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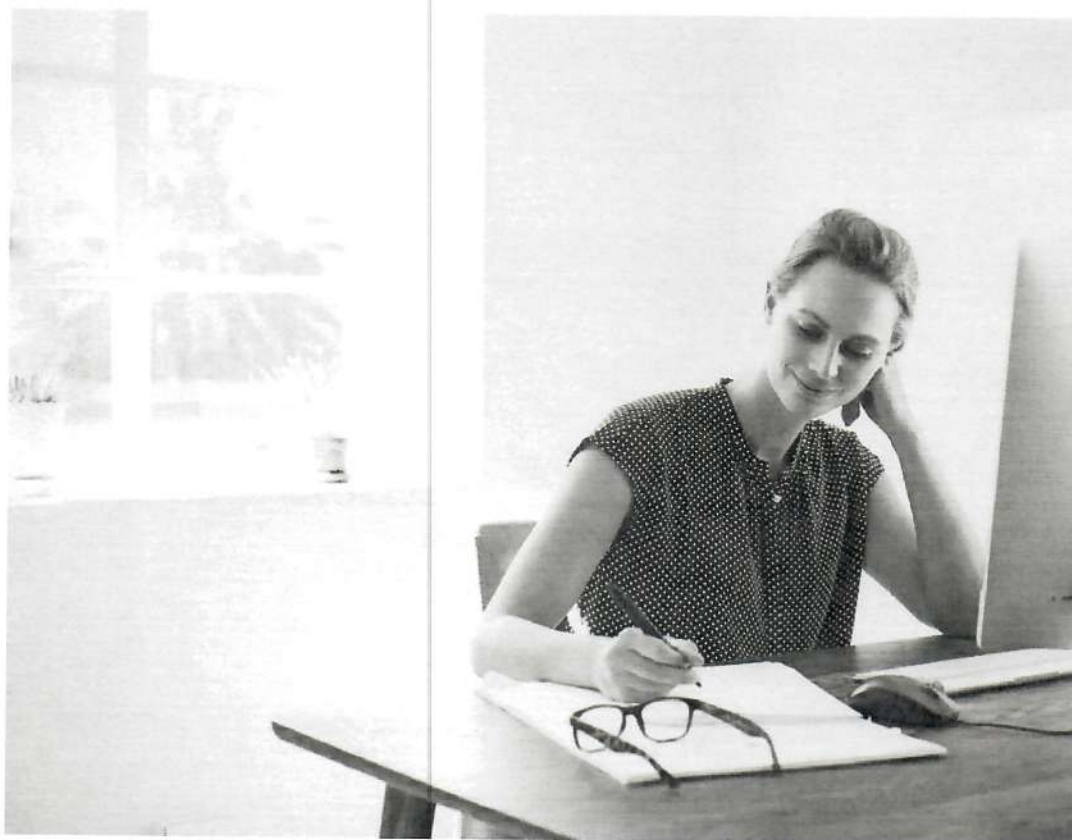
Looking For Competitive Advantage In Your Career This Year?

WomensMedia Contributor 

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Want the advantage? ICLIPART

By Dianna Booher—

No, it's not about working longer hours. It's not about connections. It's not about finding new mentors.

Standing out from the crowd demands that you put your innovative ideas out into the world. So how do you do that quickly and relatively easily? The most immediate, sustainable effort: Publish a book in your area of expertise—insights and lessons learned with strategies and tactical tips that will help others accomplish their goals.

Here's how Sara (a former school teacher and a book-coaching client of mine) did this very thing. Let me clarify up front that she had absolutely no writing background or formal academic training in her topic—just the desire to write and make a living doing it.

As a frequent blogger on a variety of topics, Sara posted a quick review of the *Top Gun* movie—not an extraordinarily well-written review. The post was just her insightful opinion about why the movie was so successful with audiences across the country. Her post went viral.

An editor at a major publishing house saw the millions of “likes,” comments, and shares, and contacted her to ask if she might be interested in writing a book. Mind you, *not* a book about *Top Gun*. Instead, the editor loved her writing style and asked her to suggest a topic that she might like to address. She tossed out a few ideas. The editor expressed further interest and asked if she'd be willing to prepare a book proposal.

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As just so happens, she had a book proposal ready to go. (Okay, so this didn't "just happen." About a year earlier, she'd attended a book-writing camp, where she'd drafted a proposal. After contacting two top literary agents who showed little interest at the time, she shoved the proposal to the back of her mind and accepted another year's teaching contract.

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Fast-forward two weeks later: The publishing house offered her a book contract on the topic she'd proposed. And there were a few "sweeteners" in the deal: The publisher signed her with their speaker bureau and began booking her immediately for seminars at women's conferences based on the "forthcoming book." Additionally, they contracted with her to write a monthly column for their online and print magazine.

Are you beginning to see the gravy train here? I could repeat this story many more times based on different business and self-help authors and how they got their start.

With few exceptions, here's what works to stand out from the competition and disseminate your ideas and lessons learned to a wide audience—the process that can serve to launch your career faster and further than almost any other method:

- Beta-test your ideas for reader appeal.
- Dig deep on your idea. That might involve deeper experience on the job, interviews with other experts and synthesizing

what you learn into new insights, or more proprietary and secondary research into your topic.

- Investigate what others have written on the topic (books, journal articles, popular magazine articles, blogs) to make sure your ideas haven't already been over-exposed. (Some aspiring authors try to skip this research step. Instead, they plunge in spending weeks, months, or longer to write their book—only to discover that other authors have already published tomes and tomes covering the same territory.)
- Identify what hasn't been said before on your topic. That's your goldmine.
- Write a book proposal focusing on that goldmine—your unique angle and experience on the topic.
- Query a literary agent to “shop” your book proposal to publishing houses.
- Write your book manuscript while the agent is selling it.
- Begin marketing your book during the 6-7 months your publisher produces and releases the book to the masses.

“But, but, but wait . . .” you may be thinking. Wouldn't it be a lot easier and faster for me to just self-publish my book and get it online at Amazon?

Sure it would!

And therein lies the self-sabotaging problem. By far, most aspiring authors take that same easier route. Thus, the competition to be an “also ran” author. At the beginning of this blog, I posed this question: Do you want a competitive advantage—to stand out from the crowd?

Technology has made it easy (yes, really, really easy now that we have AI) to publish a book. Anybody can do it in a matter of hours. That's why we have millions of new books published each year—no barrier to entry for self-published authors. If they can pay someone to print it, they can become an author.

But selling your book to a major publisher? (The ideas need to be new, and the writing needs to be good.) Now, that's an achievement worth telling your Mom—and your clients or boss when you're ready to move up and take home bigger bucks.

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 50 books, including *Communicate Like a Leader*. She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at BooherResearch.com and [@DiannaBooher](https://twitter.com/DiannaBooher).

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