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Becoming a Successful Writer: From the Horse's Mouth

by Margaret-Anne Halse

Well, it depends on what you mean by 'successful'. As an amusing article on www.cracked.com points out,

"There are two kinds of success in the literary world:

- 1) the writing-a-literary-classic kind and
- 2) the I'ma-get-paid kind.

<http://www.cracked.com/funny-3450-becoming-successful-writer>

Jack Canfield, author of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, and book promoter Steve Harrison offer advice on how to become the second kind of writer - that is, paid. Harrison's website, <http://www.writingabook.net/> invites the success-seeking writer to sign up for a free 90-minute 'tele-seminar', in which he proposes to interview Canfield and elicit from him "six keys to outrageous success as an author."

The seminar is actually a question-and-answer session, and the theme quickly becomes apparent: how to use your book(s) to become wealthy and successful. Not how to write a good book, which the unsuspecting may be pardoned for thinking it was about. The presenters do mention that you need a completed manuscript, but that's about it.

The first 30 minutes of the session consist of Jack Canfield talking about his life and promoting himself. In detail. He leaves the listener in no doubt as to how much money he has made and his assortment of real estate and other assets. If you seek success as

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Murder at BookPeople

August 31st at 2:00 p.m.

JANICE HAMRICK

The author of *Death Rides Again*, will sign copies of her book at the Round Rock Barnes & Noble store located in the La Frontera Village at the intersection of IH-35 and SH-45.

Texas high school teacher Jocelyn Shore had been looking forward to spending Thanksgiving at her Uncle Kel's ranch, but her visit takes an unexpected turn when she discovers Uncle Kel threatening his son-in-law Eddy with a shotgun. It seems that Kel, who is hosting the whole Shore clan, is none too happy about how Eddy has been treating his daughter Ruby June, and tensions are about to boil over.

Thanks to Jocelyn's quick thinking, Eddy makes it out alive, and it looks like Ruby June is going to toss him out for good. Yet no one knows for sure because that is the last anyone saw of Ruby June. The family pins the disappearance on Eddy and files a missing-persons report. Still, it isn't until Jocelyn and her sometime-boyfriend, Austin homicide detective Colin Gallagher, find Eddy's body at the bottom of a caliche pit that the police really take notice. Unfortunately, all eyes—including Colin's—are on Jocelyn's family as the most likely suspects. While Colin assists the local police, Jocelyn and her cousin Kyla decide to investigate on their own. Their hunt turns up a shady ranch manager, a mysterious racehorse owner, and an overly persistent goat, but no sign of Ruby June...or a killer who is poised to strike again.

With a family reunion that is getting smaller by the minute and more romance and humor than can be fenced in on any ranch, Janice Hamrick's *Death Rides Again* is another outstanding addition to her award-winning mystery series.

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Mouth

expressed in overwhelming amounts of material possessions, this is definitely the seminar for you.

Canfield also talks about his books, mostly the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, and name-drops relentlessly about all the celebrities he has met and/or who have read his books. These include Maria Shriver, Britney Spears and Bill Clinton.

His point is how wonderful they all thought his books were, and several apparently expressed their gratitude for what the books had done for them. Almost as an aside, he says “you never know what effect your books will have on people”. So it seems that you also need to write the correct kind of book to achieve this level of fame and fortune. Motivational books clearly rate highly.

To sum up what I learned about achieving worldly success as a writer in 30 minutes:

1. Get your book written
2. Be an entrepreneur, because publishing is a business.
3. Practise relentless self-promotion at all times and in all situations.

“His point is how wonderful they all thought his books were, and several apparently expressed their gratitude for what the books had done for them.”

“It’s all about how we collude with the obstacles that block our creativity and how to overcome our resistance, whether it is to writing or to running a business.”

Canfield comments that you never know who may invite you to speak at their conference (for a \$35,000 fee, as happened to him).

At this point, I reckoned I had the gist and hung up. The remaining hour may have contained many priceless pearls of wisdom, but I decided to start on step 1 and get my book written. I never did make it to the ‘six keys to outrageous success’.

The sequel to my attendance at the seminar was an email the next day from Steve Harrison, touting his services as a book promoter and offering to promote my book for me. I don’t think he should hold his breath.

For practical help on how to become a better writer, in the hopes of becoming the ‘writing-a-literary-classic’ kind of success, you might try reading *The War of Art* by novelist Steven Pressfield, published in January 2012. It’s all

about how we collude with the obstacles that block our creativity and how to overcome our resistance,

whether it is to writing or to running a business. Pressfield is probably best-known for *The Legend of Bagger Vance*.

Another author who seems to have achieved both literary and material success is Stephen King. His book *On Writing*, written in 2002, is a winner for this blogger at least: <http://boostblogtraffic.com/stephen-king/> 

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