

The Author's Challenge - The 7 "R's" of Writing

~ Lanny Cook©

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The 1st "R" - Reflective Resolve



Everyone has an experience or thoughts that cry out to be shared. If the truth were to be told, most people have a deep-seated desire to share their story with others. In the majority of cases, life stories are shared in rather informal ways. Through the activities of life we impart a narrative - personal interactions, everyday conversations, daily routines, the sharing of pictures, posts on social media and even through our prayer time. We are all story tellers! We were created with an innate desire to share the circumstance of life - our thoughts, hopes, dreams, accomplishments and even our failures. But greater yet is the profound need to do so. Even beyond the necessity to open up about our lives in order to maintain our emotional health, we are called to intimately reveal this human experience with those who surround us. This is why as an aspiring author you need to commit yourself with *reflective resolve!*

What joy is there in pursuing a life well-lived if we keep it all to ourselves? That behavior is the true embodiment of narcissistic pursuit. On the flip-side of that consideration, how can we recover from the challenges and disappointments in life if we keep it all to ourselves and never confide in those who walk beside us along the journey? We can't. Even the contentment embodied with personal victory is best savored through a celebratory gathering of our inner-circle of family and friends. In its purest sense, sharing is what makes life worth living through the act of freely revealing ourselves to others. Life's story is designed to be shared.

Over the years, I can't even begin to name the multitude of individuals who confided with me their deep desire to write a book. Dozens upon dozens of individuals divulged to me their secret of something significant hidden within the pages of their own personal journey. There were a few who would begin the process of compiling a bit of their story through the written word. But they would soon realize the depths of energy, commitment and frustration involved, causing them to put their dream on the back burner of life. Some of those folks never picked up their pen again, although some would sporadically spend some time trying to formally finish their endeavor. Fewer still actually finished the process of penning the manuscript of their impassioned adventure-filled tale.

Of course, as is often the case, life gets in the way of so many of our personal dreams and aspirations. One such case was my friend Pastor Vince Bousseilaire. He was in the process of recording his amazing adventure of climbing the highest mountain peaks in the world. He had a desire to record his daunting adventures within the pages of an inspirational manuscript, even though his divine calling was to actually place a Bible on the highest peak of every continent in the world. He had accomplished that particular goal and was expanding his mission to place God's Word on the highest peak of every country. Oh, what a thrilling book his adventures could

make once he'd completed his final ascent. Vince had already shared with me many of his notes regarding several of his climbs, and I have to say that his book would prove to be quite the inspirational read in a nail-biting sort of way.

Vince finally completed his calling in a sensational way, but his desire to formally record that calling for posterity's sake was never realized. God closed this page of Vince's life for some mysterious reason. Vince was descending the Matterhorn in Switzerland after successfully placing a Bible on the summit when the Lord called him home. A strong gust of wind literally propelled Vince into his heavenly reward and into the arms of Jesus. During his descent, he literally ascended into eternity. He accomplished his earthly calling, but his dream of penning his adventures for posterity, vanished within the unforgiving terrain of the Matterhorn.

There are no guarantees in life. I've always said when the Lord calls there is no call waiting. So, my question today is this – "*What is your story?*" What part of "*you*" needs to be shared in some way with the world? If you've ever felt such a pursuit tugging at your heart, you can't ignore it. It's time to get started. What are you waiting for? Come on, it's time to start writing.

So what is your first step? It is simply a matter of *defining your topic*! It can't just be any topic. It has to come from the very depths of your soul and it must overflow with personal passion and devotion. That only happens if it strikes a deep chord that resonates throughout your entire life experience. The sharing of your story has to be both a deep-seated desire, as well as a personal calling on your life. Something that can only be told by your voice and through the lens of your intimate experience. It must be uniquely yours. But most important, your story must express the true passion of your existence – of who you are as a person. Do I dare say that you need to be willing to do whatever it takes to write your words down? Possibly even say that it can only happen when you die to self so that others may enter into the inner sanctum of your existence? There you go, I guess I said it! It must be true!

Now, I have to ask, what are you going to write about? It's important to realize that not only will this journey be one of deep *reflection*, but it will also be one of even greater revelation, both for you and for your audience. Which means it can only be realized through calculated *resolve*. Choose your topic wisely. I can't wait to hear about your ideas and your progress. Next week, I'll share some additional considerations that will help you along your path. So please, send me an update by clicking on the comment button below. I'd love to encourage you throughout this adventure. May God bless your journey; and just as important may you enjoy this process of penning your dream into reality.

Thanks for checking out the author's challenge. I'm sure you've got the writer's itch just waiting to be scratched.

February 6, 2023

The 2nd “R” - Relevance – (Relatability)



In my previous blog, “Everyone Has a Story to Share,” I brought up this point; “It’s important to realize that not only will this journey be one of deep *reflection*, but it will also be one of even greater *revelation*, for you and hopefully, for your audience as well. If not, then you really don’t have anything to share. In my weird way of thinking, I refer to this part of the process as “*reflevation*.” I know, the mind can be a terrible thing to waste, but one of the great benefits of being an author is the freedom to create words for your own purpose and pleasure. This can actually be a means to not only share something revelatory and unique to your readers, but it can also provide a means for them to better remember the point you are trying to make.

So today, I want to share the next “R” within our rhetorical journey of writing. This consideration is actually a process of deep discovery in and of itself – That is the process of “*Relevance!*” *Relevance* can also be described as “*relatability*” to your audience. Without considering the relevance factor, any audience that may have taken an initial interest in your material will quickly lose focus, and move on to more intriguing reads.

There is no formal formula for writing. However, there are some considerations that you need to be aware of to make it easier on yourself. Especially if you’re not a naturally gifted writer, which is the reality in my particular circumstance. I was a “B” student in my college English Composition and American Literature classes. Honestly, I don’t consider myself a gifted writer, such as Thoreau, Hemingway, Longfellow, or C. S. Lewis. But I have become more than proficient as an author through diligent research, hard-work, dedication, and attention to detail as I refine my ability to perfect this craft. Honestly, I tell people that I have developed a knack for writing.

Getting back to the “*Relevance*” factor. In the pursuit of creating a *relatable* piece for your audience, it’s essential to first identify the genre for your narrative. I won’t waste any time discussing the various options here, but this will help define the foundation of *relevance* for your piece. That is, “who” is your audience? Once you’ve identified the audience, you can plunge head first into the task of bringing your story to life. You can begin this effort by creating an outline or skeleton of your manuscript. A good recipe, starts with an objective, or purpose for your writing. You could describe this as the overall theme that is carried throughout the entire work. This continues on through the development of chapters, divided with sections that address main points, and critical attributes of the topic at hand. It’s also relevant to mention that in the simplest form, your writing should include an introduction, a main body and a conclusion. I know, you already understand that, but I had to mention it anyhow.

Once you’ve developed the skeletal structure of your project, it’s time to start adding the muscle, tendons and flesh to the body of your work. You know, the meat of the subject! This is where the *relevance* or *relatability* factor really begins to come to life. The words you pen help create a

mental picture for your audience through the development of characters and situational considerations. Most important however, and intricately woven throughout all of the previously mentioned considerations is the need to develop and ultimately expose the heart of your creation. After all, the heart is nothing more than a big muscle that provides nourishment and life to the entire creation.

Literally, the heart of any story imparts life. The heart exposes thoughts, motivations, hopes, dreams, failures, fears, and secrets from the innermost recesses of an author's soul. Words come to life through the voice you choose to share within your writing. The heart of your manuscript beats through the voice assigned. The rhythmic pulse of your written expression is what provides connection with the reader. *Relevance*, and *relatability* provide the necessary means to connect and capture the heart of your audience.

Now, I have to ask, who is the audience for your writing? How do you plan on making your writing relevant to that audience? As you finally take the first step in sharing your story don't be impatient and don't try to rush through the initial stages of this process. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day and most books are years in the making. Writing, just like fine wine requires meticulous care and precise aging. Your story deserves to be aged to perfection. I can't wait to hear about your ideas and your progress. Next week, I'll share some considerations regarding the 3rd "R" of writing. I know it will provide some profound insight to guide you along this venture. So please, send me an update by clicking on the comment button below. I'd love to encourage you as you proceed through this calling.

May God bless your journey; and just as important may you enjoy this process of penning your dream into reality. Write on!

February 12, 2023

The 3rd "R" - Routine to Render



In my previous blog, regarding the second “R” of writing, I shared this thought: The rhythmic pulse of your written expression is what provides connection with the reader. *Relevance*, and *relatability* provide the necessary means to connect and capture the heart of your audience.

This is a profound concept that has to be carried out throughout your entire piece. It’s not a one-time point that has a fleeting connection to the entirety of your story. Rather, it is a tangible connection that is intricately woven throughout the fabric of every word. It requires deep forethought and premeditated planning within every aspect of your effort. In other words, connection has to be seamless throughout your writing. Seasoned writers understand the importance of developing intentional, momentary lulls, which are followed by climactic interludes of deep intensity. This strategy helps to maintain interest while strengthening the connection with your audience.

The reality of this strategy is that connection is a rather covert process, but within the continuation of your story, it becomes obviously apparent and carries deep significance. This strategy is a foundational practice that perpetuates interest in your work, engaging the reader to be excited to turn the page throughout the entire manuscript. Have you ever started reading a book that just didn’t keep your interest? If so, then you know what I’m talking about.

To ensure that your book doesn’t become a table decor after the first few chapters, it’s necessary to implement the 3rd “R” throughout the entire writing experience. I call this 3rd “R” the *routine to render*. Simply stated, you have to develop a nearly subconscious *routine* of maintaining relevance for your material throughout the entire *rendering* process. I contend that it needs to be subconsciously transparent as you develop your prose. But that’s not as easy as you might suspect.

Every writer develops thoughts, or maybe I should say embraces literary tendencies that can easily teeter on the edge of the mundane. It’s easy to get caught up in regurgitating facts or knowledge; wrapping it in a bland paper package. What fun is it to open a present like that? Those who embrace a *bland package writing style* will soon discover that the only thing accomplished is a cure for insomnia in regards to their audience.

So, what do you need to do? You must develop a healthy *routine* that comes naturally as you *render* the story. This helps perpetuate the process of building relationship with your

audience. You have to get into their head and stay there. You must offer something that they long for and desire. Most important, this *routine* needs to be considered and practiced throughout the entire act of *rendering* your story.

All writers need to continuously seek a deeper understanding of the dynamics of writing in order to not only engage their audience, but also, to keep their work fresh. Being mindful of the development of dynamics requires you to stay fully aware of the reader's response in order to have moments where they can exhale, breathe, reflect, and relax. Too much literary intensity becomes overwhelming for even the most avid reader. Too little intensity lends itself to the monotony side of this equation. These considerations are an integral part of your *routine* to *render*. As an author it's your responsibility to discover, practice and refine this essential application.

There are several considerations that will help you develop your own personal *routine* to successfully *render* your tale. I'll add them as bullet points to make it easier for you to decipher; for the sake of *routine* purpose.

- Learn to differentiate between dispensing dry knowledge and sharing your story. In the process determine your own personal means to develop the knowledge you wish to convey through other avenues such as illustrations, analogies, symbolism or metaphors.
- Use descriptive and colorful words (not profanity) to share your story and engage the imagination of the reader.
- Limit redundancy. Don't attempt to say the same thing in a different way only louder with bigger font and bold capital letters.
- Expand your vocabulary. Learn some new words. But not ones that are so humungous your audience will need a dictionary to define you're meaning.
- In the same line of thought, don't be repetitive with descriptive words, using them over and over and over again. Become good friends with your online thesaurus to add variety to your written language.
- Stay focused, to the point and don't ramble. If the sentences you use might be considered a full paragraph, learn to limit your words in a concise, clear and meaningful *rendering*.
- Recognize any deficiencies as a writer and work on improving them. Turn it into a personal learning experience for you as well. Take time to become enlightened within your own literary capacity. Maybe you need help with sentence structure, punctuation, grammatical correctness, thematic organization, descriptive style, or even character development. There are plenty of resources available to help you improve. Better yet, find a good book or two written by a notable author and learn to read for context, structure, and development. Not necessarily for the purpose of content or enjoying the story. Rather, dissect them like a frog in a biology lab. Scrutinize them for the purpose of comparison and discovery to see how accomplished authors develop and impart their story. There's a lot to be learned from a good example!
- Learn how to use snippets of humor, wit, mystery, and suspense throughout your entire piece. Even a bit of snarky or sarcastic humor can be appropriate or useful at times. But they need to be applied in moderation and with a bit of restraint. Remember the true essence of humor and wit are developed through the voice

contained within your presentation. Of course, the application of *routine* is crucial within the context of *rendering* humor and wit within your storyline.

Now, I have to ask one more time before moving on to the final question involving today's topic. *Who* is your target audience? *How* do you plan on making your writing relevant to that audience? *What* is your plan to develop your own personal *routine* for *rendering* your story to your target audience? *Where* are you searching to enhance your personal repertoire of writing skills? As you move deeper into this process, don't forget to take the time to let these questions simmer in your brain before jumping headfirst into the high-temp frying pan of literary pursuit.

Next time, I'll share some considerations regarding the 4th "R" of writing. I have to say this is one of my favorite parts of this process. I'm confident it will provide some profound insight to guide you through your journey. Ok, I'll even go so far as to divulge this next topic. This "R" stands for "Research that Resonates." I understand that there are two "R's" in the title but the second one helps drive the point of the message home!

God bless you on your routine journey. *Render* on!

February 21, 2023

The 4th "R" - Resonating Revelation



In my previous blog, regarding the third “R” of writing, I shared this thought: “Every writer develops thoughts, or maybe I should say embraces literary tendencies that can easily teeter on the edge of the mundane. It’s easy to get caught up in regurgitating facts or knowledge; wrapping it in a bland paper package.”

This 4th “R” is a critical consideration that also requires careful inclusion throughout your entire script. Just like the 3rd “R” where I shared specifics on developing a *routine to render*, it’s crucial to apply various forms of *resonating revelation* to help develop a strong connection with your audience. This concept cannot be approached through happenstance or without deep reflection and purposeful consideration. *Resonating revelation (research)* is part of the covert process of connection which I introduced in my previous blog post.

Resonating revelation involves a myriad of strategies and delivery considerations. Not only can it involve the presentation of knowledge, data, facts, research, and prolific points to ponder, but it also entails twists, turns, snags and surprises within the development of the story line. And yet, it also involves literary strategies, mechanics, content, and context of both your words and the entire purpose of your writing. Most certainly it’s not a one-size fits all consideration that can be applied recklessly or arbitrarily within the context and content of your story. An esoteric application of the 4th “R” will undoubtedly limit the readers’ understanding of your points and ultimately minimize the overall effectiveness of your prose.

Many times, this happens when an author uses challenging vocabulary that is not common to the everyday reader. Trying to impress your audience with a specific rendering of unfamiliar and overly exaggerated terminology is detrimental to any author’s success. I remember taking a Bible class where the instructor was so enamored with his own level of intelligence, he just couldn’t relate to his students. Nearly every sentence within his lectures contained at least one reference to a Greek word that few in the class understood. For the students, all of our energy was spent trying to put definition to the Dr.’s Mediterranean cuisine of Greek terminology. It was exhausting. Unless you had majored in Ancient Greek at the seminary. The entire point of his lecture was overwhelmed by his insistence to use words that had no relevance or understanding for the participants. He reminded me of the teacher in the Charlie Brown specials that sounded like a muted trumpet. Sadly, the class was a snooze fest for most of us, as nearly everything that the professor shared was lost in translation. Actually, it was lost in the non-

translation of terminology. If you're looking for the word to describe the act of using big words to try to impress their audience, it is "grandiloquent." However, the word that best describes this type of an individual is "sesquipedalian." The moral of this illustration? Don't be a grandiloquent sesquipedalian if you're trying to connect with your audience.

Regardless of the genre of your writing, it's important to realize that *research* is the foundation for a strong, relatable story line. *Revelation* within your writing should be developed, presented, and revealed through a commitment to *research*. Successful authors present their research through revelatory means. Revelation is the tool that allows the reader to connect with the research. *Research* is not simply a matter of securing facts, data, information, knowledge, or applications that help drive home your point. Research must include an appreciation and understanding of the psychologic aspects of the reader's experience that is used to draw them into your literary world.

The understanding and awareness of the human learning process will serve to enhance your writing abilities and undoubtedly help you better connect with your audience. Jean Piaget, a twentieth-century Swiss psychologist performed a multitude of research regarding cognitive development in both children and adults. His research is extremely applicable to the author's challenge. Piaget's research on assimilation and accommodation within the confines of human learning provides deep insight into considerations that are applicable to the process of quality writing. If you're not sure what I'm talking about, Google his findings.

Here are a few considerations to ponder that might provide great insight as you travel along this part of your journey:

- What is the reaction you're trying to achieve with the reader?
- What strategies do you plan to use that build trust with your audience?
- If you're using unexpected twists and turns, how extreme can those presentations be without losing the reader's interest or shutting them down? What are your plans to draw them back into the story?
- How can you use revelatory strategies to enhance the presentation of specific research within your writing?
- What areas of your writing mechanics could benefit by researching specific strategies for improvement?
- How will you use the psychological principle of assimilation and accommodation of existing schema to make a connection and perpetuate your adventure for the reader?
- How might research benefit your plan to get into the psyche or mindset of your intended audience?
- What resources or strategies do you plan to apply that add color, illustration, and variation to the points you're trying to share?
- There is a psychological component to many of the writing strategies available to you. Passive/aggressive; love/hate; harmony/discord; good/evil; disaster/prosperity; chaos/peace; defeat/victory, presentations, all have a psychological consideration that is worthy of research in order to enhance the effectiveness of your story. Which of these approaches would best suit the purpose for your current project?

So, what does *resonating revelation (research)* have to do with being a successful writer? I shared this in my last blog, but I think it really helps drive the point home for this topic. “You have to get into the reader’s head and stay there. You must offer something that they long for and desire.” You must write with calculated intent and consider the reader’s possible reactions throughout the entire writing process. Most important, *resonating research* is the glue that bonds your reader to your work. It also bonds you to your audience.

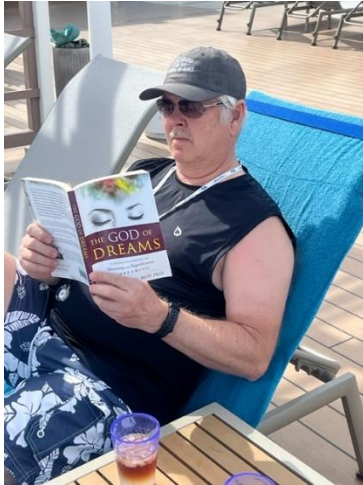
Now, I have to ask one more series of questions before concluding today’s topic. *Who* do you see relating to your *resonating revelations*? *What* areas of *research* are most necessary to improve your literary capacity? *When* do you plan to implement *resonating revelation* into your writing mantra? *Where* can you go to discover strategies to impart *resonating revelation* throughout your work? As I’ve said previously, “as you move deeper into this process, don’t forget to take the time to let these questions simmer in your brain before jumping headfirst into the high-temp frying pan of literary pursuit.” I refer to this strategy as literary contemplation. *Resonating revelation* will never occur without deep, pre-meditated, literary contemplation. I believe now is the time for great contemplation as you pursue your dream of becoming an author!

Next time, I’ll share some considerations regarding the 5th “R” of writing, *Rhetorical Resolution*. However, I’m going to take a short break before releasing the next post. As with any passionate pursuit, as well as any worldly endeavor it’s important to schedule some self-care time to address our emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. This helps sharpen the mind and invigorates the soul in order to carry on with excellence. So for the next few weeks, I’ll be enjoying the 7 “R’s” of personal care as I take leave from my pursuit of writing. My goal is to *Relax, Renew, Restore, Revive, Refresh, Rejuvenate, and Regenerate*. Yes, you might have guessed it. This too is an important component regarding the author’s challenge. You knew there had to be one more lesson thrown in before we ended this session.

May you *resonate with revelatory* contemplation!

March 5, 2023

The 5th “R” – Rhetorical Resolution



In my previous blog, regarding the fourth “R” of writing, I shared a bit of insight regarding the importance of presenting *resonating research* throughout your work. As a quick review of this topic, it’s important to remember that “*resonating research* is the glue that bonds the reader to your story. It also bonds you to your audience.”

This 5th “R” of our endeavor to share the written word provides the culminating application which literally puts pen to paper. I refer to it as developing *rhetorical resolution*. In essence, a story that fails to provide *rhetorical resolution* or I could say failing to bring written communication to a recognizable conclusion is nothing more than meaningless rambling. In other words, there’s no continuity between the various components of your presentation. More than likely your manuscript will simply be a conglomerate of disconnected thoughts, ideas, data, phrases, sayings, or discombobulated babbling. It’s like a rhetorical cream pie that’s been thrown into the face of your vaudeville audience of readers. To better understand the importance of connecting the dots using all of the previous “R’s” let’s quickly review them.

- The first “R” represents *Reflective Resolve*, or the story you are stirred to share. For the story to come into fruition, you must formulate it through *reflection* and then write it down with determined *resolve*.
- The second “R” represents *Relatable Relevance*. It requires presenting your story in ways that connects to your intended audience and captures their interest as well as their hearts.
- The third “R” represents *Routine to Render*. These are the strategies intertwined throughout your entire work that builds relationship with your reader through the art of connection. As you strategically develop links or connections between individual sections or chapters of your work the relationship deepens.
- The fourth “R” represents *Resonating Revelation (Research)*. *Revelation* is the tool that allows the reader to connect with the *research*. *Research* is not simply a matter of securing facts, data, information, knowledge, or applications that help drive home your point. *Research* must include an appreciation and understanding of the psychologic aspects of the reader’s experience and is used to draw them deeper into your literary world.

Rhetorical Resolution is the process of integrating all of the previous considerations (“R’s”) into a streamlined manuscript of calculated thought and premeditated purpose. Simply stated it is the writing process that begins at the very moment when you put pen to paper and culminates when your last thought is penned before laying your writing utensil to rest. However, it must explicitly consider and implement each of the aforementioned “R’s” of the Author’s Challenge. *Rhetorical Resolution* is the all-encompassing process of presenting your unique and personal story.

You might wonder; is it possible to simply jump in head-first at the fifth step and ignore the first four “R’s”? With a bit of hesitation, I will nod in agreement to say that it is possible... to a degree. But, ignoring the first four “R’s” of the Author’s Challenge will ultimately cause you and your editor added grief and intense gnashing of teeth throughout the much beleaguered process. Both of you will undoubtedly apply more than a fair amount of red ink to each page of your story in an effort to bring clarity, connection, and quality to your writing. Trust me when I say, I’ve been there and done just that. In the long run the associated frustration and discouragement will take its toll on your struggling efforts to continue writing.

So, what is the underlying difference between *rhetorical resolution* and the first four “R’s” of the Author’s Challenge? *Reflective resolve*, *Relatable relevance*, *Routine to render*, and *Resonating revelation* (the first 4 “R’s”) are the basic elements of the formula necessary to define the solution to the writer’s equation. If you ever want to enjoy success as an author, you must start with a formula and proceed through calculated means. The concept of rhetorical resolution is the deliberate means to the end of defining your own personal story.

Next time, I’ll share some considerations regarding the 6th “R” from the Author’s Challenge series, *Redundant Refinement*. The best way to describe our next conversation is to refer to the old adage, “de-ja-vu all over again.”

God bless you on this next leg of that journey. May you watch your P’s & Q’s as you define your story with *rhetorical resolution*!

March 12, 2023

The 6th “R” – Redundant Refinement



In my previous blog, I shared a rather profound reality regarding the first 5 “R’s” of authorship. I noted that the first four “R’s” of the Author’s Challenge; *Reflective resolve*, *Relatable relevance*, *Routine to render*, and *Resonating revelation* are the basic elements of the formula necessary to define the solution to the writer’s equation. If you ever want to enjoy success as an author, you must start with a formula and proceed through calculated means. The concept of *rhetorical resolution* (the 5th “R”) is the deliberate means to the end of defining your own personal story.

Since I’ve shared the elements along with the equation to hone your writing abilities, I believe it’s time to devote our attention to one of the most essential but often ignored necessities of authorship. That is the critical requirement for quality editing. The 6th “R” of writing could almost be considered an oxymoron if you remove it out of the context of editing your work. Which is why it’s important to provide clarity to the concept of *redundant refinement*. An oxymoron is a figure of speech that uses contradictory or congruous words in ways that don’t seem to make sense or fit together. Such as “clearly confusing,” “deafening silence,” “awfully good,” “bittersweet,” or “*redundant refinement*.” These words when used in tandem seem to have totally opposite meanings and often instill a bit of uncertainty into the conversation. But alas, they provide profound insight into the definition for the topic at hand.

A common definition for *redundant* is “no longer needed or necessary.” While the term *refinement* is often considered to be the “improvement or clarification of something by making small changes.” So when I refer to *redundant refinement* through the context of editing your writing, I am simply saying that you must tirelessly strive to provide improvement and clarity to your manuscript until it is no longer necessary. Editing is what perfects your work for not only meaning and intent, but also the mechanics of your presentation. You know, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, capitalization, quotes, end-notes, and the likes. If the truth is told, this is the most tedious and grueling part of becoming a respected author. And not to be *redundant*, but a big part of *refinement* requires eliminating *redundancy* within the content of your presentation. Beware of the typical author’s common gaffe which is repetitive presentation in order to make your point by saying it too many times only in different ways and with bolder font.

I try to employ the *KISS* method to my editing of content – “Keep it Simple Stupid.”

There are just a few suggestions I will impart regarding *redundant refinement* of your rhetorical renderings.

- Develop the practice of taking time to review and reread your work as you progress. This makes it easier to catch errors in mechanics, as well as in the delivery of your story as you move along.
- As you finish a section or chapter once again, take the time to review it. But not from the vantage point of being the author. Sit back, relax; grab a cup of coffee and a bagel to read your literary classic through the lens of your target audience. Try to digest it like you're reading it for the first time. Do so with your focus on the words and meaning of each page, not on the things you thought you wrote. So often, as an author, you glaze over mistakes because you're reading it from within the confines of what you know you've already shared, rather than what really appeared on the page. The mind instinctively glosses over items that have become common or familiar. Of course, what you write quickly falls into this arena of familiarity, causing your mind to skim right over the top of a multitude of errors. Learning to read your own work as if you're seeing it for the first time will allow you to catch glaring errors in mechanics, as well as gaps in your narrative, along with disjointed content, or ambiguous lines of thought.
- After you've completed the next chapter or section, go back and repeat the above-mentioned process. However, after you've done the same to this section, start from the very beginning of your work and continue through the whole compilation of your story. If you engage this strategy at the beginning of your efforts, by the time you write your final word and you're ready to lay the pen down, you will have dotted nearly every "i" - crossed nearly every "t" and covered all of the "P's" & "Q's."
- When you've completed this strategic review and you feel like it's looking pretty refined, go back and do it again, and again and again. A dozen meticulous reviews is simply a good start to this process.
- Now, finally with hours of dedication to *redundantly refining* your work, it's time to send it off for *professional* editing. I don't care how good you think you are at the editing process; the reality is – you're really not. Before sending your book to print, you want it to be as polished as humanly possible. For those authors who pursue self-publishing avenues, this is the biggest mistake they often make. Professional editing will make a significant improvement to the quality and presentation of your work. Ultimately this is what will make you shine as a professional writer. Great editing turns a good story into a great story and a great story into a classic.

As a side note here. Sending your work off to a professional editor doesn't lighten your burden in regards to polishing your story. It's not vacation time for you as you are not awarded a break from the hard and tedious task of proofing your work. Just the opposite is true. A good editor requires you to work side by side through the final editing process in order to *redundantly refine* your rhetorical masterpiece. High quality literature requires keen attention to detail. This can only happen through meticulous devotion to both the informal and formal editing process.

By the time you send the final galley of your manuscript to the printer, you'll probably think you've nearly memorized every detail and phrase. In fact, I'm sure you will be so tired of

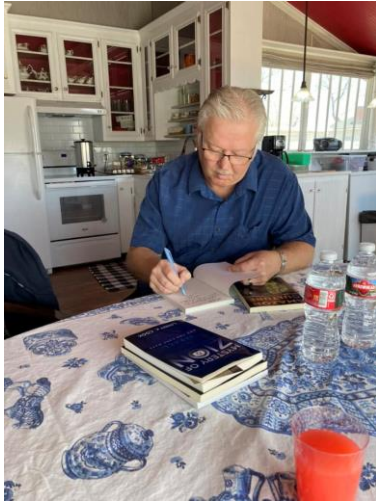
rereading your story that you'll never want to look at it again. But once the book is released, I guarantee that you won't be able to contain your excitement. You will be filled with the joy and satisfaction associated with realizing this meaningful accomplishment.

However, I need to share with you an additional warning. Even with all of the *redundant refinement* that your work encountered through this meticulous process, once the book is released, you're going to start reading and think to yourself, "I should've said it this way." This reality never fails. That my friend is sadly, the author's curse, which just might be the subject for a future blog.

Next time, I'll share some considerations regarding the 7th and final "R" from the Author's Challenge series, *Rejuvenating Realization*. The best way to describe this final conversation in this series is to proclaim, "Hallelujah! It is finished!"

Thanks for joining me on this journey regarding the "Author's Challenge." Good luck as you continue to climb to the summit of your writing adventure. Don't forget to cross all your "t's" while dotting all of your "i's" through the *refining* fire of *redundant* necessity!

April 3, 2023
The 7th “R” – Refreshing Realization



In my previous blog, I redundantly reviewed the monotonous nature of the refinement process. Actually, if there is one word to fully describe the writing process up to this point, it could easily be referred to as “tedious.” Finally, upon arriving at this point of your journey I’m sure you can look back and agree. With that being said, I have some good news, but I also have a bit of disturbing news that must be shared. The good news is you’ve overcome the tedious nature of the writing process with a great deal of tenacity and perseverance. At this point you need to take a deep breath and pat yourself on the back. It is time to celebrate and savor this moment. However, this will be a short-lived celebration. The disturbing news is that you’re not finished - yet. Actually, as far as time and energy are concerned, you’re nowhere close to nearing completion of your assignment as there’s more than a boat-load of hard work still sitting on your gang plank. Actually, the most daunting part of the journey is about to greet you head-on.

The short window of time that separates the final galley approval of your manuscript from the arrival of the finished product is merely a short and sweet interlude. It’s a time to simply pause to catch your breath before marching forward toward your final goal of literary accomplishment. Simply stated, you’ve made it to half-time where you can regroup in order to refine and formulize your second half strategies. This is the only means available to find victory on the journalistic battlefield.

Now, it’s time to develop and thoroughly refine your marketing plan. Literally, for an author this is where the rubber meets the road and is critical to the success of the story you’re determined to share with the public. It is here where you strategically gather all your promotional ducks in order to carefully place them in a row. Personally, I believe this is the biggest mountain to conquer within an author’s pursuit of excellence. This is the *Refreshing Realization* that brings completion to the process. Okay, I know and you are right. Referring to this part of the journey as a *refreshing realization* is truly an oxy-moron.

Getting the word out about your book isn’t as simple as you might assume. In fact, it can be extremely overwhelming. There are many facets of consideration that need to be addressed in order to ensure success. The process in simple terms is similar to applying for a job. But in essence it is much more detailed and complicated. Not only are you trying to sell a product, but also, in the bigger picture, you are marketing your qualifying experience and expertise for authorship. Marketing requires you to be able to sell yourself, promote your work, and convince

your audience of its relevance, as you share the confidence you embrace in the title. Not your title, but the book's title. Few people really care if you have a PhD, an MA or a BS. They are merely concerned with how well you package your BS and whether they can relate to it! Come on folks! That really was pretty funny. You might want to read it again to finally catch my attempt of humor.

As I share the specifics regarding the development of materials to accommodate this topic, it might make it a bit easier if you simply refer to the collective compilation of this information within the heading - Author Information. Once again, to streamline the process I will place these considerations into a bulleted format to provide ease of presentation and hopefully, lead to a better understanding on your part.

- Develop an *author resume* that includes the following: name, contact information, website address, and relevant professional/educational background. Include names of books or articles that you've already published, as well as relevant awards or recognition that you have received.
- Carefully develop a *brief description* of your book. Identify the genre of your writing, addressing the motivation as to why you wrote it and the audience to whom you were writing.
- Develop a *comprehensive synopsis*. This is a detailed summary of your book. Include 4-5 main points or takeaways from your book and how they all tie in to the over-all theme. Think of this as creating a sales pitch to sell your product. Make it exciting, captivating and focused on developing interest in your writing. But do it in a limited format no more than one page in length.
- Using the *comprehensive synopsis* edit it down into a *brief synopsis*. Make sure that it is direct and to the point. No more than a single paragraph or two.
- Create an attention getting *introduction* for the book. This is 1-2 short paragraphs, (150 words maximum) which is developed through a sales perspective. It is similar to the synopsis but is truly focused on soliciting marketing interest and promotional opportunities.
- Using your *author resume*, develop your personal *author biography*. You can develop a more detailed bio, as well as one that is more direct and to the point. So often, a detailed bio is too time burdensome for anyone to read other than your mother and grandmother who truly adore you. Remember to keep the biography relevant to your authorship qualifications.
- Develop 7-10 *intriguing questions* that can be used during an interview on a podcast, radio show or even television program. These questions provide added incentive for a host to invite you onto their show. None of them have time to read your entire book or come up with questions on their own. For your own benefit, and your own personal use, write out the possible answers to each question as you prepare for any interview. You never want to go into an interview cold, unprepared or completely blind. Remember, if you come across confused, or ill-prepared during an actual interview, you'll be shooting yourself in the foot. This is not a good marketing strategy unless of course you're running for a political office. At that point, it provides profound evidence of your qualifications for being an elected official!
- Create a short, concise, *introductory letter* that can be used to solicit interest in your book or used to secure interviews. These will probably be two different

letters. In fact, you should develop a third letter that can be included with any complimentary books mailed out to relevant individuals or organizations. Always include your contact information, as well as the address to your website.

Speaking of websites, don't forget to...

- Create a personal *author website* to share information about your books and links to sites where they can be purchased.
- Within the context of your website, develop a blog to share updates, articles, and information regarding your writing, upcoming events and even endorsements for your work. This provides a great segue way for my next point:
- Continuously secure endorsements from folks who have enjoyed your books. They can be used in all sorts of ways to continue to promote your work.
- Secure a professional style photo or two or more, for your portfolio that can be used throughout the process of soliciting promotional opportunities. Make it fairly current. A personal photo from thirty years ago of you posing with Mickey and Pluto probably isn't the image you want to convey as a professional writer.
- Identify social media platforms that you can utilize to promote your book and create a following of devoted fans. It's okay if your mother and favorite aunt are at the top of this list.
- Begin the work of soliciting guest appearances on podcasts, radio, internet and television programs that are relevant to your market.
- Develop a plan to host book signing events. Be creative with locations and venues. Contact your local library, bookstore, museum, church, senior center, craft show, or even rent a booth at the local county fair or rodeo. The more exposure you have, the better your chances of getting your book into the hands of your target audience.

Addressing these considerations will hopefully enhance your opportunities for success. All of these considerations and materials will be helpful in your efforts to solicit marketing and promotional opportunities. They are essential for use in news releases, book signings, special events, speaking engagements and guest appearances. Create a file folder on your computer to save each of these documents once you've developed them. This will make it easier to quickly and efficiently secure future events and opportunities.

As you develop all of these marketing and promotional tools, don't forget to apply the 6th "R" (*Redundant Refinement*) throughout this process. Spelling errors, poor grammar, bad punctuation, and even improper formatting will reflect poorly on the image you're trying to create. Make sure they are well edited and extremely professional, that is if you expect them to open up the door of opportunity for your literary endeavors.

Thanks for joining me on this journey regarding the "Author's Challenge." Good luck as you continue to climb toward the summit of your writing potential. I pray that you have gleaned at least one applicable concept or consideration that will enhance your literary journey.

May God richly bless you with His abundance and grace! ~ Lanny

The Author's Greatest Challenge!

Jan 22, 2023

Yesterday, I mailed out another dozen free books to various individuals and ministries. I've learned to be extremely discerning as to who I send them to. I started down the road of publishing my books over 25 years ago, and I must say, there is only one thing more challenging, discouraging, and time consuming than the actual writing and never-ending editing process. That is the marketing of the book once it's released.

You could say that I'm a low-volume author, as are most writers. I've heard that the vast majority of authors never sell more than a thousand books. Of course that all changes if you're some big name celebrity or politician. Then those ghost-written memoirs sell like hotcakes. I have found this to be a pretty accurate reality within the realm of my journey. It's a good thing I don't depend on my writing revenues to sustain my modest living conditions. I can honestly say that I have given away more free copies of each of my books than I have ever sold. Part of that arises from my desire to share the words I've scribed. If I have something that somebody wants or needs, I'd rather give it away than sell it to them. For most of my published works, I consider them more of a ministry than a livelihood. So it's more like I'm sharing encouragement to those who are hurting or interested in the topics that I address. But promoting them is still a huge part of what it's all about.

My books are founded on the tenets of the Christian faith. So, naturally, in my efforts to promote them, I have mailed hundreds of free copies to various church leaders and ministries; those that share a relevant mission with the content of each of the books. In every instance, regardless of how eloquent or personal my introductory letter was that accompanied the complimentary book, there were merely two outcomes associated with my effort. The first was that it was ignored completely. The second, and of course the most common response was - my name and contact information was added to their solicitation list for donations. It almost never failed that I would soon be inundated with mail begging for donations. Solicitations would pour in like fan mail for Elvis as each of those ministries encouraged me to fund and fully support their mission and purpose. Excuse me? How about someone on your staff taking the time to review the book I just sent to you, and maybe, just maybe share it as a resource to the members of your congregation. You don't have to buy any copies of it. But how about sharing the title as a valuable resource for those who need some assistance or support within the confines of your own membership or ministry influence? After all, the various books that I share address a wide range of issues in modern society and provide sound biblical advice regarding each subject. Subjects like single parenting; life, death, and the importance of faith; devotionals; a prophetic book on Israel; even a book about the connection between narcissism and spiritual abuse in relationships. It's not like I'm trying to get church leaders to endorse some Harlequin Romance Novel.

Sadly, even within every church that I have attended over the past 25 years; congregations where I faithfully served in a multitude of capacities and heavily contributed to financially; my promotional efforts always fell on deaf ears. There was one mega-church where I donated over seven hundred copies of a devotional on Jesus. They passed it out at Easter to individuals who had responded to the altar call to accept Christ into their lives. When I inquired about the possibility of it being carried in their book store, I was shunned as if I were a leper. It was obvious that the only books or materials allowed in this particular church bookstore were those written by the pastor and his minions or the best-sellers from the celebrity realm of authors.

So, what's my point of this particular blog? As a struggling Christian author, there are a few ministries out there who you might be able to contact in an effort to promote your book. But they are far and few in between. Rather than send out a free copy of your book, create a nice pamphlet, and then mail it out with a very well-written introductory letter that contains your contact information, including your email address, phone number, and website address. Make your letter to the point, and short. A full page is usually too much, and a single paragraph is not quite enough. So, something in between. After mailing the brochure, do a follow-up phone call or two. If you're lucky, they'll answer and maybe even allow you to make an appointment to meet with one of the ministry leaders. At that point, provide them a complimentary copy of your book if they display an interest in the topic. Do the same thing with various radio stations or similar internet shows. In addition, create a Facebook page, a Twitter account, or some other venue of social media connection to promote your book. Let me know how your efforts go. If you have any other options that have been successful, I'd love to hear about them. Send me a comment at lanny.cook@lannycook.com!

Thanks for checking out my first Blog series – The Author's Challenge. God bless! ~ Lanny



Lanny K. Cook @ IHS Publishing
 Author ~ Pastor ~ Life Journalist



"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:2 NKJV

