

EVERYTHING I WISH I'D KNOWN BEFORE I

WROTE & LAUNCHED MY FIRST BOOK



BY BRITTANY HODAK



Hello, Friend!

When you're preparing to write or launch your book, there is no shortage of people waiting in line to take your money, it seems! In fact, I think the market for *selling stuff to authors* might be larger than the market of people who buy books.

As a first-time author, I often found myself confused and overwhelmed when it came to launching my book – even though I have many friends who've walked this path before! It was frustrating and time-consuming to navigate, so I created this resource to help authors in similar places benefit from my experience. It encompasses everything from the pre-launch of *Creating Superfans* to six months post-release date, and I hope it will help you on your journey as an author. Here goes!



Nothing beats the feeling of seeing your book in a store for the first time! Shoutout to Barnes & Noble!



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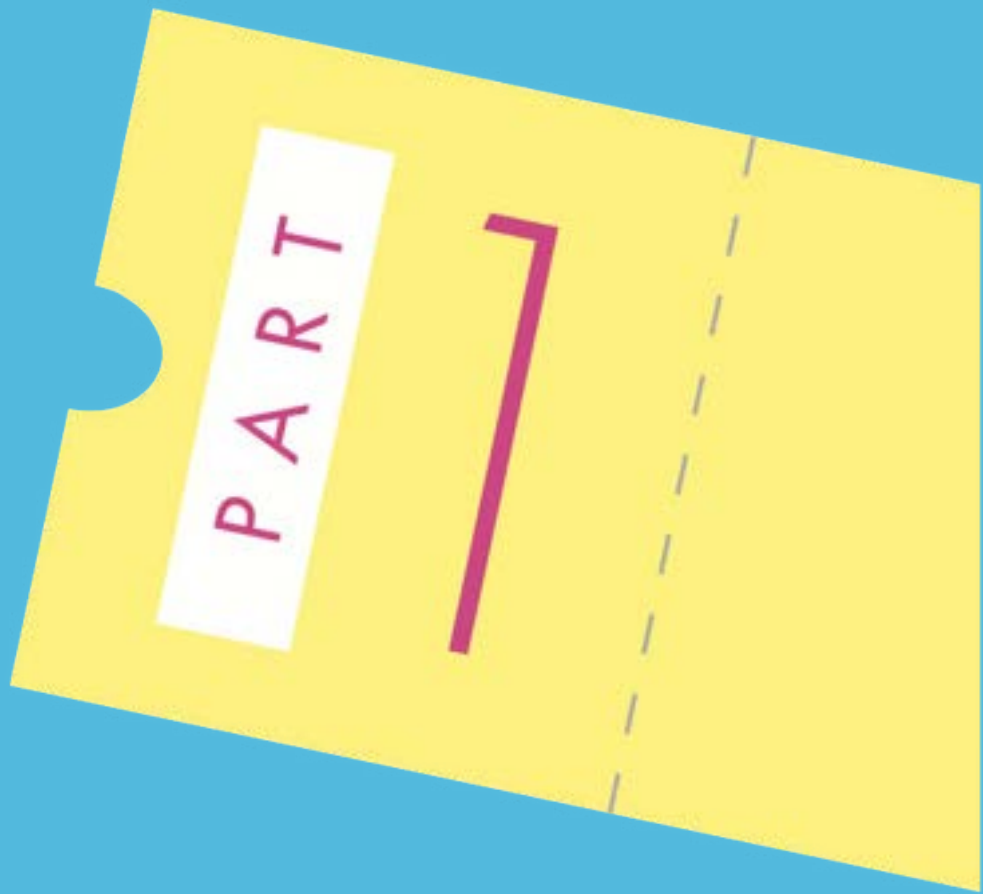
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WRITING THE BOOK



Writing the Book

First things first: It took me a loooooong time to write this book.

Years.

Some of it was because I wanted the framework, the stories, and the concepts to be perfect, and another part was just life circumstances (Covid, having a second baby, and lots of other chaos). Here's a quick run-down of some lessons and decision-making from "the early days."

Step 1: Narrowing the Scope

I wrote the initial outline and proposal for *Creating Superfans* in 2019. While the finished product (which came out four years later, on January 10, 2023) is substantially different from that first draft, those fingerprints of the initial proposal are still visible. I hadn't looked at it in years but found it when putting together this recap. Much of the language made it into the final book. I wrote things like, "This book teaches readers to take customers from apathy to advocacy in five simple steps," "If your customers aren't telling their friends about you, you're in trouble," and "This is an age-old idea with a modern spin."

I highly recommend you write a proposal and an outline, too. They're very helpful in clarifying your thoughts and your target market.

One thing that delayed the actual *writing* of my book by a bit was deciding on who, exactly, it was for. Was it geared toward salespeople? Marketers? I write about customer experience, which, admittedly, is very broad. After months of going back and forth on whether I should write a book for executives, entrepreneurs, or *anyone*, I decided this book is for anyone with customers or employees. It's as simple (and as complicated!) as that: If you have customers or employees, this book will help you make more money by turning those employees and customers into superfans. That was the North Star I used for writing. You should have a North Star for writing, too.

Step 2: Choosing A Publisher

After I finished my book proposal, I shared it with two book agents, who told me I'd likely get an advance of no more than \$20,000 with a major publisher. They also warned me I wouldn't have nearly the control I was asking for (things like color printing throughout the book and heavy influence on the cover design, to name two examples). They suggested I decide how important those factors were before moving forward.

Because of that advice, I decided early on that a hybrid publisher was the way to go. I learned quickly that calling yourself a "hybrid publisher" is like calling yourself a "songwriter." Lots and lots of people do it but with varying degrees of skill and discernment. Hundreds (or maybe even thousands) of vanity presses and publishers offer services to independent authors hoping to print books on-demand and sell them on Amazon. While there is nothing wrong with that model for aspiring authors who are the right fit, I easily eliminated all of these companies from my consideration set because of something very important to me: Distribution.

I worked in distribution for years, first at Warner Music Group and later at Sony Music. The music and book distribution worlds are just similar enough for much of my knowledge about wholesale and retail channels to be transferable. For me, in-store distribution was non-negotiable. I wanted my book to be available in airports and IRL bookstores like B&N and beloved local indies. With that condition in mind, I narrowed my list to a handful of high-end hybrid publishers who had distribution agreements with major publishing companies.

The three companies I considered most closely were Greenleaf, Idea Press, and Page Two. I had conversations with principals from each company and talked to authors who had worked with each. Ultimately, I chose to go with Page Two, a Canadian-based book publishing company, for a few reasons.

First, while some hybrid publishers are focused more on the front end of book production and manufacturing — e.g., the writing, editing, and design — Page Two's publishing pros include an amazing in-house team focused on production, distribution, and marketing. I knew they would be long-term partners for my book well beyond its launch.

Second, they have a track record with successful books selling well beyond the one-million unit mark. In an environment where very few books ever hit six figures (let's be honest, many books don't even hit five figures), I loved the idea of working with a team who could support me well beyond that. I've always preferred to be a small-but-growing fish in a large pond rather than finding myself a giant, oversized fish in an insufficiently sized pond.

And finally, I just fell in love with the Page Two team! They seemed to "get it" right off the bat, and having a team who truly felt like they would be superfans of this book (beginning with Trena White, one of the co-founders) made it a simple decision.

Step 3: Writing the Book

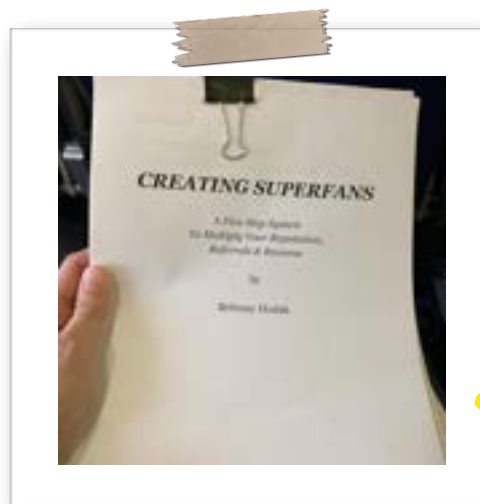
Since this is my first book, I didn't really know what to expect in the writing and editing phase. One mistake I made was thinking A LOT about editing and marketing while I was writing. Why is that bad? Procrastination. I will constantly remind myself on my *next* book that I need to *finish the first draft* before worrying about anything else.

I have two young sons, so finding time to write was sometimes challenging. Some of my best work came from days when I checked into a hotel near my house to write uninterrupted for 24 hours at a time. If you're struggling to finish a first draft, try to book a writing retreat for yourself. Removing distractions (including your phone and the internet!) can be a great productivity booster, whether for a few days or just a few hours.

I'm really proud of my book. Like, *really* proud. Even though it took a long time to finish, I think the end result was worth the time. I missed the first deadline my publisher set... and the one after that. Up next, I'll explain what that meant and how we made lemonade out of the lemons I accidentally served up.

◀◀ SUPERQUICK! TAKEAWAYS ▶▶

- Define who, *exactly*, you are writing your book for.
- Write down the goals for your book, including content and distribution.
- Decide on your non-negotiables for your partners.
- WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT before you worry too much about anything else.



Finally finished my manuscript in January of 2022!



**EDITING, DESIGNING,
PRINTING &
“SHIPPING” THE BOOK**



Editing, Designing, Printing & “Shipping” the Book

Wouldn't it be amazing if you could wave a magic wand and make your book appear? Or what if that first draft you wrote was *perfect*? Boom. Done! Finish typing and celebrate with a drink.

Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way... not even with Chat GPT. Not by a long shot! “Finishing” the first draft of your book is just the beginning of the book-writing journey. Here are a few things I learned from my book, from first draft to final draft – a process that stretched over seven or eight months.

Step 1: Editing the Book

As I mentioned, one of the reasons I was excited to partner with Page Two was because of their creative department, including their editorial team. I cannot stress this enough: **DO NOT SKIMP ON THE EDITING OF YOUR BOOK!**

Being an author does not make you an editor, just like being a singer doesn't make you a producer. My book went through three extensive stages of editing, each with multiple rounds of revisions. In fact, changes and additions during the various stages of editing dramatically improved the quality of the book, and even altered its content substantially. The first draft of my book was about 70,000 words. I wrote another 35,000 words during editing. The finished book is 60,000 words – meaning only about half of the first draft made it to the final one.

The first round of edits is for substantive edits. Big changes were made. Chapters were deleted, and entire new lines of thought were added. It took about three months for three rounds of back and forth between me and my first editor, Emily.

Next up was the line edits. My line editor, Melissa, was a Godsend! The book went from Good to Great and then Amazing. I can say that without sounding like a jerk because I know it wasn't me – it was Melissa! She changed the book materially.

Her insights, questions, and challenges made it so much stronger, and the two months or so she and I went back and forth on three rounds of edits are among my favorite in the book's creation cycle.

Last but not least were two rounds of proofreading. Alison caught dozens, and maybe even hundreds, of fixes, small and large. If you're self-publishing, I highly suggest at least two different editors. There's nothing worse than a book filled with typos and jumbled, incomplete thoughts.

Some of my favorite stories didn't make it into the final version of my book. Would I have loved to talk about setting a Guinness World Record or working with Dolly Parton? Obviously! Both of those things make me sound super cool. But they didn't ultimately serve the reader, so they didn't make the cut. Be relentlessly focused on your reader. It's about what they need to hear, not just what you want to say. Follow your book's North Star!

Step 2: Designing and Printing the Book

Page Two's creative team was amazing! Peter and Fiona helped bring a designer's eye to my words, and we ended up with a final product that truly exceeded my sky-high expectations.

Don't be afraid to collaborate on your book's look and feel. I was lucky to partner with a creative team who valued my input and was excited to try new things. When I suggested *very* late in the game that we re-design the pull quote pages to look like old-school concert posters, the team never groaned — at least not to me! Instead, they re-designed dozens of pages in record time and truly elevated the entire project.

One potential downside of *not* working with a traditional publisher was that I had to front the cost of printing the books. While it's a great thing in the long run because I own my inventory (and am making far more per unit than if I didn't), it was a *big* up-front cost.

I printed nearly 20,000 hardcover copies of my book — and I printed them in full color! Between the color pages and a few other creative decisions, the price jumped to nearly \$5 per unit, even with a quantity beyond what most first-print runs are. That meant I had to put up \$100,000 before I'd sold a single book. But hey: If you can't bet on yourself, who *can* you bet on, right?

I was fortunate to be able to take out a home equity line of credit (or HELOC) to finance the book. It's costing me a few hundred dollars per month in interest, but I've sold enough books that I'll be able to pay it back in its entirety when I get my first royalty check later this year.

Step 3: "Shipping" the Book

Have I mentioned yet how amazing it was working with Page Two? Their distribution teams at Macmillan (in the US and internationally) and Raincoast (in Canada) were tremendous. They worked really hard to secure SO MANY retail orders for me. We shipped more than 8,000 copies to retailers and libraries before the book came out, which is great for a first-time author without a huge social following.

I created book trailers for retailers and librarians (both linked in that last sentence) to help spread the word. I joined sales calls with the Macmillan team and made in-person visits to local bookstores.

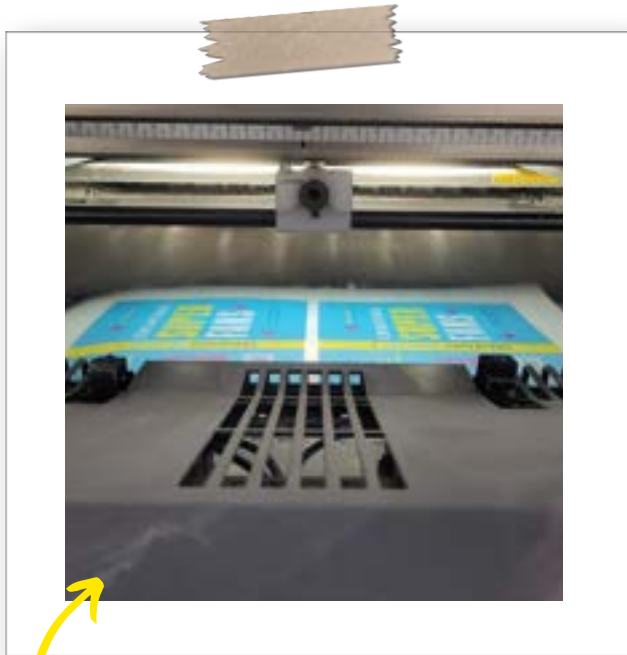
I told everyone even remotely involved in promoting the book, "My only job is to make your job easier!" I volunteered to do any Zoom meeting or in-person event that a bookstore or librarian asked for. In the end, only a handful of retailers asked for things... maybe because they were more focused on Prince Harry's book, which came out the same day as mine. But, I think they appreciated the offers — and I know my publisher's distribution teams did. In everything that you do, be easy to work with. Launching a book takes a big team, and you'll have lots more wins if your team enjoys being on the playing field with you!

I'm thrilled with how the pull quote pages came out!



◀◀ SUPERQUICK! TAKEWAYS ▶▶

- Editing is just as important (or maybe *more* important!) than writing. Don't skimp on it.
- Don't include anything in your book that doesn't serve your audience.
- Design and production should enhance your message, not just support it.
- Don't let distribution be an afterthought!



Action shot of "color trapping," a printing technique to ensure there are no unwanted gaps between colors.

This is an interior printing "signature," which is one giant piece of paper that 32 of the individual book pages print. Cool, right?





LAUNCHING THE BOOK



Launching the Book

So many aspiring music acts say, “I can’t wait to get signed! I need a label deal!” They think that will mean they’ve “arrived.” But, as every signed artist has ever discovered, the work starts when you get signed. No matter how long the journey, you walk through a door and a new journey begins.

The same is true of writing a book. Reaching “The End” of your book is really just the beginning! After all, as my friend Rory Vaden says, there’s very little fanfare about a “best-written book” – it’s about having a best-selling book! So, here’s the good, the bad, and the ugly about all the ways I subtly (and, if I’m being honest, mostly not-so-subtly!) persuaded my fellow Earthlings to care about *Creating Superfans*.

Step 1: Kickstarting the Momentum

Every author knows that getting endorsements – those little blurbs on the back of the book – is critical! I had a wishlist of people I wanted blurbs from and, to my absolute shock, every one of them said, “yes”!

First, I made a list of the authors and experts I admired most. I did this months before I planned to reach out so I could start adding value to them. I didn’t want my first outreach (or my first outreach in a while) to be an ask. Make your dream endorser list early. When it’s time to ask, make it simple! I offered to write a draft blurb for every endorser. Most wrote their own, but I wanted to make it a quick and simple “yes.”

The only thing cooler than getting endorsements from so many people I admire was having one of my O.G. CX heroes write my foreword. Shep Hyken is a legend. I’ve been incredibly fortunate to get to know him over the past few years. Having him pen the foreword was the icing on the cake of an amazing project! The fact that he graciously agreed to narrate it for the audiobook was even more epic. My best advice? Find yourself a Shep. Everything in life is better when you have a Shep!

Step 2: Talking To My Own Audience

As I've mentioned, I had a long runway in the creation of this book. That gave me several opportunities to start planting seeds. I frequently posted updates on social media during the writing process: When I hit rough spots, when I finished the first draft, when I thought of a particularly funny joke or story, and so on. This primed the few thousand people connected with me on social media to know that I was working on – and cared about – this book.

I encourage every author to do the same! The earlier you can involve the people who know and care about you in the process, the better! It's H-A-R-D to get someone to buy your book. Even people who love you. Tell them early and often that you're working on a book and it would mean a lot to have their support.

I engaged my social followers and email subscribers as much as possible leading up to the launch. I shared three potential front covers and asked people to choose their favorite. Thankfully, they chose the same cover that I liked best! I also asked for help in narrowing down taglines. I even did a few LinkedIn and Instagram polls about which stories I should include in the final version... which is how a story about taking my dog to a pet psychic made the cut! 😊

My social audience even helped me choose the author photo in my book. I was 95% certain which one they would choose, but I was totally wrong! People overwhelmingly voted for the other option, so I went with it. I was so glad I asked!

Amazon pre-orders typically go up about 90 days before a book launches. Because my street date was moved back (due to the aforementioned late manuscript), my book actually went live nearly a year before my book came out. Out of excitement, I posted on all of my socials as soon as I knew the page was live.

The good news? I pre-sold over 100 copies and immediately hit “bestseller” status in several categories on the day I shared the link. And yes, “bestseller” status on Amazon is kind of a joke. No offense to people who proudly wave that banner. The truth is anyone can be a “bestseller” in a category because there are thousands of categories and sub-categories. It can take as few as a dozen copies being sold in an hour. But at least I got to check off that box early. My publisher got a good laugh at how early I was able to accomplish the feat.

The bad news? People who pre-ordered had to wait FOREVVVER to get their copies. Luckily, since it was a friendly audience of people who knew me, I don't think there were many cancellations – and, of course, I sold hundreds more pre-orders on Amazon ahead of my launch date. But I received more than a handful of people saying, “Hey, I pre-ordered your book almost a year ago. Is it coming out soon?” In hindsight, even with the benefit of an early Amazon product page, I wouldn't have shared it widely until 5-6 months before its release date.

*Page Two
thought I might've
broken their
record!*



It's only "breaking news" the first time you post an official link to buy your book; every other time, it's a reminder. In my excitement I probably launched it without as much pomp and circumstance as it deserved. Lesson learned for Book #2!

I had several bulk pre-order bonuses designed to appeal to my speaking customers and prospects. One of the most popular was offering a free virtual presentation to anyone who pre-ordered 100 books. More than a dozen clients took me up on the offer, which represented a big savings compared to my typical virtual keynote fee.

I waived my speaking fee for an in-person event for anyone who committed to 500 books or more. And, in the weeks leading up to launch, anyone who pre-ordered books for their team (whether it was a team of two or a team of 200!) received instant access to a free video course, which was a nice way to bridge the gap between Thanksgiving (when I launched the offer) and when the books arrived in January.

Step 3: Reaching New Audiences

My goal was to record 100 appearances on other people's podcasts in the lead-up to my book launch. I did about 60 between October and January, and I've probably recorded about the same number between January and July. It was a grind, but it worked! Friends told me that podcasts sell books, and they were right. I think they're particularly helpful in selling audiobooks because of the tendency of podcast listeners to also listen to books. My advice is to go on as many high-quality podcasts as possible.

On note on that, though: Ask the podcast hosts to wait to air your episode until your book is out. As I've said before, not many people pre-order books. They want instant gratification. If you can align 10 or 20 or 50 podcasts to release the week of your book launch and the week after, you'll have better results.

My book is all about creating experiences, so I wanted to design a special one for the people who had been kind enough to endorse my book, and for anyone I thought might care about it and share with their audience — influencers, producers, etc.

My “VIP” version of the book launch was obnoxiously over the top. I was obsessed with it in the very best way. It was a giant video box that looked like an oversized copy of my book. Inside was a custom video from me, a copy of the book, a metal bookmark, two beautiful artisan lollipops, and a LEGO version of me, reading a LEGO version of the book. Fun, right?



Thanks to friend and author, Jay Baer, for posting this video of the box on Instagram. Tap to watch!

The boxes were expensive, but they were worth it! My cost was over \$200 per box for all of the components, but I had a near 100% success rate in people sharing them online. Would you pay \$200 for someone you admired to share your book with their audience? Of course you would. Give them a reason to do so organically!

I sent lots of copies of my book to clients and friends to drum up interest in bulk orders. I don't know the exact count, but it was in the hundreds. Each one included a handwritten note and a numbered metal bookmark. Most also included lollipops or another promo goodie. It was time-consuming and cost a few thousand dollars in shipping, but it yielded lots of bulk orders and a handful of impactful social posts.

◀◀ SUPERQUICK! TAKEWAYS ▶▶

- Make a list of endorsers and start adding value to their lives early.
- Tell your audience early and often that you're writing a book. Make the first announcement SPECIAL!
- Do as many podcast interviews as you can, especially around your launch.
- Don't be afraid to give away free copies of your book.



I loved seeing people post the book on Instagram!





SUPPORTING THE BOOK



Supporting the Book

When my first son was born, my OB-GYN told me to think of his first three months as his “fourth trimester.” She said, “Even though he’s technically out in the world, he’s still helpless and developing rapidly every week.”

I felt very similar about my book launch. Six months post-launch, I am still saying, “I have a new book.” I will keep calling it “my new book” in every podcast, TV interview, and keynote for at least the rest of this year. Why? Because it is my new book... and I’m a proud new book parent!

I’ve seen too many people give up on their books after a few weeks or months. Or they move on to the next project. Both are mistakes, in my opinion. Here’s a secret: My book will remain “new” forever because it’s “new” to every person who discovers it.

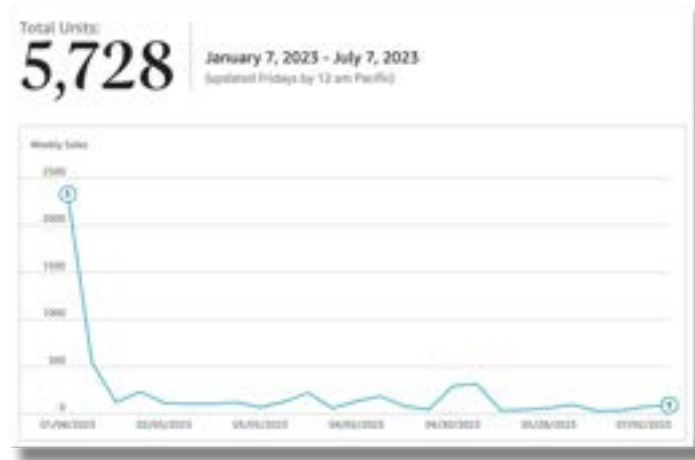
I’ve lived through this phenomenon once before: I appeared on an episode of the sixth season of *Shark Tank*. Even though the show first aired in 2015, thanks to the magic of syndication, it’s seen for the first time by tens of thousands of people every month. I know this because thousands of them end up on my website. Many send messages as if that snapshot in time they saw on their screens was now. Some are even confused when I say, “Oh yeah, I filmed that episode in 2014. I sold that business a long time ago.” Because to them, it’s “new.” And that’s the energy I’m taking with me as I spend the next three years (or longer!) actively promoting my new book. 😊

The Numbers

I have very little frame of reference for ongoing sales. My weekly BookScan hardcover numbers (which represent about 85% of US retail sales) usually hover around 100 – 150 copies per week, except when a large speaking event pushes them beyond that. My direct sales vary based on events, but I sold at least 1,000 bulk hardcover copies to speaking clients between weeks 2 and 12 and nearly as many ebooks. In the next 12 weeks, I sold more than twice that number of hardcover books direct, but fewer ebooks.

Tracked sales (those through retailers that report to BookScan) were as follows:

BookScan tracked 5,728 U.S. sales in the first six months. Here's a snapshot of the ebbs and flows by week. This does not take into account the *few thousand* hardcovers sold directly to clients. When I sell books to a client directly (or fulfill them through my publisher), I earn more per copy than when books are sold at retail. That's why I continue to funnel many sales through direct versus retail channels. Also, the dramatic dip is because of the frontloaded first- and second-week sales (2,330 and 547).



I haven't received my first royalty check yet (that will come later this year, on a delay of about nine months post-release), but I'll earn about \$9 gross per book sold via retail. As I noted previously, I have about \$5 per unit in each book, meaning I'll net something like \$4 per book. That's still more than a traditional publisher (I've been told payouts typically range from \$1 - \$1.50 per book with traditional publishers), and I retain much more control.

When I sell books direct to clients, I earn about \$3 more per book, on average, or about \$7 net per book. While it's nice incremental revenue (if a client hires me to speak at a conference of 500 people and buys books for everyone, I make about \$3,500 in book sales), the biggest value comes from my message spreading. Well-written, well-edited books are the best sales material you could ever have! Once someone has read your book and connected with your ideas, you become a category of one. Even if I was just breaking even on my books, it would still be an incredible investment.

Unlike hardcover sales, which are reported on a weekly basis, audiobook sales reporting is very delayed – at least to authors. This is apparently due in part to Amazon allowing Audible subscribers to “return” audiobooks they don't enjoy for a refund for a period of time.

The audiobook version of *Creating Superfans* sold 583 copies on Audible between January and March. I'm writing this in late July and haven't received another update. However, I've heard from lots of people on social media and at events that they've purchased the Audible version, so I'm hopeful that it is continuing to perform well!

Real talk: Every single book sold is worth celebrating. The first week my hardcover sales dipped below 100 units, I was disappointed for a split second, until I realized that nearly 100 strangers who don't know me at all spent their hard-earned money that week on a book that I wrote! How cool is that?!

That feeling will never get old, and I encourage every author to adopt the same perspective. You sold 10,000 copies last week? That's amazing! Congrats!! You sold 10 copies last week? That's amazing! Congrats!! It's a beautiful thing when your words find their audience. Impact doesn't only happen at scale.



A bulk order of Creating Superfans tied to a keynote at Customer Contact Week in February. I loved signing each copy!

Selfie from the recording studio... aka my guest room! It took about 14 hours to record the entire audiobook.





MY OWN REVIEW: SIX MONTHS LATER



My Own Review: Six Months Later

Overall, there isn't much about my book I would change. I love it! And, while it may not be perfect, I'm damn proud of it for my first attempt at recording my thoughts and theories into a "they're gonna be here forever" format.

In hindsight, I wish I had made my name and the subtitle larger on the cover. I might bump them both up a bit when I do the next print run. They're fine for in-person, but I'd like them to be more prominent when someone scrolls through covers on their phone or laptop screen.

Speaking of the subtitle, I'm not crazy about it, but it was the best I could come up with. Page Two suggested "How To Turn Your Customers Into Champions." I love that alliteration, and it's much less of a mouthful to say "Champions" than "Lifelong Advocates." Still, I was afraid "Champions" would make people think it was a sports book or have a slightly different connotation (e.g., you helping your *customers* win instead of your customers helping *you* win).

Others I considered were even longer but still didn't feel 100% on the mark: things like "Five Steps To Exceptional Customer Experiences" or "A Five-Step Framework To Make CX Your MVP." My subtitle (How To Turn Your Customers Into Lifelong Advocates) is *fine*; the most important thing is that it communicates exactly why the book exists. If you want your customers to be lifelong advocates, this book is for you. I only include this diatribe to help you think about your subtitle earlier in the process than I did so you can workshop it, get feedback, and hopefully land on something that's equal parts pithy and powerful. You might not ever feel 100% confident in every decision you make along the way, but you've got to trust the team around you!

Customer experience is relevant in every industry and in companies of all sizes. Because of that, I was very intentional about the examples I included in my book so there were relevant case studies. I wish I had included an index of such examples for people to quickly find and reference later because that makes the reader's experience even better. I planned to include an index originally, but because I was down to the wire with my revisions, there simply wasn't time. In a future edition of the book, I would love to add one for easy reference based on company name, industry, organization size, and specialized terms like "patient experience," "member experience," "subscriber experience," and so on.

One of the things I went back and forth on in the final stages of creative was whether or not to include a prominent call to action in the book, asking readers to leave a review online. The team at Page Two and I discussed using one of my full-page “poster” spaces to do a beautiful call to action for a review. In the end, I decided not to because of a few logistical reasons: I didn’t want it to interrupt the reader's flow, and I didn’t want to call out any one specific retailer for fear of angering other retailers (I’m sure B&N wouldn’t be excited about selling a book with a prompt asking people to leave a review on Amazon!). I also wasn’t sure where to put it. At the end of the book? Halfway through? In the part where I talk about the importance of customer reviews? Finally, it felt a bit... can I say “thirsty” in a business recap? Of course I can. It’s my recap. It felt kind of thirsty, so I didn't do it.

Looking back, there were a few creative ways I could’ve made this work. Probably the best would have been to include some kind of insert (think: postcard) that customers could’ve used as a bookmark that also had the subtle ask. I’ll probably incorporate that into future printings. Maybe I’ll have a beautiful illustration of the SUPER Model for easy reference and a clever-but-shameless ask on the back requesting people leave a review. Feel free to borrow the idea. Bookmarks (and other inserts, sometimes called “blow-in cards”) are very inexpensive to print and to include in hardcover books.

Things I'm Glad I Did

I’ve mentioned it before, but I’m so glad I printed this book in color. It was expensive, but it was worth it. Invest in your art.

I’m glad I created an evergreen Resource Library for readers of the book. It’s been a great way to capture email addresses and provide ongoing value to readers after the publication date. Check it out at BrittanyHodak.com/SUPER. We created a Kajabi course, but even something as simple as a Google Drive folder filled with resources would add value for readers.

I’m glad I went all-in on creating fun things for the launch. I’m especially glad I took the time to order fancy lollipops and write notes by hand. It was pricey and time-consuming, but it made a difference... especially since my book is all about experience! If you’re writing about a different subject, these details may not matter as much.

I’m glad I didn’t hire a ghostwriter. It was harder and it took longer to write it myself, but I don’t think I’d be as proud of the finished product as I am if I hadn’t taken that route.

I’m glad I made a second book trailer video specifically for librarians. I think it led to more orders, and I know it led to more librarians recommending my book to their borrowers.

I’m glad I put all of my podcast interviews into a [Spotify playlist](#). It made episodes MUCH easier to keep up with and share.

Things I Wouldn't Do Again

I paid for reviews in all the major publications that target indie authors, like [Kirkus](#) and [BookLife](#). The good thing is that they guarantee a review of a certain length and turnaround time, and they let the author see it before deciding whether or not to publish it. The bad thing is that you're paying several hundred dollars regardless, and you might end up with a less-than-amazing review that you don't want anyone to read. While all of my reviews were positive (you can read them on the links above), I doubt they impacted sales at all. That's \$2K I wish I had back.

I did a Goodreads campaign on the recommendation of my publisher. It was a waste of time and money. I think it was about \$600, plus the cost and time of mailing out 20 physical books. While a couple thousand people "entered" the contest (meaning they clicked a button), I doubt more than a few actually bought and read the book when it launched. Many of the books I sent ended up on eBay and Amazon — thankfully, I didn't send them until right before street date! I suspect Goodreads goads winners for reviews because several left 3- and 4-star ratings without any comments, making my Goodreads review score lower than my Amazon one. I don't care about legitimate 3-star reviews. Still, it's annoying AF that I paid money to send books to the wrong type of audience members (people who love sci-fi and fantasy novels or historical dramas), and was punished with sub-par reviews while they sold the books as "exclusive signed author copies" on Amazon. **TL;dr: Don't waste money on Goodreads.**

Things I Wish I Did

I wish I had held a launch party. I planned to do one at a local bookstore, but everyone in my house got Covid about a month before my book launched. That led into Christmas and New Year's, and I honestly just ran out of time. I wish I had prioritized it because celebrating with friends and family would have been really fun! I am terrible at planning celebrations for myself. I eloped instead of planning a big wedding. I've never had a birthday party as an adult. Publishing a book is a big deal, and I should have made it a point to share that accomplishment with the people who care about me. If you get a chance to do something with an independent bookstore or your favorite chain to launch your book, do it!

I wish I had hired a publicist sooner and found one whose expertise was book launches. I think that may be a service of Page Two that I wasn't aware of at the time. Next time, I'll begin auditioning publicists who specialize in working with authors at least eight months before my book launches so I can have someone on retainer for the six months leading up to the launch and for three to six months after.

I wish I had processed orders for those early commitments I told you about! Had I captured credit cards (instead of just trusting people would follow through with their pledges months later), I would have definitely debuted on the Wall Street Journal Best Sellers list. Be sure to take those orders! If you need help with the process, check out my friends at Brand Builders Group. They offer bulk order fulfillment as a free service to all of their clients.

I wish I had hired an Amazon Ads expert to help get the book in front of more eyeballs starting during street week. This got lost in the shuffle. I've hired someone now and hope to see results quickly, but in hindsight I'm starting months too late.

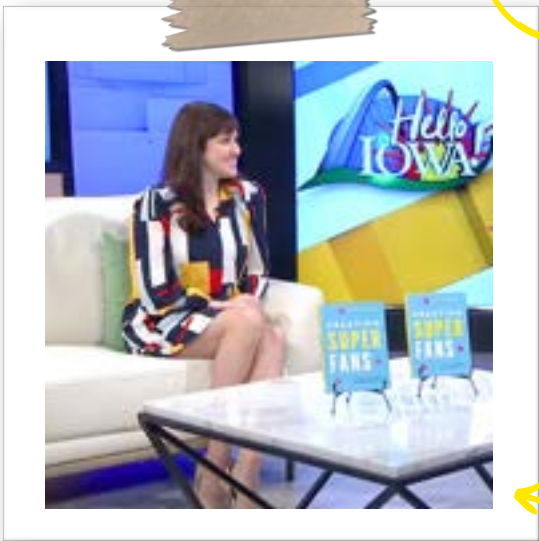
◀◀ SUPERQUICK! TAKEAWAYS ▶▶

- Play the long game. Books aren't episodes. They're seasons.
- Talk about your book everywhere you can.
- Don't obsess over the numbers daily or even weekly. It takes time for people to fall in love with your book and tell their friends. Stay the path.
- Don't be tempted to release another book in a matter of months. Instead, update the evergreen resources you offer to your readers.

Backstage with Carole Sullivan, host of "Today in Nashville."



Promoting the book on "Hello Iowa" with LARYNGITIS!





RESOURCES



Resources

So, you wanna write a book? AMAZING! Here are some resources I suggest or am frequently asked about that helped me tremendously.

Writing Program

While writing my book, I paid for several fancy writing programs and apps with lots of bells and whistles, productivity trackers, and fancy-sounding features. Guess what? I got sick of *all* of them and finished my first draft in Google Docs. Then, when I was ready to give it to my publisher, they told me it had to be in Microsoft Word because Word has the most robust tracking program.

Trying to find the “right” program to write your book in is an excuse. It’s a procrastination device. Write where you’ll write — but know that Word or Docs are more than sufficient to finish your book.... No fancy apps needed!

Idea Clarification

Whether you’re trying to clarify your book idea or something else for your personal brand, my go-to recommendation is Brand Builders Group.

This collective has been a game-changer in my personal and professional life. In the four-plus years I’ve been a member, I’ve made dear friends and increased my revenue several-fold. There are courses on writing and launching best-selling books, plus many other tools for up-leveling your influence and impact. Check out [this link](#) for a free discovery call with a BBG Strategist.

Book Videos

Every book needs a book trailer! I worked with a company called Video Narrative on mine because they produced my speaking reel. I LOVED working with their team! If you don't have a big budget or lots of lead time, check out Animoto. It's a really intuitive platform to quickly create professional-looking videos. I've used it several times, including for this recap video showcasing my first six months of 2023.

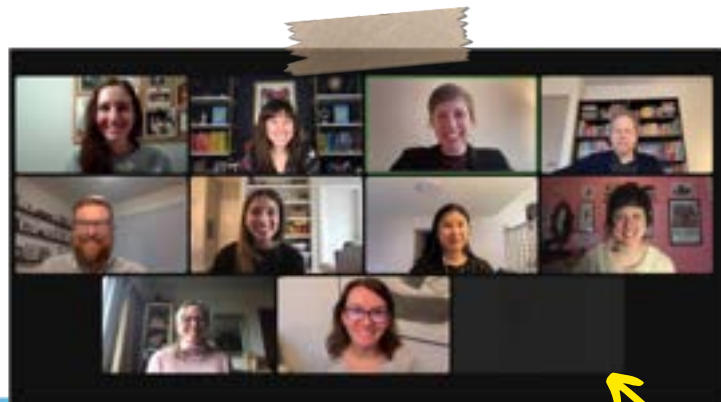
Marketing Goodies

I was OBSESSED with the fun stuff I created to launch my book. My VIP vendors were amazing! If you want to make metal bookmarks, check out MyMetalBusinessCards.com. If you want to create LEGO versions of yourself with your book, call the team at MinifigLabs.com. And for just about everything else (Stickers! Magnets! Buttons! Window clings! Keychains!), StickerMule.com is my go-to resource.

Publishing Partner

You've read my praise about Page Two already. Working with them was a highlight of my book-writing journey. I've sent several friends in their direction and would not hesitate to tell you to check them out too. Learn more about Page Two here.

Click to watch the Animoto video I made to celebrate my book's first six months.



Virtual celebration with the amazing team at Page Two on street date!

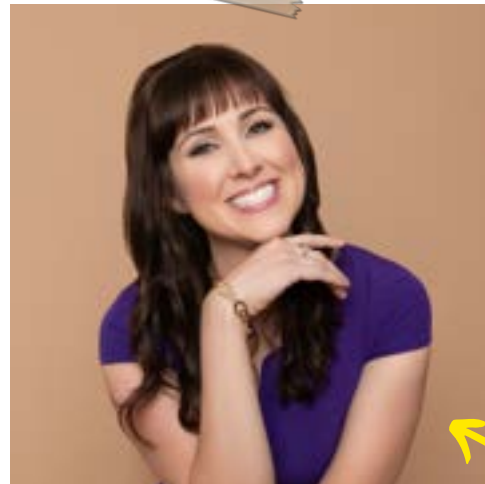
THANKS FOR READING!

I hope this recap has been helpful (or *will be* helpful) to you on your book-writing journey! If you've enjoyed it, please throw some good karma my way by:

- ★ Buying a copy (or another copy) of my book and leaving a review!
- ★ Subscribing to or leaving a review for my podcast, also called *Creating Superfans*. 😊
- ★ Sharing this recap with an aspiring author who may benefit from it!

For much (much, much) more about *Creating Superfans*, follow my Spotify Launch Playlist where I continue to add new episodes and interviews about the book.

This shot is from about a week after I finished the first draft, while recording my speaking reel. You can watch that video here.



And here's the author shot I used inside my book, taken by the super-talented Fizzah Raza!

LET'S CONNECT!

