

What to do next

Marketing your Catholic book
after you've been published



Michael J. Rayes



Leonine
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Visit us online at www.leoninepublishers.com

For more information: info@leoninepublishers.com

About the author

Michael J. Rayes is a native of Arizona, a lifelong Catholic, a husband, and a father. Rayes earned a master's degree in business administration with an emphasis in marketing, and a bachelor's degree in education. He is a regular columnist for *The Latin Mass* magazine, *The Angelus* magazine, and the author of three books (and counting). Rayes is currently pursuing a second master's degree in professional counseling.

Rayes is the past president of three civic and charitable organizations as well as a speaker on Catholic family life and Catholic home schooling. He and his wife currently operate two small Catholic publishing companies.



Note from the author

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Every effort has been made to ensure the completeness and accuracy of this book. However, there may be mistakes, both typographical and in content. This text should be used as a general guide for the subject matter covered, not as the single source of book-promotion information.

The purpose of this book is to inform and entertain. This book outlines methods and strategies the author has learned as a Catholic author and businessman. The author and/or Leonine Publishers LLC are neither liable nor responsible to any person or entity with respect to any loss or harm caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained in this book.

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A great author, gentlemen, is not merely one who has a copia verborum, whether in prose or verse, and can, as it were, turn on at his will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences; but he is one who has something to say and knows how to say it.

John Henry Newman
The Idea of a University, 1873

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Your book is published!

Whether you found a traditional publisher who accepted your manuscript, went the self-publishing route, or utilized an author-services company that helped turn your manuscript into a real book, you are now a published author. Congratulations!

Tell everyone about your newest creation. Throw a party! Let all your friends know. Tell all your extended family members about your book!

Let's take a closer look at what it takes to sell your book. Now that you have the actual book in your hands, what should you do next? And how can you overcome that natural hesitancy that may pull you back from getting into the marketplace? Keep reading and we'll find answers.

Is there a salesman inside you?

You wrote a book. That required certain attributes.

Not everyone can sit still, write something, and then sit and write more.¹ Day after day. On top of that, you went over your book and made sure it was organized. That required persistence. Attention to detail. And a passion for what you believe.

Writing was probably the natural part. In some ways, it may have come easily to you.

Now it's time to sell, sell, sell.

How does that make you feel? I mean, when you think of selling your book, what is the immediate reaction right in the pit of your stomach? If you feel a twinge of anxiety, you are not alone. The attributes that make you a good author may not make you a natural salesman! Many authors are thoughtful, reserved, and introverted. Salesmen tend to be extraverted, risk-takers, action-oriented, and insensitive.²

Authors usually think before they act.

Salesmen act without thinking. One of their favorite quotes is, "it's better to ask forgiveness than permission." They *do* first, and then think about what they did—but only if it caused a problem.

Do you really need to change your personality to sell your own book? The good news is, no, of course not. That's impossible anyway. This section may or may not describe you, but everyone has a little anxiety sometimes. You can skip ahead if you like, or keep reading to learn why *you* can be a great sales representative.

I believe authors are the best salesmen for their books. You see, selling and marketing can be learned. Combine these learnable skills with what probably is a natural sensitivity and the quiet passion of your temperament: the result is a compassionate, low-pressure salesman.

It *can* be done. You really can get out there and sell your book. Writing it was the first part. Now it's time to be an evangelist for your own book. Let's find out how.

¹ Rev. Conrad Hock, *The Four Temperaments* (Milwaukee, WI: The Pallottine Fathers & Brothers, Inc., 1962, reprinted 2002) page 7.

² Ibid., page 7, 48, & 53-55.

Practical evangelization: What mindset do you need?

First, have **confidence** in your own work. If it was important enough to invest time, money, and effort, surely others will benefit from your work. Remember the words of the Lord in Scripture: "*No man lighteth a candle, and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel; but upon a candlestick,*

that they that come in, may see the light" (Luke 11:33, Douay-Rheims 1899 Challoner version). This point is so important, it is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels! So, let your light shine. Go out and tell others about your book. Post it on your online social-network page.

Next, consider that just as extraverted, natural salesmen sometimes need to slow down and think before they act, you need to eventually get up and **just do it**. It's wonderful to have a well-thought plan. It's great to think things through and dwell on them a bit. But then it comes time to take action. What's the worst that can really happen? Someone will say "no"? Move on. Then follow up later and ask the same person again... no may eventually turn into "yes." Things change.

Will it always be like this? Will it always be difficult to sell the book? Actually, it gets easier! There are two reasons for this:

1. You get better at it. You are learning a new skill—sales—that you didn't have before. You'll get better with time and you will fine-tune your approach.
2. Customers become more familiar with your work. With time, potential customers will have already seen your promotions and your book cover a few times. This makes them familiar with your book and increases their comfort level. More on this later—keep reading!

A point needs to be made regarding **persistence**. Everyone is persistent about something. You persistently, relentlessly continued writing your book until it was completed, even if it took years with on-and-off writing. Salesmen persistently continue trying to sell. It takes more than simply one contact with someone to persuade that person to buy. When you ask a bookstore manager, a pastor, or any individual to buy or stock your book, ask if you can follow up "next month" or even "next week."³ They'll usually say yes, and even if they don't, you can follow up anyway, at least once. Remember to smile!

It takes several visits to get a sale. If you really want a bookstore to carry your book, you'll want to visit them every week. Bring a copy of a book review with you. Leave your book with the manager. You can also contact online bookstores. Some bookstores will list your book without ordering any copies. Once a customer orders a copy, the bookstore will stock a few copies.

Finally, remember to **get help**. There are two kinds of help: earthly and heavenly. Ask someone you love and trust to help promote the book. This could be one of your children, your spouse, your parents, or perhaps a treasured colleague. You may also wish to offer your sales journey to God through a special saint. **Choose a saint** as your patron and ask his or her intercession while you promote your book.

³ Tom Reilly, "Persistence in Sales," *Tom Reilly Training*, accessed May 31, 2010, <http://www.tomreillytraining.com/Ezine%201-13-05%20Persistence%20in%20sales.htm>.

Promoting your book

Now we come to the nuts-and-bolts of book promotion. This is where a combination of tenacity, hard work, smiles, and networking combine to make your light shine.

The very first thing to do is get a **press release**, sometimes called a news release. Dan Poynter discusses a few things to do⁴ before you announce your book, but your publisher should have already done these: ISBN listing, Library of Congress listing, and so on. For you as the author, the first thing after your book is produced is to generate a press release. You can learn to do this from Poynter's book, or research it on the Internet, or have an author-services company write one for you. A good press release does not simply state what a book is about. Rather, it presents a problem and then shows that your book solves the problem. Here is a fictional example of a lead paragraph in a press release:

Every Catholic goes through a time of tepid, dry spirituality. A new author, however, poured refreshing, spirit-filled meditations onto this all-too-familiar spiritual desert.

After that powerful lead, the release should reveal the book's title and the author's name in the next paragraph. The book title should appear three times in the release. Here's another fictional example, showing the first two paragraphs of a press release:

Parents smile every June when their kids begin summer vacations. By July, the same parents cringe. Are there any indoor rainy-day activities for kids that don't require a lot of time from parents?

Author Denise Smith has just what parents need. Rainy Day Activities for Bored Catholic Kids features 60 activities kids can do at home, from cutting out images of saints to playing what she calls "Catholic Kid Bingo."

This is just an example; the author name and book name are fictitious. But I hope you get the idea. Present a problem, and then show the book as the solution. Read on for more nuts-and-bolts promotional ideas!

⁴ Dan Poynter, *Dan Poynter's Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book* (Santa Barbara, CA: Para Publishing, 2006) 161-167.

Send emails.

You don't want to be known as a spammer, but you can certainly send one email announcing your book to everyone on your mailing list. Two weeks later, you can send another email announcing some event related to your book: a book signing, a free-shipping offer, a book table outside St. Miscellaneous Catholic Church, and so on.

Write articles.

This will establish you as an author and get your name out there. Once you've been published as an article columnist, it will be much easier to get other articles into print. Let me repeat that: Just get published **once**. That's all it takes. After that, other editors will be much more comfortable running your articles, and you'll soon have multiple magazines and popular blog sites running your stuff.

You may wish to begin by submitting articles to sites that do not offer compensation. Your goal at this point is not to make money from articles, but to promote your name as a subject-matter expert. Write articles on the same topic as your book, or at least something similar.

Send review copies.

Book reviews sell books. Book reviews sell books a lot better than paid advertising. Book reviews make you look "professional." Book reviews mean that your work is peer-reviewed. That is exactly what you want.

Make a list of Catholic book reviewers. These can be popular bloggers, reviewers for Catholic magazines and newspapers, and online book reviewers. Next, you'll want to follow a process to make sure the reviewers actually want to see your book. Otherwise, they may just toss it if you send it unsolicited.

First, send them an email inquiry letter. This letter will give a brief description of your book, explain why the reviewer's work inspired you, and what prompted you to consider them to review your book.

You will also want to include the first chapter of your book as an email attachment. You can make a PDF file of the title pages, intro, and chapter 1. Your publisher or typesetter may be able to do this for you.

Also, in the same email, provide a hyperlink to your book available online, so the reviewer can see the cover image.

End the email by telling the reviewer that you reserved a free copy of the book for them, and you would like to mail it.

If a reviewer doesn't respond to your email after a few days, you can send another email as a reminder. But if he or she still don't respond or says "no," the reviewer certainly won't have time to read and review your book!

Once a reviewer says yes, mail a free copy of your book. Include a short cover letter thanking the reviewer, explaining very briefly what your book is about, and why the audience will be interested in the book. Yes, some reviewers will not publish a review. It's like growing a garden. You plant a lot of seeds and hope that some, not all, will grow.

What probably will *not happen* is a reviewer will publish a bad review. When reviewers dislike a book—especially Catholic reviewers—most of the time they simply do not write a review. A good

review will state the positive opinions of the book and include something that could be improved. Expect that.

Don't forget your own **diocesan newspaper**. You will definitely want to send a letter of inquiry to whoever reviews books there. You may want to advertise in the local Catholic paper. We'll discuss advertising in more depth later.

A couple weeks after you mailed your book to reviewers, contact them to follow up.

Do book signings.

Your book, especially if it is a good Catholic book, will not be on the shelves of every Barnes and Noble in the country. But it could be in one or two local B&N stores. Barnes and Noble managers are encouraged by their corporate offices to promote local authors. You are a local author. Walk in with your book, ask for the manager, and see if you can set a date for a book signing.

You can also do book signings outside your parish church after each Sunday Mass or in the parish gift shop. These may be much easier to arrange. You can do signings at other parishes as well.

Once you have a book signing scheduled, tell everyone! Take out a couple small ads in the diocesan paper. Issue another press release. Send another blanket email. Make flyers and ask bookstore managers to post them in their store windows (this may be hit-and-miss).

Give your book away.

Hold a raffle. Donate your book as a door prize to a charitable event. Believe me; you will get a few seconds of fame, even if it's only in front of a few hundred people. Donate a copy to a parish gift shop and ask them to raffle it. They can put the money toward a poor collection or the building fund. If you wrote a children's book, give a couple copies to a children's hospital, especially if it's a Catholic or faith-based hospital. Children's hospitals crave toys, books, *anything* that will help bored kids in hospital beds keep their minds busy.

This gets your name out there, in front of the Catholic marketplace, and establishes you as a caring, charitable person (which you are).

Hold speaking engagements.

Give a talk. You are an expert at whatever you wrote. If your book doesn't have one particular topic, but rather is a collection of inspirational messages, you can give a talk on positive spirituality. If you wrote such a book you could probably talk with someone for a half hour about God's love for them. Doing a talk at a parish or a bookstore is the same thing.

Always, *always* bring books with you when you speak at any venue. Arrange a book table ahead of time with the organizers. Tell them you would like to have space after the talk where you can sell your book. During your talk, you don't want to sound boorish, but you may wish to segue into a short explanation of your book.

Before your talk, you may wish to practice parts of it into a recorder and then play it back. You can do a lot of fine-tuning that way.

Get on the radio!

This is easier than you might think. There are Catholic bloggers out there who do podcasts. There are also small, local radio stations and Catholic radio show hosts who always need new people. Who knows? You may eventually get on EWTN.

Before your radio time, research tips for radio interviews.⁵ Practice into a recorder and play it back. Don't forget to mention your book title a few times. People listening to the radio are usually driving or working in the kitchen. They cannot easily write down information from the radio show, so say your book title a few times during the broadcast. This helps them remember.

⁵ Scott Lorenz, "33 Radio Interview Tips," *SalesVantage.Com*, accessed March 3, 2011, <http://www.salesvantage.com/article/1273/33-Radio-Interview-Tips>. This is a great site to prepare for a radio interview!

The wholesale market

You are the best person to get your local parish gift shops and bookstores to carry your book. The publisher is best at producing the actual book, and they usually do a good job making the book *available*. But getting it at the "street level" requires a local representative: *you*.

Should you (or your publisher) list your book on Amazon and other online catalogers? Usually, yes. But regarding Amazon, it depends on whether the cost is worth the benefit. At the time of this writing, Amazon has a long-standing policy of taking a big chunk out of the profits, and if this works for you, great! Amazon's universality is pretty hard to beat. If this is your first book, your goal in the first couple years should be to promote your name and your book title, not so much to make money.

A word about Catholic bookstores: Catholic bookstore managers are cautious. This is good and it should be expected. After all, they want to stock faithful Catholic books that do not demean Catholic faith and family life. However, bookstore managers can also be somewhat shortsighted. They order a handful of books, but when they eventually sell out, they do not re-order. Bookstores are great candidates for following up. Check back in six months or so after they order books; have they sold out? How is it going? Have they moved the books around so customers notice them?

Book trailers and videos

This can be a lot of fun if you plan for it. A book trailer can be anything from a multimedia slideshow that you post on the Internet, to a full-scale infomercial using professional sound and video equipment. You'll have to research this one—I'm still learning this promotional tool myself at the time of this writing. But you can bet they are effective!

When you plan and produce your book trailer, don't make it too long. Three minutes is about right. And whatever you do, don't charge for it! This should be a free, streaming video using universal formats so prospective buyers don't experience any computer hassles trying to view your trailer.

Finally, and I've mentioned it before, get yourself a copy of Dan Poynter's *Self-Publishing Manual*. This is perhaps **the best resource** for *any* author, no matter how they were published.

At this point, you may think, **who has time to do all this?** As the author, you do what you can. If you had the resources, you could hire a promotional expert who could do this work for you. But will anyone else have the passion you hold for your work?

Twelve months from now, where will you be if you did not promote your book? Consider getting out your day planner (or buying a special one just for this project) and writing a **12-month promotion plan** for your book. What will you do next week? Next month? Make a list of places you've visited. You'll want to follow up with them. Make deadlines, and then reward yourself for accomplishing something. *I visited three bookstores today, now I get a latte!* Or perhaps, *I finished an article, now I can watch a movie with my spouse!*

Plan for promotion. Build in deadlines, rewards, and a timeline. Tell someone about your plan so they can periodically ask how it's going. You can do this!

Solving problems—a marketing approach

Think of your **intended audience**. Who are they? How do you reach them? And how do you get them to spend their money on your book?

In other words, WHY should they buy your book?

I've mentioned before the importance of presenting your book as solving a problem. Keep this in mind whenever you create marketing material for your book. What problem can you solve for your readers?

Ultimately, **people spend money on things that solve their problems.**⁶ Their families are hungry, so they solve the problem by buying groceries. They need transportation, so they pay the mechanic to fix their cars. They are not entertained enough, so they spend money on sporting events, movies, and so on.

⁶ Rick Frishman, "You need to have a hook!" *Rick's Blog*, accessed May 25, 2011, <http://www.rickfrishman.com/blog/index.php?entry=entry090324-184511>.

Too many new authors make the mistake of promoting their books because *the author* wants to sell the book. Rather, the books should be promoted because *readers* need to buy the book. There is a difference. To a potential book buyer, is your book about you, or is it about them?

Why should people spend money just because you want them to? Think about it: Other than your loved ones, for whom else do you spend money simply because they ask?

A total stranger, even a good Catholic, will not spend his hard-earned money just because someone else wants him to. That would not be good stewardship. No, he spends money on things that will make his life easier:

- He has spiritual problems
- He has money problems
- He has food, clothing, and shelter problems
- He has time-management problems
- He has relationship problems
- He has moral problems
- He has parenting problems
- He has life-balance problems

Which one of the above problems does your book solve for potential readers?

Let's look at some examples using the Catholic marketplace.

A book on apologetics solves spiritual and theological problems. (The reader has nagging doubts or at least doesn't know how to answer friends who are critical of the Faith.)

A meditative book solves readers' needs for deeper and more joyful spirituality.

A book on parenting solves a mother's need to have well-adjusted, loving children.

An autobiography could solve readers' problems about their own struggles with life balance, spirituality, and relationships.

Anytime you write a news release, a flyer, an email, do a radio interview, talk to a bookstore manager, or people standing in front of your book table, *always* keep the problem/solution scenario in front of your mind. **You** are just the person God put in their path to solve their problems and make their lives easier.

Should I pay for advertising?

Does it make sense to **pay money for ads**? Yes. But only a little. Advertisements do not sell books, at least not at first. The purpose of advertising is to promote your name and your book title.

Which is the better way to do that, one big ad or a bunch of smaller ones?

Let's think about this. You see a half-page ad somewhere. It looks great and you are intrigued. You turn the page of the magazine, or click another link, and it's gone.

Here's another scenario: You see an ad. It is compelling and you are intrigued. You move on. But you see the ad again another day. Or next week. You eventually see a slightly different ad for the same product, and it catches your eye. That may be the fourth or fifth time you've seen this particular product or service advertised. Now, you are familiar with it, you are comfortable with that brand, and you decide to click the link or call that number. Sometimes you'll just get information, but sometimes you'll buy. The rest is sales history. **It is always better to run a series of ads than to have only one.** People need to see your book over and over again before they become familiar enough with it to click-through.

If you decide to invest in advertising, consider online banner ads and text "advertorials." The important formula is this:

1. Lots and lots of people see your ad
2. Many click on your ad
3. A few will buy the book.

To go from lots, to many, to a few, you need to begin with lots. If the web site only has a few hundred hits a month, it isn't worth paying money to advertise on it. You need a site that has tens of thousands of visitors a month. Some Catholic sites have millions of visitors each month. Their ad campaign managers are motivated to get the most money out of you they can, but remember bigger ad sizes are not always better. *Recurring* ads are what helps. It also helps to move the ad around so it isn't in the same spot each time. You want to catch the reader's eye.

You may also wish to consider commercials on Catholic radio stations. The same principals apply, so the important thing is that your book title and where to buy it are repeated throughout the commercial.

Before you pay for any advertising at all, **plan a marketing budget.** Remember to include money for postage to mail review copies of your book. How much do you want to spend on advertising? How much of that should go to this web site or that one, or this magazine or that one?

I hate to write this, but it really might not make sense to pay for any advertising at all in a quarterly magazine or journal. Not if you are a new author, with limited resources, with only one book under your belt. Quarterlies only come out every three months; too much time passes between advertisements to make them meaningful for potential buyers.

If you need help creating marketing materials or setting up online advertisements, you can always do a little online research. Look at examples of other material and other advertisements for ideas. You may wish to consider having someone create the material for you.

Leonine Publishers has many different marketing materials available to you. You can review them here:

<http://www.leoninepublishers.com/services-additionalservices-marketing>

Remember to plan your promotional efforts. Pray and offer your plan to God. Choose a saint to intercede for you, take a deep breath, and get started! It really does get easier—and no work is more exciting.

