

IT'S NOT too late

BUILD YOUR TRIBE, SERVE YOUR AUDIENCE, AND
GET THE ATTENTION YOUR WRITING DESERVES

Table of Contents

Introduction: Is It Too Late?

Part 1: The Problem (You Need a Tribe)

Part 2: The Method

Part 3: The Results

Conclusion: Your Turn

INTRODUCTION

is it too late?

Every day, someone emails me asking me the same question: “Is it too late?”

They want to start a blog, but worry that ship has already sailed.

They dream of writing books for a living, but wonder if that’s even possible anymore.

They hear my story about how I started writing online years ago and how I turned it into a successful, full-time career as an author, speaker, and blogger.

Does this stuff still work?

It’s a valid question, but in my mind, a silly one. Why? Because every year, I meet

hundreds of people who do it — who start a blog or begin writing even though they feel like they're late to the game. And I watch as these people apply timeless principles to their writing careers and succeed.

Yes, I did this a few years ago and succeeded — at a time when I felt like the Internet was a crowded place and there wasn't any more room for another blogger or writer. But more importantly, I see people do it every year, every month, all the time.

Why does it still work?

Because the world is still hungry for more great work.

Because there's still one story we haven't heard yet, one idea we haven't seen:

Yours.

So it's time to give us what you've got. To share your gift.

It's not too late.

PART 1

The Problem

(You Need a Tribe)

Writers, musicians, public speakers. We all have something to say. But without an attentive audience, our words will fall on deaf ears — no matter how important or inspired they seem.

Everyone needs a tribe. That much is clear. But how do you attract the attention of others? How do you win over those who will pay attention to your work?

Great question.

Most writers and bloggers struggle with this. They “just want to write,” hoping their clever prose will someday get them picked by a publisher or gatekeeper. Then, they think, they’ll leave all that marketing and promotion stuff to the other guys, the professionals.

That is a *bad* idea. Because guess what? Those “other guys” don't exist anymore. There are fewer and fewer gatekeepers who actually have the power to pick you.

You know who knows the most about your audience, your readers?

You.

You know who's in charge of you successfully sharing your words with the world?

You.

The only person in charge of getting you the attention your work deserves is you.

And what does that mean, exactly? It means you need to build an audience who will stick with you, no matter what. But before I tell you about that, I need to tell you a little more about me...

How I Grew an Audience of 100,000 People in 18 Months

Hi. My name's Jeff. And I'm a writer. But for the longest time, I wouldn't admit that to myself. Even though I'd been writing and publishing articles, even *coaching* other writers for 10 years, I wouldn't dare call myself a writer.

Afraid of rejection, I wasn't taking my work seriously, wasn't thinking like a pro. And though I was too insecure to share my words with the world, that's what I secretly longed to do.

Then something incredible happened. A friend asked me what my dream was, and when I stuttered to offer an intelligent answer — “Uh, I dunno, I guess to be a writer?” — he gave me some simple, but powerful advice:

“You are a writer. You just need to write.”

This simple phrase unlocked something inside of me. It lit a fire beneath me. And the next day, I went to work, changed. At five a.m., I started writing. And I did it every single day, without fail, for the next year.

All of a sudden, I wasn’t acting like an amateur anymore. In my mind, at least, I was now a pro.

But what changed?

On the outside, not much, except that I had started writing a few, not-very-good words once a day.

But on the inside, everything.

I started calling myself a writer, first to myself as a personal affirmation and then to others as a declaration to the world. This made me start thinking like a writer, which led to me acting like one.

And once I did that, everything changed. In less than a year, I had launched a blog, self-published a best-selling eBook, landed a book contract, and built an online audience of over 100,000 blog readers.

How did I do it?

I found my tribe. Realizing no one was going to choose me, I had to choose myself and build my own audience. I didn't wait for someone to tell me I could start. I did what writers do. I wrote, and I shared my words.

And if you want your message to be taken seriously, you'll have to do the same.

The Power of Tribes

So what *is* a “tribe”? Seth Godin calls a tribe “a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea.” According to Seth, for a group to be a tribe, all you need are two things: “a shared interest and a way to communicate.”

For a writer, your tribe doesn't have to be huge. It just needs to be a small but dedicated group of fans who believe in your work so much they're willing to tell people about it. In my case, it was my blog readership, which I built over the course of two years.

Thanks to a small but powerful group of people reading my words, I was able to make my dream a reality. And I became a writer. This audience helped me replace my wife's income and then my own, allowing me to quit my job. And this all happened in about six months. Now, I'm able to support my family through writing full time, something I never thought possible.

Sounds crazy, doesn't it? But it's not. Not if you take the time to build the audience. Not if you find your tribe. But how? What does it take? Let me begin by saying that it's not just a matter of luck or chance. This is not something that will just happen. Trust me. But it is the result of a method I noticed, developed, and eventually began to teach others.

And in this book, I'm going to share it with you.

PART 2

The Method

We are our own worst enemies.

If you've ever dreamed of sharing your words with the world, chances are you've talked yourself out of it because it seems so audacious. You might think no one will care what you have to say. Or that learning how to share your work effectively is too big a learning curve to scale.

You might think you don't even deserve an audience.

The truth is, building a tribe doesn't have to be as complicated as we think it is. After publishing five books and growing my online audience to over 100,000 subscribers, I've learned that we give ourselves the best chance of success when we have a plan to follow.

What kind of plan?

Well, there are lots of ways to get the result you want. You could enroll in a college class or find a mentor. You could “fail better” your way to success, if you’re patient.

What I decided to do was learn everything I could about marketing for writers, and then apply it for myself. Once I did that, and saw what worked, I wanted to share it with others. I’ve called it the Tribe Writer Method because it’s all about finding, writing for, and connecting with your ideal readers.

Over the last four years, I’ve used the Tribe Writer Method to serve my audience, publish a national bestseller, and teach what I’ve learned to over tens of thousands of other writers.

This is not a formula. You don’t plug X and Y into an equation and get Z. But it is a method, a proven process that continually yields positive results.

What that means is this: it may take you more time or less than the person beside you. But that’s not the point. The point is that this works if you do.

We are all looking for a quick fix or an easy solution. This method is not that (because, frankly, I don’t believe such a thing exists). But if you follow this process, I promise you one thing:

If you do the work, you will see results.

The 4-Step Tribe Writer Method

Step 1: Hone Your Voice

Finding and honing your voice is the first key to getting dedicated followers and fans. It's also the only sustainable way to write. If you're not being yourself, you'll eventually burn out.

But how can you hone your voice? Most of us need help, myself included. In fact, I wrote every day for 365 days straight before a friend finally said to me, "Jeff, you've found your voice."

Here's a short exercise that can help you find yours in a lot less time. Pay attention to your answers, and you'll find as you near the end that you know your voice a lot better than you may think.

1. Describe yourself in **three adjectives**. *Example: snarky, fun, and flirty.*
2. Ask (and answer) the question: **"Is this how I talk?"**
3. Imagine your **ideal reader**. Describe him in detail. Then, write to him, and only him. *Example: My ideal reader is smart. He has a sense of humor, a short attention span, and is pretty savvy when it comes to technology and pop culture. He's sarcastic and fun, but doesn't like to waste time. And he loves pizza.*

4. Jot down at least five books, articles, or blogs **you like to read**. Spend some time examining them. How are they alike? How are they different? What about how they're written intrigues you? Often what we admire is what we aspire to be. *Example: Copyblogger, Chris Brogan, Seth Godin, Ernest Hemingway, and C.S. Lewis. I like these writers, because their writing is intelligent, pithy, and poignant.*
5. List your favorite artistic and **cultural influences**. Are you using these as references in your writing, or avoiding them, because you don't think people would understand them. *Example: I use some of my favorite bands' music in my writing to teach deeper lessons.*
6. **Ask other people:** "What's my voice? What do I sound like?" Take notes of the answers you get.
7. **Free-write.** Just go nuts. Write in a way that's most comfortable to you, without editing. Then go back and read it, asking yourself, "Do I publish stuff that sounds like this?"
8. Read something you've recently written, and honestly ask yourself, **"Is this something I would read?"** If not, you must change your voice.
9. Ask yourself: "Do I enjoy what I'm writing as I'm writing it?" If it **feels like work**, you may not be writing like yourself. (Caveat: Not every writer loves the act of writing, but it's at least worth asking.)

10. **Pay attention to how you're feeling.** How do you feel before publishing? *Afraid? Nervous? Worried?* Good. You're on the right track. If you're completely calm, then you probably aren't being vulnerable. Try writing something dangerous, something a little more *you*. Fear can be good. It motivates you to make your writing matter.

Once you've completed the above and begun to find your voice, make sure you continue to develop it. It's a discipline, one that can't be overlooked if you're going to have the impact you desire and that your words deserve.

The bottom line is that there's a lot of noise out there in the world. If you're going to get heard, you can't just raise your voice. You've got to set yourself apart, showing you have something special to say, and that you have a unique way of saying it.

Which brings me to...

How to Persuade People with Your Words

If your message is going to matter and you're going to use the web as a communication tool, you'd better learn a thing or two about writing copy. Copywriting is a different skill with a different purpose than your other writing: it's meant to inspire people to take action. Copywriting is what you're doing when you're writing to sell.

Here are some tips to strengthen your copywriting muscle:

1. Start with a good headline. Headlines are everywhere. Sure, they have different names: titles, introductions, tag lines, etc. But the bottom line is this: we judge products — even people's words-by the first thing we see.

If your article or blog post doesn't have a killer headline, people won't bother reading the rest of your piece. If you don't hook them at the beginning, you won't get a chance to speak your mind.

2. Write each line as if your life depended on it. Never assume your reader will continue reading your piece once they start.

A good writer knows this. In a world full of distractions, there's no guarantee someone will continue reading your work. Not if they get bored.

3. Write for an audience. It's okay to write for yourself — in your journal, for an upcoming memoir, whatever. But if you're writing for the web and want to actually be read, you need to be intentional.

Have someone very specific in mind when you write. Give this person a name, a hair color, a hobby. Find out what she likes and hates. Make it up if you have to, or pick a real-life person.

Step 2: Establish Your Platform

These days, everyone is talking about platform. With blogs and self-publishing software, it has never been easier to create a place online from which to share your message.

But if building a platform is so accessible, why aren't more people *doing* it? Why aren't people sharing their art? Maybe it's not for a lack of resources. Maybe it's lack of understanding—how to use the tools they've been given.

Maybe you can relate.

But first, let's define our terms.

What Is a Platform?

It's what it sounds like: **A platform is a “stage” that gives you and your message leverage and visibility.** It's how you make your work matter, how you change lives. In the olden days, platforms were easy to identify:

- If you were a musician, it was a record deal.
- If you were an author, it was a book contract.
- If you were an entrepreneur, it was a connection with a venture capitalist.

But nowadays, with blogs and Twitter and instant access to the world with one click of a mouse, it's harder to tell. Now that anyone can build a platform for free, what's the point?

Why Build a Platform?

There are some misconceptions about the word “platform.” Some dismiss it as ego-driven aspirations spawned by an obsession with celebrity. Certainly, there’s some of that going on in our culture. But that’s not all the word means.

Platform is inevitable.

Whatever you want to do in the world, you need influence to make your voice count. Even a homemaker or schoolteacher needs authority to lead. And that has to come from somewhere, right?

In the simplest terms, a platform is permission. It’s the right to speak to a group about a certain topic. And there’s nothing necessarily wrong with wanting that. If you have something worth saying, you *want* people to hear it. A platform amplifies and legitimizes your message. It gives you authority to influence.

For example, if you were an opera singer, *where* you sang your *aria* would be as significant as *how* you delivered it. Singing it in a coffee shop versus a packed auditorium would undoubtedly affect the impact. The same is true for your work and message.

Any responsible communicator knows the importance of platform. It extends your reach and magnifies your voice. All so you can make the most difference.

How to Build a Platform

There are three important aspects to building a platform; they are:

1. Gain experience
2. Demonstrate competency
3. Generate buzz

The last one is the hardest; the other two just take practice. If you're just getting started with your dream, whether it be writing or dancing, this is important.

You've got to get good.

Before you launch your marketing campaign, spend some time practicing. And thank God that you don't have a huge platform yet; your lack of influence allows you to fail with grace (and little public attention).

After you get good, you need to demonstrate *that* you're good. This can be a demo for your band or an essay for your writing. You've got to have "something to show them." Knowing the right people isn't enough; you need to have done the work, so that when an opportunity presents itself, you're ready.

And then comes the hard part: networking. Platform is, essentially, people. It's human beings giving credence to your art. *How does this happen?* Through influence. Which happens through relationship. And this is the difficult work of "knocking on doors."

The best (and only) way I know how to build meaningful relationships is by networking —not the sleazy, let's-exchange-business-cards kind, but the let-me-do-a-favor-for-you kind. If you do this enough, you'll eventually win friends, fans, and followers.

At this point, you're ready to build your platform. But you'll still need to decide what type of platform you want to build.

The 5 Platform Personalities

After years of studying the most powerful communicators in the world, both online and offline, I've discovered five basic types of bloggers that I call the 5 most powerful platform personalities. Let's go through them one by one so you can figure out which one best suits you.

1. The Journalist

The Journalist builds his platform on **asking questions**. The only requirement for this type of platform is *curiosity*.

When I set out to start my blog, I was nervous. I was no expert on writing, so what right did I have to tell other people how to do it? I didn't even have a published book.

Then I found out about Darren Rowse. Darren, as you may know, started one of the largest blogging communities in the world. How did Darren build his platform? Did he wait until he was an expert?

No. He began his journey by asking questions. And as he publicly shared the answers he got, his curiosity attracted an audience of hundreds of thousands of people. Now, he is considered a leading expert on blogging, and it all began with asking a few simple questions.

If you are a naturally inquisitive person, this may be an excellent approach for you to consider.

2. The Prophet

The Prophet builds her platform on **telling the truth**. The requirement for this type of platform is a passion for *authenticity*. I can think of few people who have done this better than my friend Jamie Wright.

Jamie authors a popular blog called The Very Worst Missionary, on which she riffs and rants about faith, life, and other stuff that bugs her. She complains and cusses and confesses. In short, she says all the things missionaries wish they could say, and people *love* her for it.

Ask any of her readers why and they'd probably tell you, "Because she's *real*." She tells the truth — the dirty, ugly, nasty, wonderful truth. That's what a prophet does.

Of course, prophets are not always so popular. They are unpredictable and often offending someone. But that's not their goal. The goal is to simply tell the truth, whether people want to hear it or not. Another example is Seth Godin, who is an iconoclast in the business world.

Seth calls out the brokenness of the status quo — whether it be in marketing, education, or charity work — and challenges us to something better. And sometimes he catches a lot of flack for it. That is also part of the job description of a prophet, so be prepared for some criticism if you take this approach.

And remember to not be cynical for the sake of being cynical. Good prophets do not only condemn the dark; they also call us into the light.

3. The Artist

The Artist builds his platform by **creating art** — whether it be music, painting, or entrepreneurship. The requirement is an eye for beauty.

One of my favorite artists is Jon Foreman, the lead singer of the rock band Switchfoot. Jon communicates the truth of his message through the words he sings and the notes he plays. He challenges his listeners through powerful art that causes you to ask questions long after the song is over.

Artists speak to our hearts, not our minds. They show us through their art that another world is possible. Having sold millions of records, toured the world many times, and appeared on The Tonight Show, it's hard to say this hasn't worked for Jon and his band.

Another artist who has recently risen in popularity is a blogger and author by the name of Ann Voskamp whose blog encourages readers to notice the everyday moments in life we might otherwise miss. The gift of an artist is they give us eyes to see.

4. The Professor

The Professor builds her platform on **facts and information**. She does extensive research until she has achieved mastery. Of course, there is always more to learn, but this type of person knows more than most. The only requirement is a longing to learn.

A great example of someone who has built a platform this way is Jim Collins. Jim is a respected speaker and author. He has written *Good to Great*, *Built to Last*, and *How the Mighty Fall* — all bestselling business books based on extensive research he and his team have done.

These books are not light reading. They are full of charts and information and case studies. The Professor loves data. And if you are going to build your expertise this way, you too better love reading, studying, and analyzing (or find a team that does).

5. The Star

Perhaps, the oddest type of platform to build (and the most visible) is that of The Star. I used to call this The Celebrity, but people got the wrong idea. These people aren't just famous for being famous. They are known for being charismatic, for being naturally likable.

A product of a media-saturated culture, stars are a new breed of influencers. They woo and endear us, even sometimes scandalize their audiences, and for the most part, we love them for it. They are doing what we ask of them—sharing their lives.

But of course, not everyone can be a star. This kind of personality earns his audience through charisma. Often, the person is attractive or talented, but not always. These people earn their attention because people want to be around them, and this is often because they want to be around people. They're a party looking for a place to happen.

An example of this type is Ashton Kutcher. A talented entrepreneur and well-known actor, Ashton has something that makes him especially interesting to fans and customers. He is charismatic, full of energy, ideas, and excitement. As a result, people love listening to him. Another would be blogger and best-selling author Tim Ferriss, whose mantra is basically, "If I can do it, so can you." This is the message of a star: *I'm just like you.*

Networkers fall into this group as well. They have influence, because they're good with people. They may not be the up-front-and-center person, but they are charismatic, nonetheless.

People like stars because stars tend to like people (or at least pretend they do). You can't be a star if you're a misanthrope. It just won't work. More than any other personality, this one is contingent on community.

What Type Are You?

These are the five main types of platforms. I'm sure there are others, but these seem to cover most of the blogs out there. If you have a message you want to get out to the world, you need to identify what type of voice you have and, therefore, what type of platform you should build. I hope this helps you get that much closer.

Step 3: Expand Your Reach

Your influence will grow as you commit to your craft and your audience, but you may eventually reach a plateau in terms of your audience numbers. To keep growing, you need some new techniques to help you expand your reach. You need to step outside your comfort zone, be a resource, and offer to use your words to help someone in need. Here are three ways to do that:

1. **Solve problems.** Not just any problems, but the ones people don't know they have. If you have to ask, "What can I do for you?" you're asking the wrong question. You need to know what your audience needs before *they* do. This means creating a new sub-genre, addressing issues in a way nobody else has, or maybe just telling your story.
2. **Answer questions.** If you don't know where to begin, look at the questions you want answered. Be observant. This applies to writing fiction and nonfiction alike. Put yourself in the seat of the reader, and guide them where they don't know they need to go.
3. **Help people.** Do favors without being asked. Be generous (think over-the-top here). This doesn't mean giving away a free chapter of your book — that's predictable. Do something remarkable, something truly outstanding that will get noticed. And do it for someone else. Like how Seth Godin wrote and gave away a million copies of *Unleashing the Ideavirus* before selling it.

The Challenge

Are you ready to expand your reach and start serving your audience in new ways?

Here are a few ideas to get you started (pick at least one):

1. **Do a giveaway of a product or service.** Find authors or organizations wanting to partner with people like you, and ask them for donations. Do this to build trust with readers, and make sure whatever you give away adds value.
2. **Conduct a survey.** Find out what readers (or perfect strangers) want, what they struggle with, and create something just for them. This can be a blog series or an eBook or a *whatever*. Just make sure there's a need for it before you make it.
3. **Write something important and give it away.** Publish an eBook to Amazon. Or offer a free PDF in exchange for people subscribing to your blog.
4. **Answer all correspondence.** Respond to every single email, phone call, tweet, etc. Do this until you can't possibly keep up anymore. This is how tribes are formed — through accessibility.

Why We Do This

We are generous with our talents because we can be. Because we're trying to overcome anonymity. Because art, at its core, is about generosity. Not profits — *passion*.

We serve our way into an audience's affections, because this is the only way influence is earned: gradually, over time, little by little through permission.

We don't give simply to get, but if we do this enough we'll learn that what goes around does, indeed, come around. This isn't our primary motivation, but it's a nice byproduct.

Put People First

Everything you do from now on should be geared towards helping others.

When you write, don't begin with a "get" mentality, seeing how many readers you can get or how much money you can get. Instead, put the *giving* before the *getting*. Because if you're going to leave a legacy, your work will need to be about others.

This is where most people fail. They stop finding ways to address what people need, especially when it gets hard. They quit before realizing their potential: to push back despair and bring hope to a world in need of their words.

They fail to be writers. (I hope you do better.)

Step 4: Go Pro

You've done a ton of work so far. You've found your voice and your worldview. You've established your home base and outposts to share your message and draw people in. You've served your way into a thriving platform, and you've learned how to choose and use tools to expand your reach. Now it's time to cash all that in. This is your endgame. Sort of.

Honestly, it never ends, this cycle of serving and building relationships and growing as a writer. And that's a good thing.

But publishing a message that matters is what you're working toward. And you can't do that without making one important change in your thinking.

There's an important truth that few people who've "made it" in their industry want to talk about. But in my experience, it's essential to success.

What is it? Mindset.

Success is first experienced in the mind before it becomes a reality. This may sound kind of metaphysical, but all I mean is this: Before you start acting like a pro, you will have to think like a pro.

Mindset Matters

For me, this meant calling myself a writer, even though I was scared to do so. It meant stepping out in faith, forcing me to rise to the occasion.

And it worked.

Having spoken to numerous professional artists, some of whom have reached the peak of success in their fields, I've found this to be a universal characteristic for almost every person. Before they succeeded, they had an idea of success and how they would achieve it.

Turns out, what we actually think — about ourselves and our professions — plays an important role in how we act.

The Application

So what does this mean for you? Simple: If you are longing to do or be something, you may need to first change the way you think.

As an exercise, why not try something different, possibly scary? Change your mind. Think differently about yourself. This often has a few important outcomes:

1. **You will take the work more seriously.** If you want to be a writer, start calling yourself a writer. It will force you to write. But even more than that, it will require you to think like a writer when you actually put pen to paper or lay fingers to keyboard.
2. **Your confidence will grow.** You will also learn that the most powerful affirmation is internal. Most of us get praise from friends and family that we don't accept. But once we start believing something ourselves, confidence tends to skyrocket.

3. **Others will treat you differently.** As you begin taking your work more seriously, you tend to do better work. And as your confidence grows and you begin acting more like a pro, the world will have no choice but to start treating you like one.

Of course, there will still be doubters and skeptics, even those who hate you. But that's okay. There will always be *those* people. So it's a good thing you made a decision a long time ago to love the work and believe in yourself, no matter what.

What This Doesn't Mean

Please understand that I'm not saying if you simply believe something, it will happen. That's absurd. Nor am I saying that you won't have to work hard, struggle, and hustle to achieve your dreams. You *will*.

But I am saying the fight begins in your mind. So if you find yourself in a losing battle with the world to claim your dreams, maybe you need to go back to where it all started: in your mind.

Have you always thought negatively of yourself? Been embittered towards those who succeeded?

What if you made the decision to change your mind? If all that negativity and cynicism hasn't worked out for you, then what harm could this cause?

Time to Go Pro

This is what it means to be a professional. It's all it's ever meant — someone who takes the work seriously enough to do it well and doesn't look to others for qualification. You are qualified because you believe you are.

Or, as Steven Pressfield says:

You are when you say you are.

Are you ready to start acting like a pro? To do the work that matters and stop apologizing for the art you owe the world? Then it's time to start.

You will begin where all pros do: with the mind. By changing the way you think today so you can leave a legacy tomorrow. It may be uncomfortable, even painful. But it will be good.

And you just might be surprised at how much a simple shift in mindset can affect *everything*.

Get Paid to Do What You Love

How can you start getting paid for your words? Here's the strategy I followed, and that I recommend to all my students:

1. **Build the audience first.** Successful people like Brian Clark build an audience long before trying to sell anything. For more than a year, I wrote

a LOT of free, helpful content (i.e. eBooks, newsletters, blog posts, guest posts, webinars, and more) and shared it with my audience. The result was a tremendous amount of trust — to the point that people started begging me to sell them *something*.

2. **Ask your audience what they want.** Use a free online survey tool to ask your audience one simple question: “What would you be willing to buy from me?” Early in my career, I was even told to ask, “How much should I charge?” Over 1000 people responded to my initial survey, many indicating (to my utter shock) they would indeed pay for something I created. That gave me the confidence to try something.
3. **Experiment with an initial offering.** My first product was a \$2.99 eBook (which I seriously doubted people would buy). Based on the concept of a minimum viable product, I put together an offering that required minimal effort to create and then put it out there to see if people would buy it. The money I made that first weekend paid for my email marketing service for an entire year (about \$1500). After that, everything changed. A hobby became a business. The same can happen for you.
4. **Learn how to launch things.** After that first eBook, I released another eBook, but with three different price points (based on Chris Guillebeau’s advice) and a few other tweaks. This generated *ten times* the sales that the first product did — in a matter of a few weeks. It also taught me how to harness the power of an online product launch, which I’ve gone on to study and learn about as deeply as I can so I can share this information with you. Learning how to launch was the golden nugget I was missing that led to sustainable, repeatable success in my business.

Dreams Don't Just Happen

I didn't plan for *any* of this to happen. But that doesn't mean it was an accident. I saw an opportunity and took it. Which may be the biggest takeaway from the past two years. **Some of our biggest successes can't be planned, but they can be anticipated.**

This means if you want to do something similar, you will need to be patient but also vigilant, paying attention to the opportunities that come. And when the right one presents itself, be ready to take it. You won't be able to plan for it, but you will be able to recognize it (if you know what to look for).

Until then, the best course of action is to be generous, build trust, and follow this Tribe Writer Method all the way to the success you've always dreamed of.

PART 3

the results

So now you know the Tribe Writer Method that will help you build your own tribe. But sometimes, knowing something is not enough to do it. Sometimes, we have to be able to see the success before we have enough faith that it will work for us.

So I want to take it a step further. I've rounded up some of the smartest tribe-builders I know to offer helpful advice on how to share your work with the world in a way that won't be annoying or forgettable.

These experts are authors, speakers, and entrepreneurs you should listen to because they've actually taken the journey and found incredible success.

One caution, though: Read their advice at your own peril. Because once you hear this advice, you can't un-hear it. You will be responsible for what you know and for what comes next. And you just might be called to act, speak up, and let your voice be heard.

TRIBE BUILDING

from the Trenches

14 tips from those who have done it



Jeff Brown
@THEjeffbrown

Though “**Done is better than perfect**” is a mantra that makes sense when you’re afraid to hit publish, it can’t continue to be your mantra long term. Too many people six months or a year down the road are still publishing subpar work citing that line. In contrast to perfection, excellence with consistency, demonstrated over time, is one of the smartest ways to build a tribe and draw attention to your work.



Nathan Barry
@nathanbarry

Start with just 10 people.

To do that you need to pick a niche (mine was designing iPhone apps) and list out 10 people who are trying to learn that skill.

Then email them and ask if they'd be interested in joining your list to learn more about _____.

Everyone who says yes gets added to your email program. Then follow up with two more questions:

1. What's your biggest frustration related to _____?
2. Where do you go online right now to learn about _____?

The answers to the first question will give you plenty of material to write about (just answer their frustrations). The second set will tell you where your target audience hangs out online. That's where you should write guest posts and promote your content.



Chris Ducker,
founder of
Youpreneur.com
@ChrisDucker

Be yourself.

When you're building a tribe around you, and what you're all about — and how you can help them — being YOU is the best 'marketing tactic' you can employ. Because, when you build the 'business of you', it's 100% original!



Ray Edwards
@RayEdwards

You already have a tribe waiting for you; your job is to find them. To find your tribe — or, more accurately, help them find you — an act of stunning courage and daring will be required. You'll need to find something you actually care about, and then act as if you care about it. Having that passion is key, in my opinion. People are attracted to passion. Nobody is going to follow you because of your spreadsheet. Unless, of course your tribe is the Spreadsheet Tribe...



Asha Dornfest
@ashadornfest

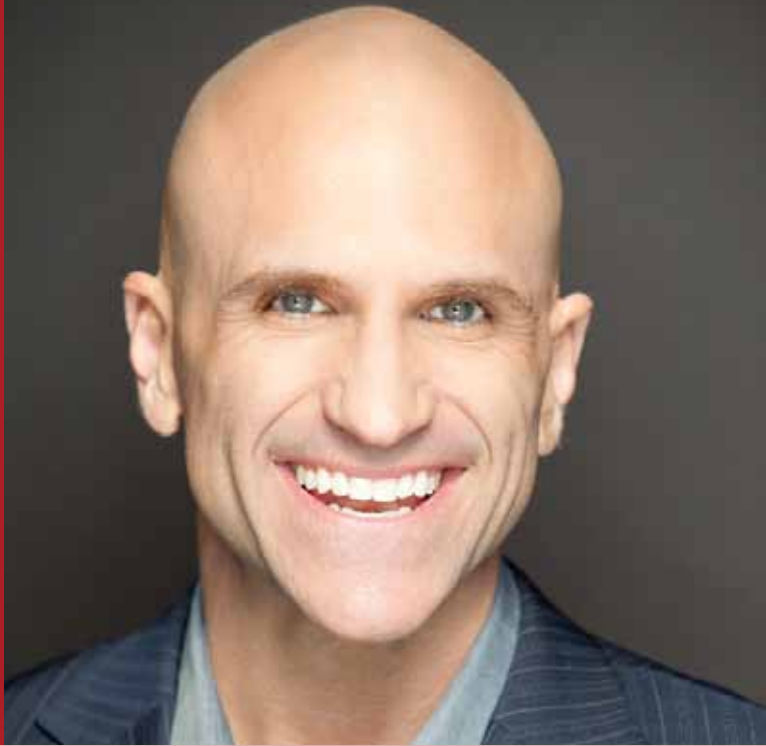
Be consistently useful.

Do what you can to help your audience improve their lives. I'm not just talking about self-help or how-to: giving people a laugh, or helping them feel seen and respected or less alone through your storytelling, or brightening their days with art or photography all count. This is a giving business we're in. The more we give and celebrate "us" rather than "me," the more we can build a tribe.



Carlos Whittaker
@loswhit

The simple tribe building rule that I live by is to “Show the Party and the Pain.” I think when you are a lifestyle content producer like myself, people are drawn to consistency in my authenticity. My tribe has continued to grow as I have continued to show both sides of my life. The good and the bad.



Michael Port
@michaelport

My #1 tip for creating a tribe is focusing on creating connections between members of the tribe.

The first part of your job is to be compelling enough to get people to pay attention. The second part of your job is to support the development of the tribe. Remember, it's not about you. If you think it is, you're not much of a leader.



Marion Roach
@mroachsmith

Having a tribe is the cornerstone for building one's body of work. I depend on my tribe as much as I depend on air or water for survival. From them stems all creativity. After all, creativity requires both something to which to respond, as well as people on whom to test one's material. But at the heart of all creativity is discipline, and nothing reinforces the discipline of work like surrounding oneself with hard-working people.



Timothy Grahl
@timgrahl

Focus on the real definition of marketing which is:

- 1) create long lasting connections with people and
- 2) focus on being relentlessly helpful.

If you do those two things, you will find success.



Emily Freeman
@emilypfreeman

Rather than building a platform with the spotlight on you, build a bench with room only for two. For me, imagining sitting on a bench rather than standing on a platform takes the pressure off and reminds me of my real job as a writer — to be relentlessly helpful to the soul of my reader.



Shawn Coyne
@StoryGrid

A **ttracting a tribe of people who** will follow your work...post after post, month after month, and year after year requires sincerity of purpose (genuinely wishing to impart your expertise or passion to other like-minded people) and authenticity of message (being clear about what you are offering and what your offers will cost, with no hucksterism). When you are sincere and authentic and your craft is genuine, your tribe will follow. Hard work learning your craft with equal parts caring and you're on your way.



Chris Marlow
@ChrisMarlow

People want to be part of a movement that is clear, compelling, and that invites them to be part of the story. Once they feel that they belong, they will passionately help move the mission forward and become loyal members of your tribe.



Andy Traub
@AndyTraub

You don't need a big email list to connect and influence. If you want to build your tribe and increase your influence start by asking people on your small list what their pain is and then write them back with something that helps them. You can't do this with 10,000 people, but the good news is you don't have 10,000 people on your list. Caring is a great way to build your platform and influence. Keep it simple.



Pamela Wilson
@pamelaiwilson

One under-used and under-appreciated way to build your tribe is to sit down and talk with them. It doesn't have to happen in person: Skype or phone work fine.

To do this, invite current members of your tribe to participate in a focus group, call them one by one, ask them all the same set of questions, and *listen*. They will tell you everything you need to know about their challenges, fears, and desires.

Doing this will give you the best language and approach to use with your tribe. And it will inform and enrich everything you create for them because you'll truly understand how you can help them.

So there you are. Some of the best tribe-building advice around. Follow these experts' advice, and find the audience your message deserves.

Now, let's zoom in and take a look at one person who followed this exact advice. By applying the Tribe Writer method, he went from prison straight to the bestseller list. If he can do it, all of us can.

PRISONER **turned best- selling author**

Laying on the steel bed in the dark corner of his prison cell, David Mike knew he'd officially hit rock bottom.

He'd just been apprehended at a nightclub with 100 Ecstasy pills in his jacket. This was the worst thing to happen to him that night, but not even the worst thing all year. Just six months prior, he'd also run away from the army.

David's story is a shocking one. At just 19 years old when all this happened, he might've given up and given in. A lot of people would have. But not David.

Throughout his trials and wrong turns, David began to hear from those around him that he should write a book. He'd certainly lived a drama-filled story, but the

suggestion was preposterous. *Me, write a book?* he thought incredulously. *I can't even get my life together.*

What he didn't realize at the time was that rock bottom wasn't a landing pad for him, but a pivot point. It was the place he found himself when he decided to turn his life around and start listening to the promptings all around him.

This past summer, David published *Dishonor*, one of the many excellent books to come out of the Tribe Writer Method. Upon release, it was a top 100 new release on Amazon, and it has served as a springboard into opportunities that David never could have anticipated.

Thanks to the tribe he sought out and built from the ground up, David went from not even calling himself a writer to publishing a memoir that received, in under two months, over 70 5-star reviews. He is now working on his second and third books.

And he says it was his tribe that helped him do it.

Tribe-build Your Way to a Best-selling Book

Here are David's top 5 tips for finding community, sharing the work, and tribe-building your way to a best-selling book.

1. Do it together.

Following the 4-step Tribe Writer Method in this ebook, David found an online network of fellow writers, creatives, and tribe builders. He learned soon after

how powerful it is to surround yourself with people who get it. “I’m not building community so I have someone to sell to,” he says. “I’m doing it so that we all have each other’s support. We all need people to bounce ideas off of and tell us how we’re doing. A friend outside your writing community will just say whatever you’ve written is good, but a fellow writer can tell you exactly what you need to do and why.”

2. Practice in public.

“I published the first third of *Dishonor* chapter by chapter on my blog,” David says. “Once I got into the Tribe Writers Facebook group, the second two thirds of the book got way better because I was getting regular feedback from the other writers in that group.” He says there was such a difference in quality between the first third and the final two thirds that he went back and rewrote the former.

3. Start before you’re ready.

Left to his own devices, David says, he wouldn’t have gathered a launch team until it was too late. But on the advice of his editor, he decided to start a *Dishonor* Facebook group midway through the writing process, and “on the first day, 400 people showed up.”

Who were they? David’s answer is proof of the power of tribe-building: “Blog and Twitter followers, family members, friends, Facebook friends.”

Writers often underestimate the scope of their own networks, and the potential for them to grow if they would only commit to starting in the first place. By the time the book was ready to publish, David had nearly doubled his initial audience, which

made for a nationwide launch team that was eager and ready to help him spread his story and celebrate his success. Because he'd created community via ongoing Facebook updates and group engagement, they were his first buyers and most enthusiastic evangelists.

4. Share your platform.

David made a small, specific request of his first readers: "Take a selfie with your copy of *Dishonor*, and post it on social media." Even he was surprised by the outpouring. Multiple postings later, it started to look like *everyone* was reading his book, which helped catch the attention of even more readers. David's request worked because it was mutual: readers got to share a bit of themselves with their followers, and David got the benefit of grassroots publicity. This is the give and take of any healthy community.

5. Remember your offline community.

If you're from Omaha like David, you might have seen the review for *Dishonor* in the Omaha World Herald. Or maybe you were present at his launch party, where free books and good coffee were part of the local celebration. David's launch was so community-centric that he is now leveraging the success of the book into speaking opportunities at local churches, men's groups, and schools.

Today, David's goal is two-fold: to get *Dishonor* into prisons, where his story can inspire the group of people he used to count himself among, and to keep writing for his loyal and growing tribe.

Tribe is everywhere we look, and it includes even the people we least expect. It's time that you found yours.

CONCLUSION

your turn

Today, we live in a noisy world. Everyone is vying for everyone else's attention. So, what are we to do?

There are, of course, only two options. One is to be quiet and let the talkers talk. There's nothing wrong with this, but that's not always the right choice.

Recently, I read an interview with John Grisham, in which he shared how it took him three years to write his first book. He was a busy lawyer and a new dad, arguably in the busiest season of his life, and as he was writing this book, he would occasionally go into the bookstore and look at the tens of thousands of books there, wondering to himself, "Who wants to hear from me?!"

But the truth was lots of people did. The same is true for you. You have a tribe, an audience out there. But if you just start talking, they won't listen. You have to earn their attention, and that is a subtle art that takes practice.

Throughout this book, I've shared the Tribe Write Method, the stories, and the testimonials you need to take the most important step in your career: the first one.

The world needs your message, and your tribe is waiting for you. Use this book to find them, bring them together, and lead them to what's possible.

And when you're ready to be a part of that group of writers I see who are going pro every year, I invite you to join us at TribeWriters.com.

Best,

Jeff

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff", written in a cursive style.