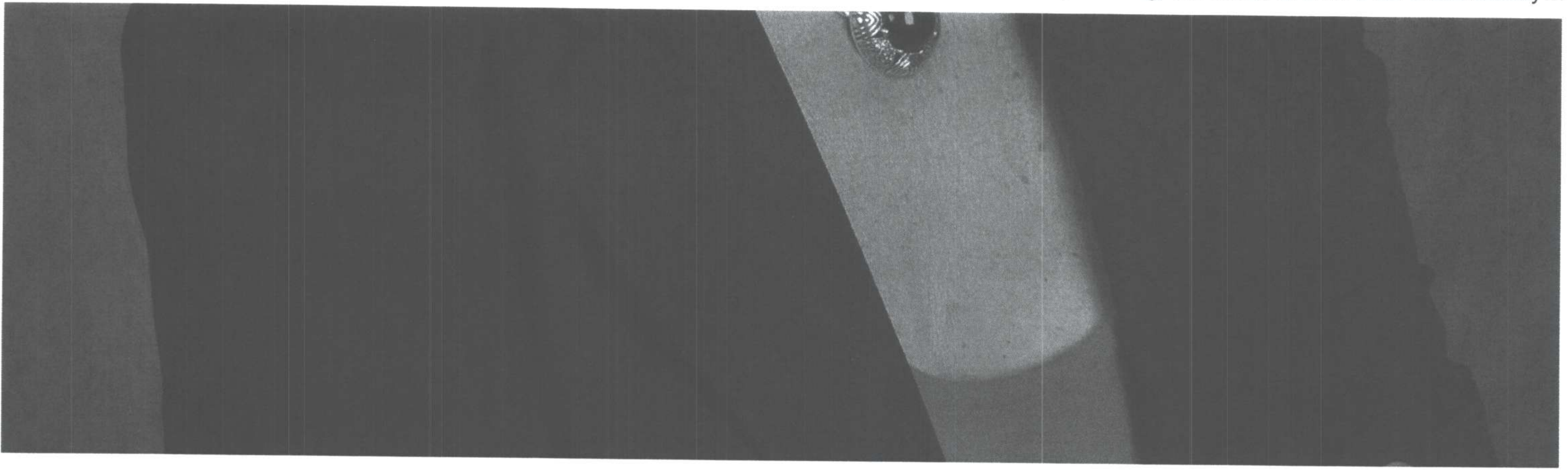


Author Dianna Booher: "Words hold our society together; When those words become so polarizing, untruthful, or uncivil our entire society will crumble"



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...I'd like to see our country return to civil discourse!
Words hold our society together. When those words
become so polarizing, untruthful, or uncivil, so that
our government ceases to function, our entire
society will crumble.

. . .

As *part of my series about "How to write a book that sparks a movement" I had the great pleasure of interviewing Dianna Booher.*

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 48 books, published in 62 foreign-language editions. She helps organizations communicate clearly and leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence.

*Her latest books include *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*; *Communicate Like a Leader*; *Creating Personal Presence*; and *Communicate With Confidence*.*

*National Media such as *Good Morning America*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, *FOX*, *CNN*, and *NPR* have interviewed her on workplace communication. Clients include more than one-third of the Fortune 500.*

As CEO of Booher Research Institute, Dianna has been named on Richtopia's list of "Top 200 Most Influential Authors in the World."

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Thank you so much for joining us Dianna! Can you share the "backstory" about how you grew up?

I grew up in a small farming town in central Texas. Very poor, as most farmers were back then. But as they say, we didn't know it. My parents gave me a great loving foundation for life.

When you were younger, was there a book that you read that inspired you to take action or changed your life? Can you share a story?

As I was growing up, I hardly heard the word "reading." In our small school, our entire library for 1–12th grades consisted of a room smaller than the average 12X12-foot bedroom. So you can imagine the culture shock when my family moved to Arlington, Texas (home of the Dallas Cowboys). When I transferred there in the 11th grade, I went from a class size of 24 to a class of 465.

And the Arlington library was gigantic. That library opened up an entirely new world for me — access to books that I'd never had available.

What was the moment or series of events that made you decide to bring your message to the greater world? Can you share a story about that?

Most definitely, there was a "defining moment," as they say. At the age of 27, I had two toddlers and a husband in and out of the psychiatric hospital, struggling with severe depression. When I understood that he would probably not be working much longer, I knew that at some point, I would need to support the family.

One particular night while he was in the hospital and I had not slept for 2 nights, I went into the family room, grabbed my Bible and prayed for guidance about how I could make a living. At the time, I was teaching Spanish at a local junior high school. The more I

prayed, the more I felt that God was telling me to write. So the next morning, I turned in my resignation to the principal effective at the end of the semester (30 days later).

Immediately, I launched my freelance writing career and headed back to the university for my master's degree in English, with a specialization in creative writing. In my thesis, there was a novel (under the direction of Beverly Lowery, who has been called the female William Faulkner). After graduation, I sold that novel to Kensington and began to write full-time. Both fiction and nonfiction — often 2 or 3 books a year.

What impact did you hope to make when you wrote this book?

My first business book was *Would You Put That in Writing* (hardcover sold to Facts on File; softcover to Random House). When Simon and Schuster/Pocketbooks picked up the book years later, the title was changed to *E-Writing: 21st Century Tools for Effective Communication* (2001). In June 2019, my updated and briefer version on writing was released by Berrett-Koehler: *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*.

Essentially, this book on writing "morphed" through 3 titles published with 3 different publishers and has had a life of more than 38 years!

But back to that first business book: It was an immediate hit and offers for sub-rights began to pour into my agent: video sales (Britannica, American Media, PBS), audio sales (Nightingale-Conant), and software (KJ Software and ModelOffice).

Seven more books quickly followed — all on the topic of writing. Then my publishers suggested that I broaden my topic somewhat wider to communication in general. That's when McGraw-Hill released my book *Communicate With Confidence: How to Say It Right the First Time and Every Time*.

Did the actual results align with your expectations? Can you explain?

I had NO expectations — I just needed to make enough money to support my family.

When I started to write my first articles and books, I was rather clueless. I had never known a real writer. To teach myself about the industry, I went to the 800 section of my local library and checked out most of the sections (50–60 books). After reading almost around the clock for a month, I learned what the writing life was all about.

What moment let you know that your book had started a movement? Please share a story.

Actually, there were two such moments several years apart. The first time was during the launch of that first business book: *Would You Put That in Writing?* My publisher sent me on a national book tour, and the *Houston Chronicle* ran a feature story on my book and the need for better business writing. By noon that day, I had received 32 calls from businesses saying, "Can you please come out and talk to us? Our people can't write clearly!" That's how my one-person consulting/training firm got launched — and finally grew to a multimillion-dollar company.

The second moment (several years later) was this: One evening, I was sitting in my bedroom reading a stack of newspapers, business magazines, and journals that had stacked up while I'd been traveling as a speaker. I opened up 4 major publications that had either a feature, a review, or an ad about my work: *USA Today* (feature), the *Wall Street Journal* (full-page ad placed by the software developer), *TD Magazine* (an award for the video program), and another that I've now forgotten.

Basically, in one month's major publications, my work in these several different formats reflected major attention to the way the business community communicated — or should I say "didn't communicate"!

What kinds of things did you hear right away from readers? What are the most frequent things you hear from readers about your book now? Are they the same? Different?

As I spoke at major conferences around the world, this was the refrain I heard from bosses and employees (engineers, lawyers, accountants, systems analysts particularly): "The schools never taught us to write for the business world. I dislike writing, and it takes too long! Your book makes it so simple!"

More and more universities started to teach my "MADE" writing concept (which I quickly trademarked). So today, those who have not completed the MADE Format® training still need the same help: a simple, step-by-step process for thinking clearly BEFORE they write.

But today's audience has an additional problem: volume. That is, they need help simply managing the volume of email they get so that it doesn't extend their workday. In our latest survey for *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*, the average knowledge worker reports spending 3 hours a day just doing email.

What is the most moving or fulfilling experience you've had as a result of writing this book? Can you share a story?

The most rewarding experience of my many books on writing and communication is having people tell me that my work has literally "changed their life." When I probe them with "why," they typically tell me a story of how their improved writing skills and communication habits led specifically to a promotion or career boost or how their improved communication, in general, saved their marriage or repaired another significant relationship.

One particular woman at IBM took my training class early in her career. Her writing showed such a drastic improvement that her boss began immediately to mention in staff meetings how well she wrote sales proposals using the Booher Strategic Writing® method. Colleagues then began to come to her, asking for feedback and input on their own writing. Within a few years, she was promoted to regional director. The last time I heard from her, she had a job in Obama's White House. And each time, we talked, she attributed her career success to learning to write well in our Booher programs.

Stories like this from my clients make my work exceedingly fulfilling!

Have you experienced anything negative? Do you feel there are drawbacks to writing a book that starts such colossal conversation and change?

No negatives that I'm aware of — except that with each new book I have the same high aim. And that adds pressure as I write.

Can you articulate why you think books in particular have the power to create movements, revolutions, and true change?

The written word has staying power — unlike the spoken word that people misinterpret and often forget. Books establish authority.

What is the one habit you believe contributed the most to you becoming a bestselling writer? (i.e. perseverance, discipline, play, craft study) Can you share a story or example?

My parents taught me to be disciplined, focused, and organized. That has made all the difference in building a body of work during the past 3 decades.

In fact, my kids have often teased me about my focus — my ability to “tune out the world” when things around me are in chaos.

I recall one particular afternoon when I had just completed a book manuscript and turned off my computer. I was just sitting at my computer, exhausted but thrilled to be finished. Then I heard my young son, Jeff, coming down the hallway with his next-door friend in tow. I listened quietly, straining to hear my six-year-old’s whisper as he and his friend neared my office door. He said, “Listen to this, David. I’m going to go in there and talk, and my mom won’t even hear me.”

They walked into my office, and I could feel them standing behind me as I sat gazing out the window. Jeff said, “Earth to Mom. Earth to Mom.”

I turned around to face him: “Yes? What do you need, boys?” My response blew his whole illustration to his friend. But he made a point with me!

What challenge or failure did you learn the most from in your writing career? Can you share the lesson(s) that you learned?

I learned the value of colleagues and friends to give great feedback and most especially to help in promoting. Secondly, my writing career has underscored what my parents have always taught me: “Whatever you do, do it with your best effort.”

If they’re well done, your words/books have the potential to last for decades.

Many aspiring authors would love to make an impact similar to what you have done. What are the 5 things writers need to know if they want to spark a movement with a book? (please include a story or example for each)

1. Stop talking about writing, and write. A business-professor friend has been talking about writing his management book for more than 15 years. As far as I know, he has never written it. Instead, he just goes to tradeshow and mentions what he's GOING to write.
2. Writing books is all about promotion. Even my largest publishers (Penguin Random House, Simon and Schuster, McGraw-Hill) expect authors to build their own platform and promote their book as if sales depended on them alone.
3. Writing does NOT have to be a long, complex process. I typically draft a book in less than 3 weeks. Would-be authors who have struggled for years to finish a book tell me that after they hear my 12-step process, they have finished their book in days — not months.
4. Your money as a writer comes from sub-rights. On one particular book released years ago, I was paid only \$7500 advance. But at last count, that book has earned me more than \$4 million because of the other related income streams spun off that content.
5. Speaking is the absolutely best way to promote and sell books. In fact, as CEO of my own training company and a keynote speaker for 3 decades, we have always REQUIRED audiences to buy the related books for the program I and my trainers present. Speaking creates a steady audience for your work, income, and ongoing notoriety.

The world, of course, needs progress in many areas. What movement do you hope someone (or you!) starts next? Can you explain why that is so important?

I'd like to see our country return to civil discourse! Words hold our society together. When those words become so polarizing, untruthful, or uncivil, so that our government ceases to function, our entire society will crumble.

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Thank you so much for these insights. It was a true pleasure to do this with you.

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