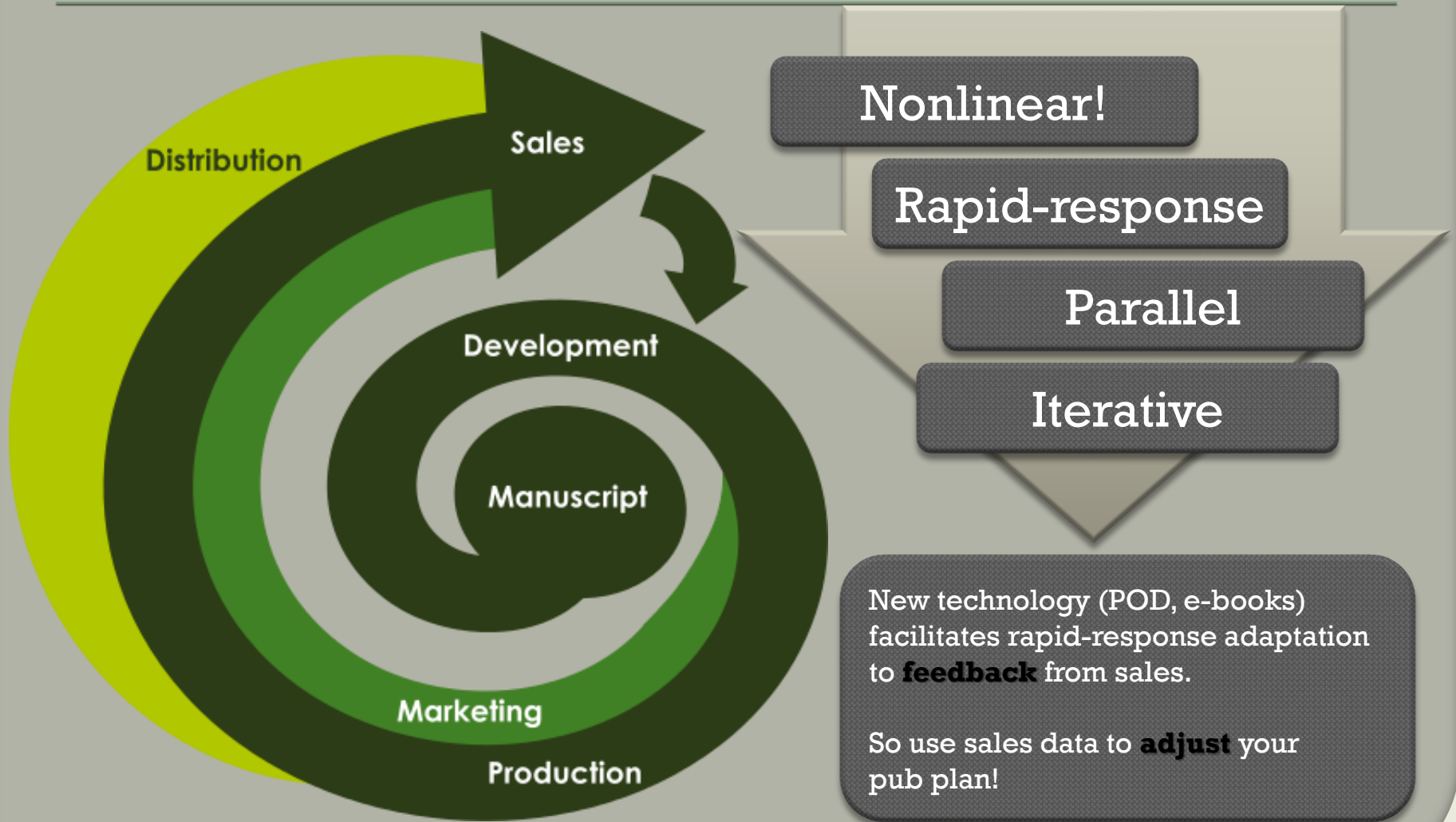- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

TITLE:
- Delivery vehicles
- Marketing platforms
- Sales channels

So the processes that drive publishing today are…

Distribution

Sales

Development

Manuscript

Marketing

Production

Nonlinear!

Rapid-response

Parallel

Iterative

New technology (POD, e-books) facilitates rapid-response adaptation to **feedback** from sales.

So use sales data to **adjust** your pub plan!

Sales Feedback Loop
Assessing the Profitability of a Title

Use sales data and past experience to build an informed pub plan!

Continually adapt your pub plan to changes in the market.

So analyze a title's P&L periodically:

- Before developing a pub plan
- 1 year after publication
- When considering reprinting
- When considering retiring title

Create a P&L spreadsheet containing the following data for new and existing titles:

- Advances; royalty percentages
- Unit sale prices
- Sales commissions
- Total units produced, sold, returned
- Development and production costs (OOPs, labor): editorial, cover design, interior layout, e-book conversion, etc
- Marketing costs: website, publicity, reviews, ads, trailers, etc
- General admin/plant costs
- Etc

# Iterative Development
Lean Publishing & Early Feedback

Implement the "lean publishing" model:

- Based on Japanese lean production: Reduce waste by eliciting early feedback & conducting inexpensive tests

- Connect with your target audience early in development
  - Set up an advance review team in your genre (**beta readers**)
    - Develop a standard form for user testing. <u>Must ask</u>: Would you buy this book, and would you recommend it to a friend?
    - Use an impartial tester.
    - Generate reviews through this process. Give reviewers a 3-week time frame.
    - Provide reviewers with e-books (not ARCs) to reduce cost.
  - Conduct focus group tests:
    - Go to a public library and ask patrons to review your book; elicit structured feedback
      - Book clubs
      - Children's reading groups
    - Test cover designs early using Netgalley (3-6 months before pub date)
    - Find other low cost ways to conduct focus groups. Do this **early**. Do in phases… Great tactic for testing book cover designs.

Aionios Books: Notes from Publishing University 2017

Focus on: Development
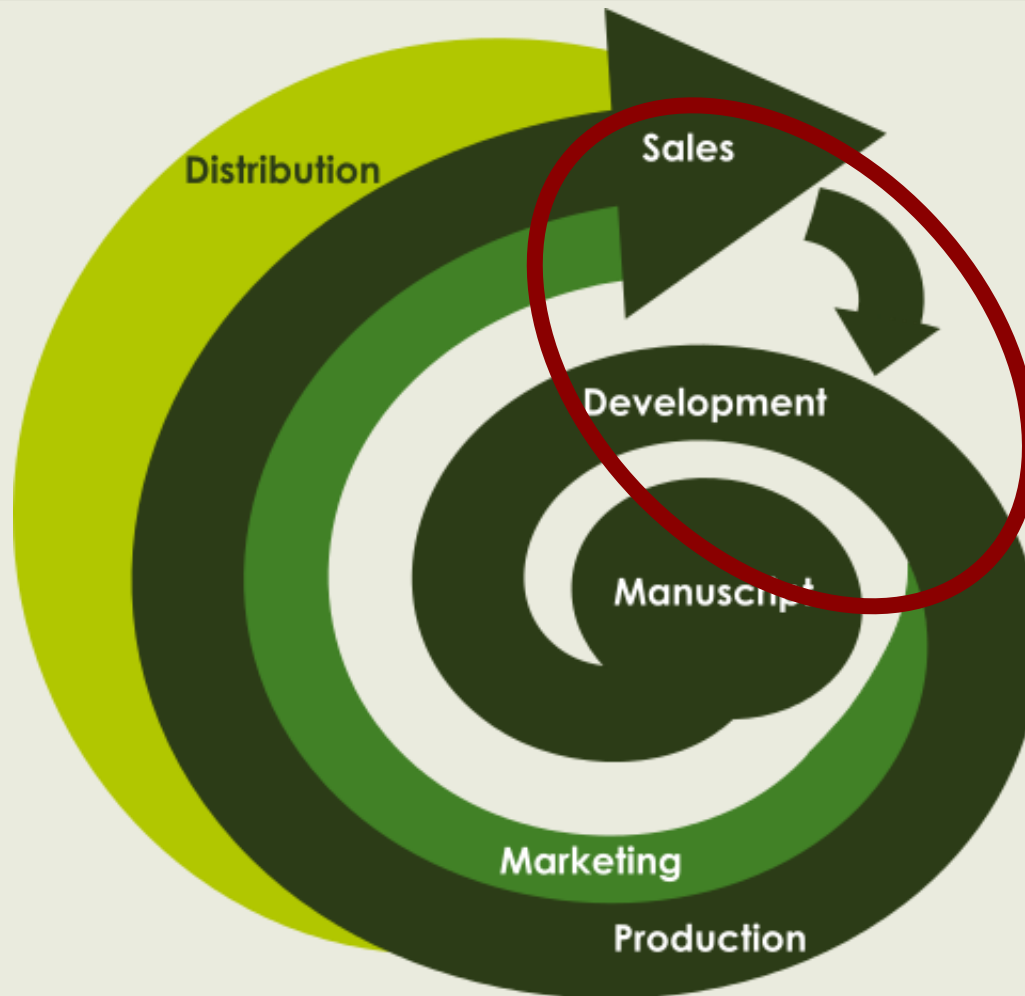
Cover Design:
Covers That Connect

Know your target audience and design to that.

- "Everyone" is NOT your target audience!
- Know your genre: gender, age, ethnic diversity, etc.
- What are your top 10 competitors?
- How is your book unique?

Fiction covers **vs** **Nonfiction** covers

- Evoke mood, emotion
- Leave you guessing; are open ended; plant an idea

- Answer a key question, a need
- Have a clear message

Colors Effect Moods & Emotions

COOL

CALMING

Used alone, these colors can have a cold or impersonal feel.

So add colors from another group to add some warmth.

WARM

EXCITING

Used alone these colors can over-stimulate, generating emotions of anger and violence.

So add colors from another group to counteract this.
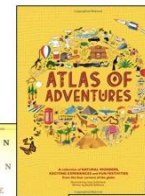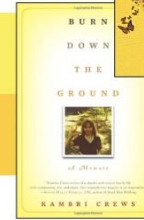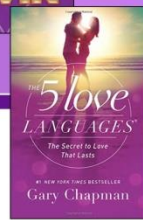
NEUTRAL

FOR MIXING

These are great for backgrounds, and tend to tone down the use of other bold colors.

Black is added to create a darker shade, while white is added to create a lighter tint.
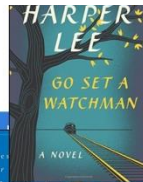
Purple

Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Spiritual	Calming	Surprise
Enlightened	Relaxing	Magic
Creative	Helps	Regal
Artistic	Insomnia	Rare

Yellow

Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Warm	Poor skin	Lively
Cheerful	Reflection	Secure
Solitary	Bright	Caution
Irritable	Reflective	Slow

Blue

Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Isolated	Lowers Blood	Calm
Peaceful	Pressure	Conservative
Cool	Decreases	Loyal
Distant	Appetite	Trusting

Orange
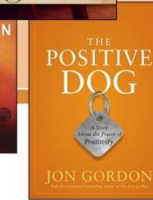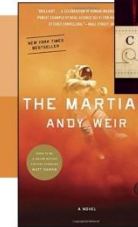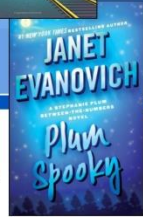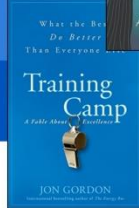
Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Happy	Encourages	Movement
Energetic	Movement	Confidence
Pleasant	Energy	Playful
Social	Vigor	

Green

Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Friendly	Concentration	Jealousy
Calming	Focus	Envy
Neutral	Attention	Money
Balanced		Avarice

Red
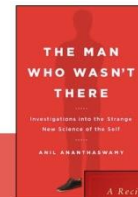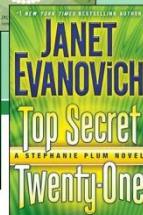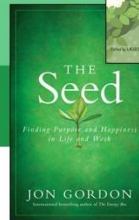
Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
Passion	Raises	Hot
Love	Heart Rate	Aggressive
Strength	Appetite	Danger
Anger	Blood Pressure	Stop

Brevity & Contrast: Titles That POP!

- Keep character count low.
- Images should not conflict with readability.
- Light text on dark backgrounds (or dark on light)
- Hand-written fonts – NOT! against busy backgrounds
- Title and author name – readable even in thumbnails
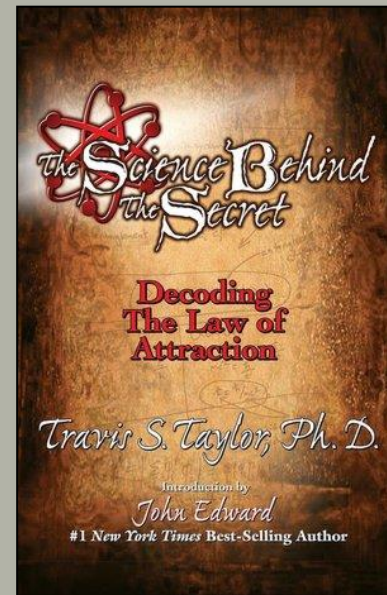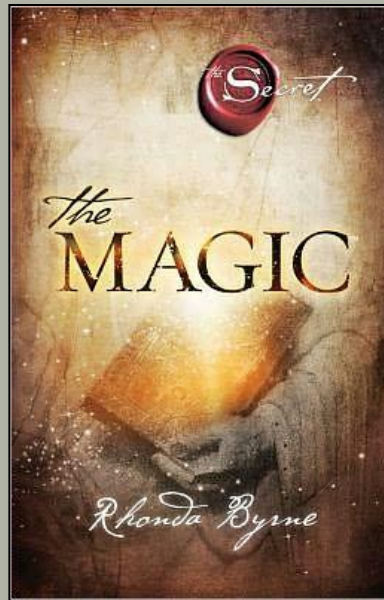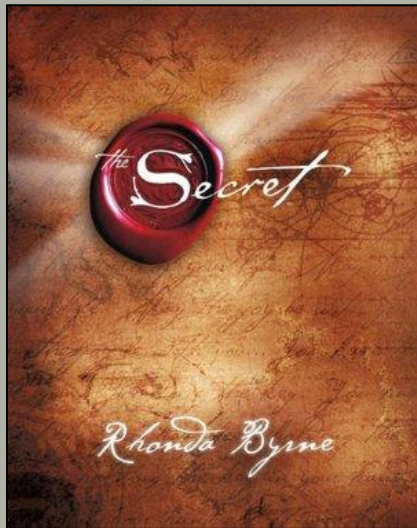
Difficult to read: text is running over background with variation in light and dark (poor contrast).
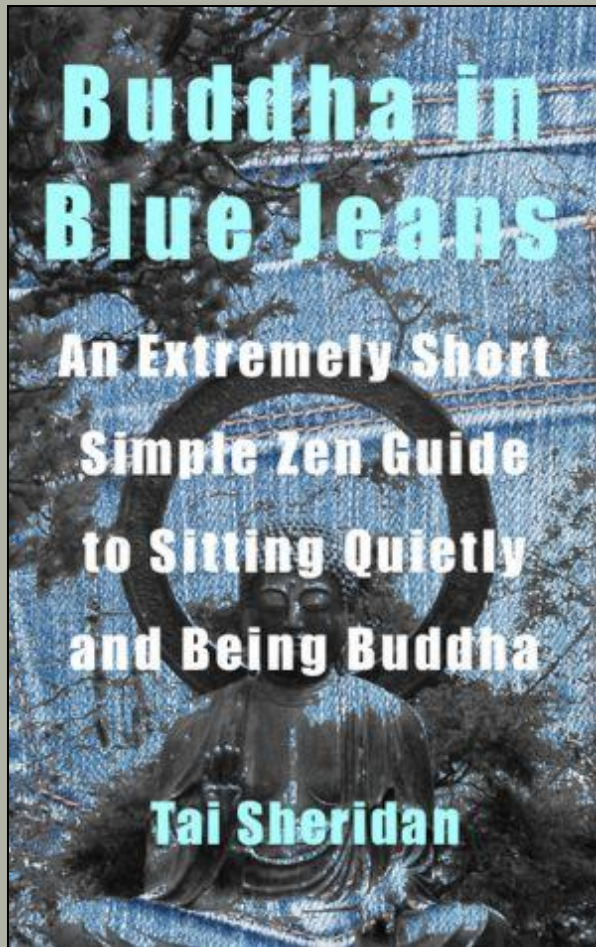
Similar design concept, but the text is larger, and white, with better contrast in the background for a more readable title.
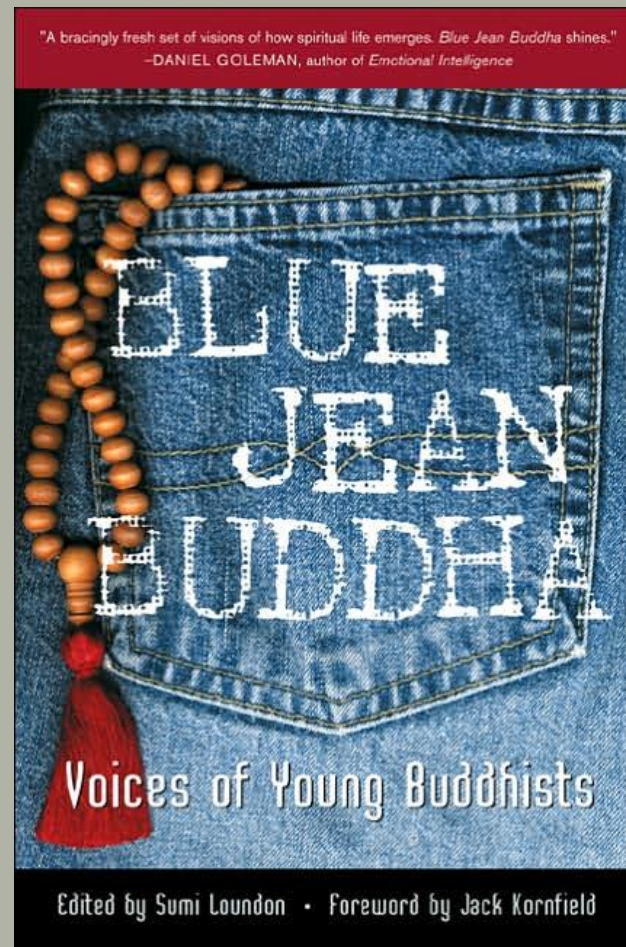
Avoid showing too much or trying to represent every reader possible on the cover.
Instead of attracting "everyone," you can overwhelm—and detract from your message and potential sales.
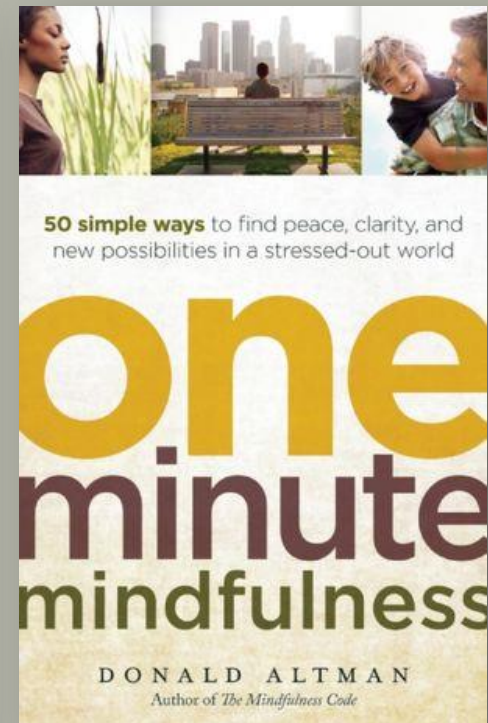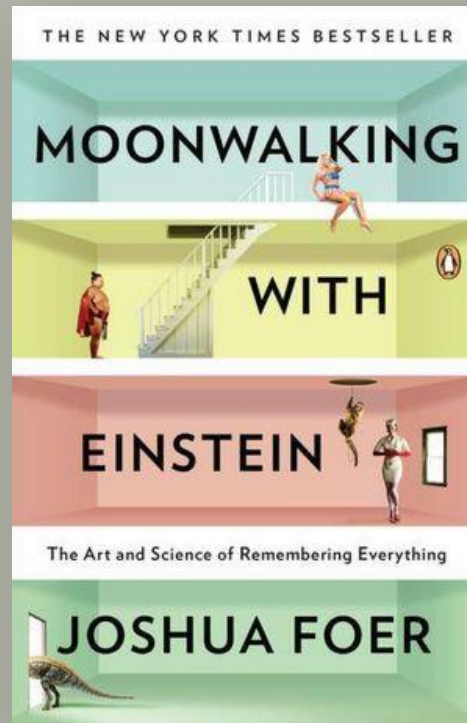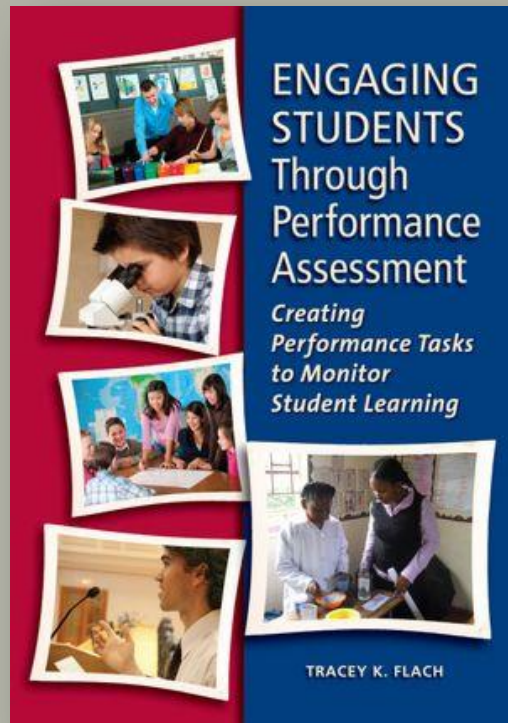
Too much text or imagery can turn off the entire market instead of widening your audience.
- The first cover has too many images, so the cover feels crowded.
- The second and third use multiple images in a clear and balanced way.

1. Make your title "pop." Have a clear path for the eye: vary size and color of type to help the reader know what to read first.
2. It's a balancing act—not all the text will read well at reduced sizes.
3. Leave some white space for balance.
4. Stay in the same font family when you vary style (bold, italic, condensed or extended).
5. Make sure any image balances well with text and doesn't angle the eye away from content.

Source: Shannon Bodie, BookWiseDesign.com;
Jeniffer Thompson, MonkeyCMedia.com

- Convert to grayscale to check contrast/readability.

- Spine width:
    - **No hard edges!** esp in POD
    - Allow for variability, esp for hardcovers and POD

- Avoid matte finishes for dark covers because it scuffs.

- Create e-book covers at print resolution so that you're ready if you decide to go to print.

- What to communicate to your designer:
    - What are the goals for the sales of the book?
    - What is the job of the cover?
    - Give designer examples of what you like/don't.

- Sources:
    - Myfonts.com
    - Use stock images to cut cost—still looks good.

Focus on: Book Launch

Distribution

Sales

Development

Manuscript

Marketing

Production
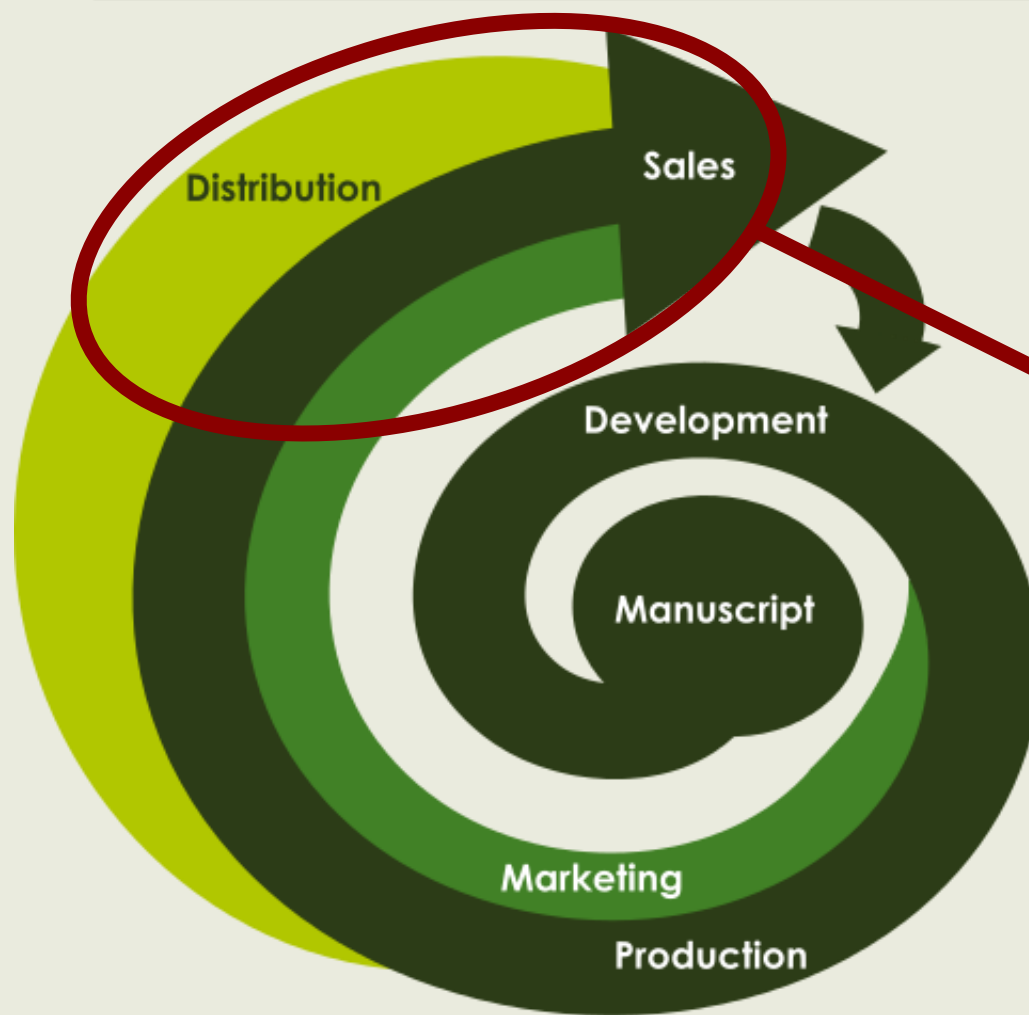
The 6-Month Black Box

?

What should I do now?

Book Launch Timeline:
Overview

(Assuming retail distribution is a priority)

Pub Date

t = -1 month — Books en route to wholesalers

t = -2 months — Online marketing shifts to high gear

t = -3 months — Books go to press

t = -6 months — ARCs ready to distribute

Key Milestones

Source: Tanya Hall,
www.GreenleafBookGroup.com
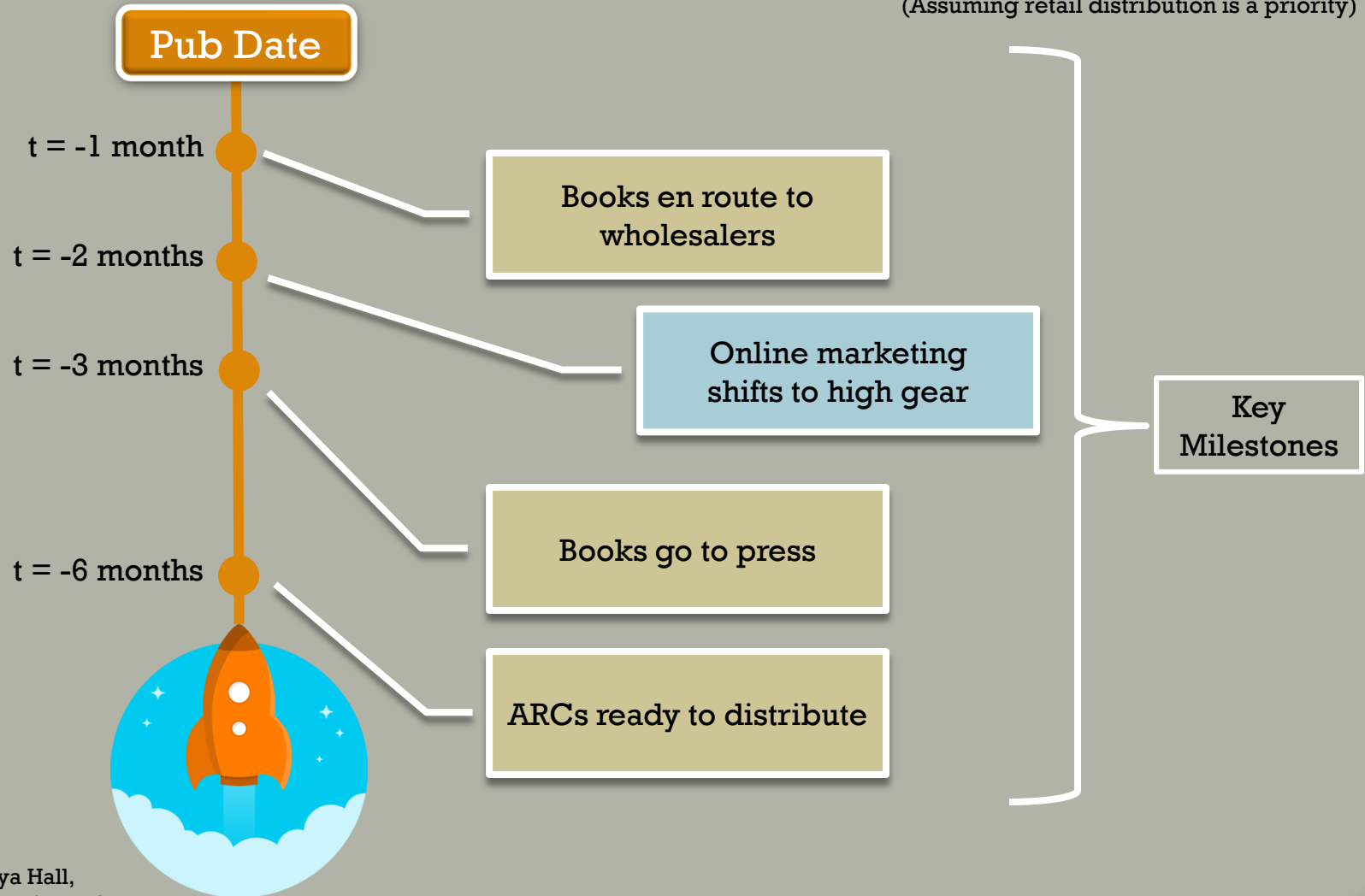
Specific Tactics for Launching Your Book

(Assuming retail distribution is a priority)

- ⊙ **t = -6 months → ARCs are ready**
  - Media and retailers work on a 6-month timeline
    - B&N – Buys books 6 months out: reviews ARCs in July for books on shelf in the Spring
  - Website must be ready!
  - Begin long-lead media pitches; finalize back cover blurbs (including book reviews)
  - Begin bestseller campaign
  - Begin pre-order campaign
  - NB: Get endorsements (celebrities) 8 months out so you can put on back cover
- ⊙ **t = -3 months → Books go to press**
  - Publicity pitches pick up again
  - Go live on NetGalley (make digital ARCs available because these feed into Amazon)
  - Go live on Goodreads
  - Last chance to co-op commitments (B&N decides now which books to place on their "end caps")
- ⊙ **t = -2 months → Online marketing shifts to high gear**
  - Social media give-aways, cross-promotions
  - Do blog swaps, guest blog posts
- ⊙ **t = -1 months → Books en route to wholesalers**
  - Author must self-promote now!
  - Begin soliciting online book reviews
  - Lock down media bookings
- ⊙ **Publication month!**
  - Promote, promote, promote to drive demand!
  - Watch your inventory!
  - Hustle online reviews whenever possible!

Source: Tanya Hall,
www.GreenleafBookGroup.com

- ## What if your launch is a dud?
  - Fine tune your media clips
  - Consider revising your angle and/or target audience
  - Consider e-book price promotion
  - Consider revising your cover
  - "News-jack" – Connect your book with a current news event
  - Consider saying that it was a "limited regional launch"

- ## Listen to feedback to shape future books or editions
  - New edition if change >20% of content

- ## When to publish?
  - Do NOT publish in November/December (re: shelf life of book)
  - Best to publish early in the year but not January
  - Genre dependent: Memoirs are best published in the Autumn

Focus on: Driving Sales
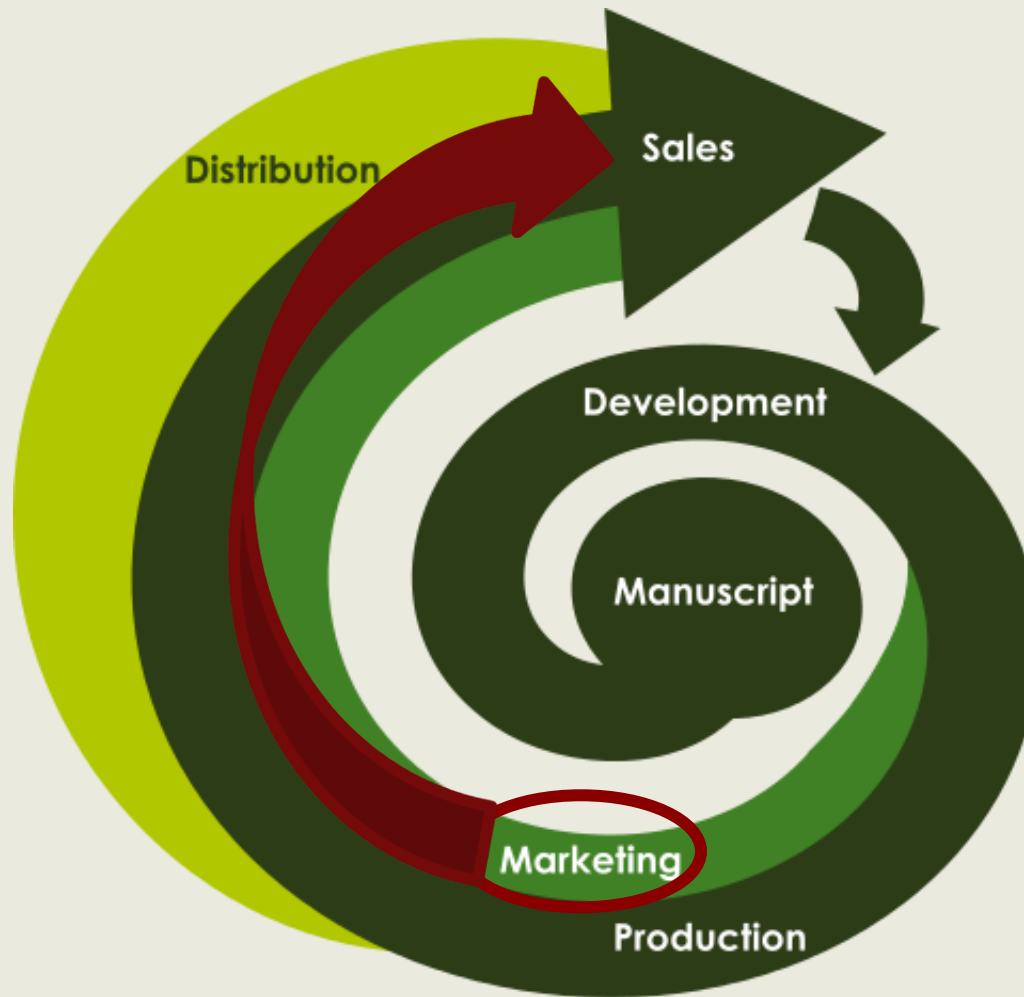
Driving Online Sales:
Tips from a panel of experts

- **Meta data is key!**
  - Know your genre and the keywords in that genre
  - Continually update your keywords (esp in Amazon) for SEO

- **An email list is critical!**
  - Create a newsletter
  - Get a pledge to buy the book 1 week before launch

- **On your website:**
  - Create a sample book page, with links to buy the book at the end of the sample
  - List all links where readers can post book reviews

- **Use OverDrive to provide free extended samples of your book with links to buy**

- **Books in a series**
  - 20-50% of readers buy the next book in a series. Therefore, include buy link at the end of every book in a series.
  - Use paid advertising (eg, Bookbub) for books in a series

Source: Kelly Preston, moderator; with
Michelle Hoppe, Joshua Talent, & Elizabeth Turnbull

Tips from a panel of experts

- For e-books:
  - Put samples of new books at the end of a book with links to buy
  - Use free e-books to push new books
  - List e-books with ALL online retailers, not only Amazon

- Use NetGalley to get reviews and find audience

- Author page is critical on Amazon! Must have/do:
  - Photo of author
  - Clearly and specifically state what the author writes (eg, romance)
  - List all books
  - List links to social media; explicitly ask to be followed
  - Explicitly ask for reviews; always thank your readers
  - **Update this page often!**

Source: Kelly Preston, moderator; with
Michelle Hoppe, Joshua Talent, & Elizabeth Turnbull

Driving Sales Online:
Social Media Marketing

- **Use online discoverability tools:**
  - NetGalley – IBPA deal: 1-month free trial
  - Bublish – 1 book is free
  - Bookbub – Requires a minimum of 10-12 reviews
  - Online book catalogs – Edelweiss (http://edelweiss.abovethetreeline.com)

- **Meet your target audience's information needs!**
  - Get content to share on social media through Google.com/alerts, Shelf Awareness

- **Post blurbs on your website:**
  - Get blurbs from fellow publishers: CROSS-PROMOTE!
  - For Amazon book reviews, post links back to reviews page
  - Always thank reviewers ("proud and humbled by this review")

- **Get online book reviews:**
  - Find the best for your genre!
    - Who gets the traffic and shares with their own audience?
    - Who accepts self-published books?
    - Who does author interviews?
  - "vloggers" = book reviews on YouTube
    - Christine Riccio's Books Haul (PolandBananasBooks)
    - Wisecrack Thug Notes
  - Goodreads – Super powerful!
  - Instagram book reviews

- **Do Twitter live chats (interviews)**

Beyond Social Media Marketing

- Leverage the reach of book clubs:
  - Kathy Patrick's Pulpwood Queens Book Clubs
    - Has over 700 chapters nationwide (http://www.pulpwoodqueen.com/)
    - Timber Guys
  - Start local! – Go to local libraries, local bookstores, local meetups

- Clubs, councils, & other organizations:
  - Rotary clubs – Meet weekly: Ask to speak at a meeting
  - "A" is for "affinity" – Wine bars for chic lit; farmer's markets for cookbooks; animal shelters for dog books; gun shows for westerns; Comic-Con for SF/fantasy…

- Publicists and book marketers
  - Expensive – so demand to know their ROI!

- Writing contests: Look for…
  - Entry fees <$75
  - Prizes >$150

Source: Shari Staunch,
Where Writers Win

Marketing:
Pitchosaurus—the Art of the Pitch

- **Author: Know yourself; know your expertise; know your book!**
  - What is your passion/expertise?
    - Take 2 min to write down every word you can think of to describe yourself.
    - Must sell yourself if you're to sell your book. Sell yourself as either an expert or sell something you are passionate about.

  - What is your book's genre and target audience?
  - What meta data or keywords should you use?

- **"Pitch the hook, not the book."**
  - Find your book's selling point: What is it like? What does it offer? What of value does it provide?

- **Ask yourself 2 questions when considering a pitch:**
  - What's in it for your target audience? (Specifically, what value are you providing?)
  - What's in it for me as the author?

- **Two targets for your pitch: the "gatekeeper" (reviewer, bookseller, news media) + their audience**
  - Gatekeepers want content that:
    - Caters to their audience and their format
    - Educates/entertains
    - Keeps people tuned in (often controversial)
    - Is topical/timely, that creates a buzz

- 30-word book pitch/synopsis
  - Identify your work, use meta-data
  - Identify your audience
  - Emphasize the value it offers

- 50-word media bio
  - Specify your expertise and passions
  - Other interesting/relevant details

Pitchosaurus: 6 Types of Pitches

Segment Pitch
- A preformatted package provided to news media

Experts Pitch
- Goal is to sell yourself as an expert

Reviewer Pitch
- Goal is to land a book review

Regular Contributor Pitch
- Target bloggers
- Goal is to become a guest contributor to their blog (you'd provide free content for their blog, webzine, etc)
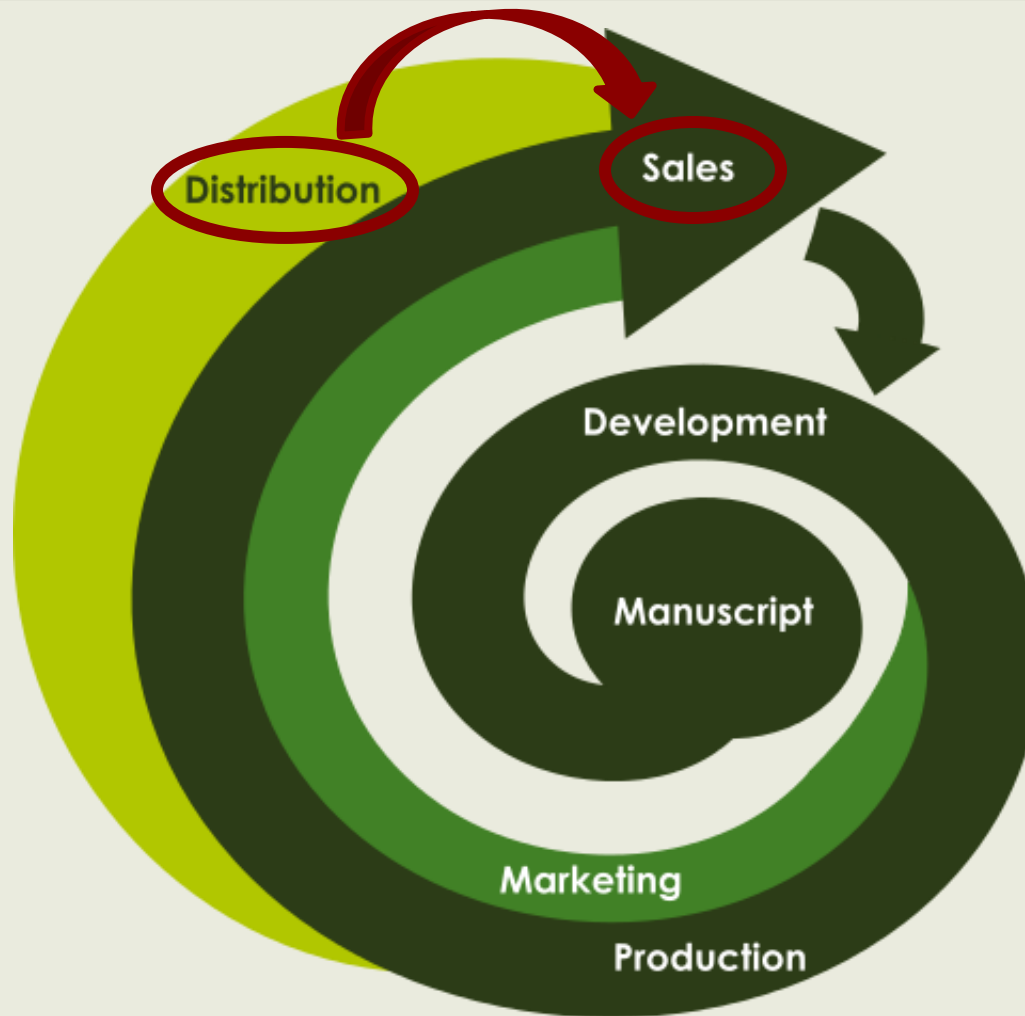
Networking Pitch
- Typically target a social media maven
- Goal is to get a quid pro quo interaction or cross-promotion

Word-of-Mouth Pitch
- Examples: "Please retweet;" book give-aways; contests

Focus on: Distribution & Sales

Distribution:
Wholesale vs Full-Service

- Acts as a consolidator on behalf of the "doors"
- NON-exclusive agreement
- Sells individual titles
- Minimal sales force

Wholesaler

PUBLISHER

Full-Service Distributor

- Acts as the official vendor or partner for the publisher
- Exclusive agreement
- Sells entire list or imprint
- **SALES FORCE**

D O O R S

Libraries

Retailers

Indies — Chains

Specialty

Costco Resorts — Museums Airports

Source: Robin Cutler, IngramSpark; &
Richard Williams, Independent Publishers Group

Aionios Books: Notes from Publishing University 2017

29

Working With Full-Service Distributors

- Your distro partner **=** Access to POS data

- Sales force **=** More clout with each door

- But distribution $\neq$ Sales

- Publishers still need:
  - Marketing/advertising/PR strategy, execution
  - Books that meet quality standards
    (IBPA's standards checklist: http://www.ibpa-online.org/page/standardschecklist)
  - Author platforms (social media)

- Distro's sales reps must explain:
  - How is your title competitive?
  - Is your title truly unique, or does the store already have others of that type?
  - What success does your title replace?

A good distributor is conservative & will hedge against **RETURNS**

Holds ~20% of royalties on reserve to guard against returns

Aionios Books: Notes from Publishing University 2017

Are you ready for full-service distribution?

- 6+ new titles/year?

- Meet high-quality standards?

- Price points in line with competitors?

- Sufficient funds to cover the costs of:
  - Spikes in demand (additional print runs)?... Consider:
    - POD to fill the gaps between offset print runs = "Gap" printing
    - Short-run offset printing
  - Returns (before payments are issued)?
  - Your total publishing program (your entire list of books in development, production, and distribution)

- Never sign with a distributor in December; do it in January
  - (6-month seasonal buy cycle)

- Develop a relationship BEFORE asking them to stock your book
    - F2F relationship makes you memorable when they receive lists from distributors
    - Know their inventory; understand the "staff picks"
- Make life easier for them:
    - Work with distributors with whom they already work
    - Most indie bookstores get charged 10% penalty on books they cannot sell. So offer to pay the penalty for them.
    - If you know the store and the staff picks, send them a personalized "white box." Include testimonials from other indie booksellers.
- Indie booksellers all know each other and share info: So if you do well with one, then the others will know.
    - A home-run success with ONE seller is better than putting your book in 100 different stores
    - Attend indie book fairs/conferences (eg, BookExpo)
- They stock books with pub date <12 months old
- POD is **not** an issue (IPG)
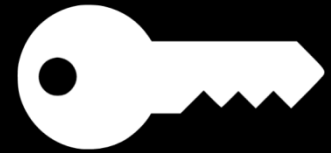
- Cultivate a relationship
- Make life easy for them

Prerequisites of Indie Book Sellers

Your book <u>must</u>:

- Have a spine
- Have a good cover (based on genre, audience)
- Accommodate returns (return window must be >6 months)
- Have its price printed on the cover with the ISBN and barcode
  - Do your research to set your target price!
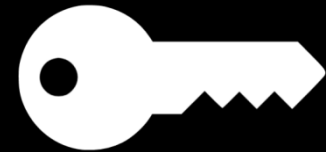- Reviews that make your book stand out

Case Study: Laura Stanfill
Lessons From a Micro, Trad Publisher

- ◎ **Laura is a sole proprietor who:**
  - Successfully penetrated the national fiction market within 5 years of start-up
    - Must watch inventory and have sufficient funds to cover extra print runs and high returns
  - Average offset print run today = 2000-5000 copies
    - Started with short-run offset printing (200 copies)
  - Publishes 2-4 new titles/year
  - Outsources:
    - Copy editing; proofreading
    - Cover design
    - E-book design/conversion

- ◎ **Grassroots: grow locally first!**
  - Build F2F relationships with everyone: printers, booksellers, authors, readers

- ◎ **Grow and guard your brand!**
  - Be very selective; be true to your brand.
  - Build a high-quality list that will attract a distribution partner.

BUILD RELATIIONSHIPS!
Her enthusiasm, charisma, energy!
Have faith, and work hard!