



INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER

WHITE PAPER SERIES

**The Right Tools for the Job:
Using Book Awards to
Boost Your Book Sales**

JENKINS GROUP INC.

A Whole Lot of Books

There are currently millions of book titles in print and available to American consumers, with about 300,000 new traditional titles and about 1.5 million “non-traditional” (reprints, public domain, POD) titles. It’s not easy to get noticed in this mass of books, all vying for buyers’ attention with bold cover designs, clever titles and paid-for end cap positioning in bookstores. Authors and publishers need tools to help promote themselves and their work; Book Awards are one of the most effective – and affordable – means of gaining recognition and credibility for the independent publisher.

The Competition: Number of American Publishers by Year since 1950

1950: 400 publishers

1970: 3,000 publishers

1990: 23,000 publishers

2003: 85,000 publishers

2013: 600,000 publishers

Building the Buzz

As with any commodity, books compete for consumers’ attention and need to achieve a certain momentum to become bestsellers. Feature stories and reviews in newspapers and magazines, television and radio appearances, viral marketing on the Web, and word-of-mouth around the water cooler are all examples of the “buzz” it takes to sell a book in large numbers. It’s hard enough to beat out the “big five” New York publishers for attention, but today the independent is also competing with nearly 600,000 other small-to-midsized presses due to the POD/DIY explosion. How can you reach the critical mass of attention it takes to become the “new new thing,” or just one of them, for at least a few weeks?

An Extra Attention-Getter

Everyone judges a book by its cover. The average bookstore browser spends about five seconds looking at the front cover and about ten seconds scanning the back cover. Human animals share a tendency with monkeys and crows; we’re all attracted to bright, shiny objects. Having a gold seal on your book cover (and maybe even printed on the back cover) attracts attention and denotes the “seal of approval” from someone of authority. An award sticker brings extra credibility to a book that can give it an edge with buyers making a decision between competing titles.



Reviews, Quotes & Blurbs

Getting reviews, especially pre-press reviews, can be a very difficult task for new publishers, especially for works of fiction and children's books. Just as these often great books were overlooked by mainstream publishers at the outset, they are also ignored by mainstream reviewers due to policies about self-published works and lack of space. There are simply too many deserving books being written and published for all of them to be recognized by the press. At BookExpo America, Steve Wasserman, editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* said, "This is the sad truth; the universe of the worthy is far larger than any of us have pages to accommodate. The hardest challenge (for the small publisher) is to break through the curtain of noise that so smother the culture at large and to gain for your book the attention it deserves. This is a hard thing to do. The self-published author has to resort to means that are quite extra-curricular to somehow gain attention. For every book I choose, there are two worthy books that get ignored."

Winning a book award is a great way to gain attention, and with it comes the opportunity for getting positive quotes from judges, awards coordinators, authors and publishers themselves. Many awards come with "Book of the Year," "Most Inspirational," or "Best Humor Book" kinds of designations. Ask the awards coordinator for specific quotes from the judges, and any comments he or she might have about the book. These quotes can be used in press releases, brochures, sell-sheets, bookmarks, and on covers. Not only is the book an award-winner, but the book's author is now an "award-winning author," and this can be added to bylines and should be stated often during appearances and book signings. Winning a book award brings increased credibility to the book, the press, the author, and their expertise in a given publishing category.

Here is an example of an email from a publicist announcing a new book by an award-winning author:

*You should have recently received for consideration for excerpt or mention, a copy of **Living the Life You Love** (September 2012; \$15.95 paperback, Diomo Books) by Paula Renaye. Subtitled *The No-Nonsense Guide to Total Transformation*, Renaye's book introduces a whole new way to make the transformative changes you need to lead a life you truly love, with quick and easy ways to enact change on a daily basis.*

*Living the Life You Love encourages the reader to snap out of it, providing the tools they need to identify a dream life and determine the steps needed to achieve it. Paula Renaye is a five-time award-winning author, and **Living the Life You Love** was named gold medalist in the Self-Help category of the 2013 Independent Publisher Book Awards.*

*Did you receive **Living the Life You Love**?*



For example, a silver medalist in the 2009 Moonbeam Children's Book Awards contest, *Giraffe Sounds?*, by Debbie Buttar, saw an increase in sales that continues today, due to the award seal on the cover. "I know it's made a difference because my other book in the series, *Llama Sounds?* is practically identical, but without the Moonbeam seal, it's only selling about 2-5 copies a month, compared to 30-50 copies a month for *Giraffe Sounds?* Receiving the Moonbeam award and adding the silver seal to the cover truly does make a difference in sales!"

"The fact is, award stickers help to convince buyers to purchase. I've seen this happen with librarians -- when faced with two competing titles and a limited acquisition budget the librarians will take the one that won an award, any award, over the title that doesn't have an award to its credit. I'm confident that this same phenomena works for bookstore patrons browsing the shelves as well." - Jim Cox, Midwest Book Review

Winning Feels Good

Along with the sales boost that can come from an award is the personal recognition and morale boost for all those involved. The prestige of winning can inspire staff to promote the book with more enthusiasm and give the title's marketing campaign new life. Use this excitement to send out a new wave of press releases and sales pitches to a variety of potential customers. Everybody loves a winner!

Benefits of Winning a Book Award

INCREASED CREDIBILITY

INCREASED VISIBILITY

NEW MATERIAL FOR PRESS RELEASES, BROCHURES, ETC.

**RENEWED ENTHUSIASM OF
SALES & MARKETING TEAM**

**USE OF STICKERS/LOGO ON
BOOKS & PROMO MATERIALS**



Uses for Book Awards Sticker or Logo

**Book cover Press kit cover Press release Catalog
Brochure/Postcard Poster/Flyer Bookmark Website
Book Club Guide Business card Email signature**

Uses for Book Awards Quotes & Blurbs

All of the above, plus:

- **Radio & TV Interviews and appearances**
- **Booksigning and reading introductions**
- **Catalog descriptions**
- **Articles by or about the author**

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