

From  
Wannabe

to

writer

The highs. The lows. The shortcuts.

danielle raine

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Housework Blues

A SURVIVAL GUIDE

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Dedicated to you and your Inner Wannabe.

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# Introduction

There are as many ways to write a book as there are writers.

This ebook is about just one way; the way I did it.

It's the story of how I wrote and self-published my first book, which hit several bestseller lists, and brought me national media attention, an agent and offers of future book deals.

Though I'm not a famous millionaire author (yet), over the last four years, I've learned a huge amount about writing, publishing and marketing a book in the modern arena. I made mistakes but I also got a few things right, and I'd like to share what I learned along the way.

So this ebook is packed with helpful pointers that could save you days, weeks or months of trial and error. And I've included comprehensive *How I Did It* breakdowns to eliminate the frustrating guesswork and shrink your learning curve. My aim is to highlight potential shortcuts, and help you avoid unnecessary and time-consuming pitfalls.

More than mere instruction, though, I hope that my story will also inspire you. I'd like to show you that it's possible to go from nothing - no funding, no experience, no publisher, no real dedicated time or space to write - and create work that people read, enjoy, and buy. In their thousands.

Today I enjoy a regular income from my writing - not enough to buy a yacht, but enough to pay the mortgage. This is something my Inner Wannabe of years ago would have considered a dream come true.

Beyond financial successes, though, I've also enjoyed the emotional rewards of hearing from delighted and grateful readers, as well as the thrill of holding my first book in my hands. And seeing my book head to the top of the highly competitive *Homes & Garden* bestseller list was a buzz I will never forget.

So, allow me to share with you my story, what I learned on my journey, from Wannabe to Writer. I hope it will encourage and inspire you to follow and live your own writing dreams.

To the Wannabe spirit!

Danielle



# One way to hit the bestseller lists

One day, as I was 'networking' on Twitter, I came across a fun and interesting lady and so I clicked 'Follow'. A few seconds later, my email pinged. It was her. She'd noticed my Follow and checked out my profile (which had a link to my book's website).

She then enquired if I'd had much publicity on my book, as she thought she could get an interview with me about my relationship to housework into a newspaper. Would I like to have a chat?

A few minutes later, I was talking to my new Twitter friend on the phone. Her name was Natasha Courtenay-Smith and she ran a media agency called [Talk To The Press](#). I told her all about my book and she told me all about the media contacts she had that would love to hear about it. After a lovely chat (Natasha is one of the nicest media people I've ever encountered), she promised to see what she could do and get back to me.

A couple of hours later, she emailed back to say that the *Daily Mail* was interested and would confirm the following day. At about teatime, I got another email saying that the *Mail* was really keen on an doing an interview with me, with credit to my book etc... as a feature for their popular weekly *Femail* section - due out in two day's time.

Natasha asked if she could do a phone interview that evening (after we'd both wrestled our respective little ones into their beds). In the meantime, I sent her a digital copy of my book, along with all the details (price, ISBN, availability, web address etc...) and some promo pictures. My homework for the interview was to think of specific incidents or advice. (Apparently the media loves any anecdotes that bring a piece to life.)

The next 24 hours were crazy.

Natasha called that evening and asked me lots of questions. (She had somehow managed to familiarise herself with the entire contents of my book.) The next morning, she called again to read through the piece she'd written overnight. Oh, and she also mentioned that the *Daily Mail* was sending a photographer and make-up artist over from Manchester to do a photo shoot in my house.

Eek!

That afternoon my living room was turned into a photography studio (backdrop sheets, spot-lights, cables everywhere) while I had a makeover in the dining room. (Which was rather embarrassing when my neighbour called to drop off my children, who were highly amused by their made-over Mummy wearing Drag Queen supplies of makeup. Apparently, you have to overdo it for the cameras, darling...)

The photographer was great and it was quite a fun, if surreal, experience. By the time my husband came home, I was high on adrenaline and dressed to the nines. (I made the most of my new glam look and went out on the town to celebrate these exciting developments).

Then all that was left to do was wait and see.

Natasha had warned me that newspapers change plans at the very last minute, so there was no guarantee that my piece would be in the next day's paper. But she'd had good feedback from them and was hopeful that it would be in the following week.

As you can imagine, I didn't sleep very much that night. (I think I was more nervous about the photos than the editorial. Photos of me usually fall into two camps: Not Bad and Do I Really Look Like That?) I was up at first light and fought my way through an army of paperboys to get my hands on a copy of the *Daily Mail*. I didn't dare open it until I got home - I was incredibly nervous about my feature being in it, even though I knew I'd be disappointed if it wasn't.

Eventually, sitting at my kitchen table, I quickly leafed through the *Femail* section, scanning for the pictures I'd seen on the photographer's contact sheet.

Nothing.

I actually think my first reaction was relief. I had been catapulted way beyond my comfort zone (Me - just a normal person - in a national newspaper?). So when I found no sign of my book feature, my world seemed to ping back to normality (aka obscurity). I did feel disappointed to not have the PR for my book, but being the quiet, reserved type that I am, it felt good to be out of Scary-Things-Happening-Too-Fast Land.

And then... As I was blithely leafing through the paper again, I spotted a photo of a Barbie Doll, next to this headline:

*How to Hoover up those housework blues: Driven to despair by the monotony of daily chores? Help is at hand from a new book.*

It was my piece! As far as I was concerned it was a perfect result. My book got some great coverage (I estimated the advertising rate for similar coverage would have been about £20,000!). Plus, I didn't need to worry about embarrassing photographs.

I did wonder whether I should be offended that they deemed my pictures so unsuitable that they replaced me with a Barbie doll. (I never did understand that. I'm sure they had their reasons and I'm not sure I want to know them. The media can be pretty ruthless.) But overall, I was delighted.

Natasha called later that day with congratulations. Even she was amazed at how quickly things had happened. Within 48 hours of connecting on Twitter, I had a double page feature on my book in the national press.

The rest of that day was pretty exciting. Thanks to NovelRank and Amazon's rank updates, I was able to watch the online impact almost as it happened. (It would be a couple of days before I could monitor paperback sales.) After the many months of working in isolation with little or no feedback or results, it was quite a thrill to spend the day at my computer, watching my sales climb, to a soundtrack of email pings announcing yet another sale of my book from my website, or another person signing up for the sample chapters.

Perhaps most exciting, though, was watching my little, self-published, zero-budget book climbing up the sales ranks on Amazon.

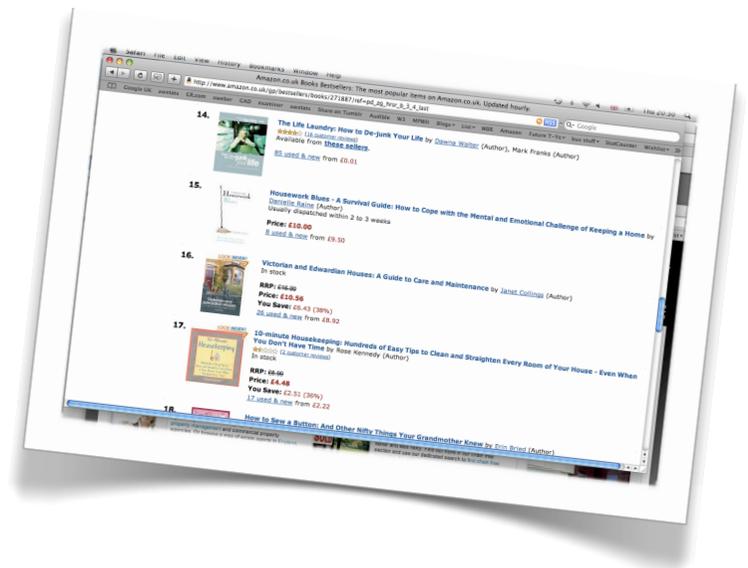
This is where the Bestseller List magic began to happen.

Amazon updates its sales ranks hourly. So if, for some reason, (perhaps NATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE!!!) your book starts to sell in increasing numbers, you can watch it move up the ranks. I knew that my book was featuring on some of the smaller niche bestseller lists (*Household Hints, Cleaning & Caretaking* and, bizarrely, *Blues*) but I was staggered to see it at number 81 on the massive *Homes & Gardens Bestsellers* list.

The competition on this list was impressive, usually made up of celebrities and big names (Kirstie Allsop, Kim & Aggie, Martha Stewart). And there was my book, not only clinging onto a spot in the Top 100 - but climbing!

I'm not sure how many times I refreshed that window that day (a lot) but I spent the afternoon watching my book go up and up the list. The highest position I saw it reach was Number 5. I was pretty pleased with that! Number 5 on Amazon's *Homes & Garden Bestsellers* list.

Whether all the extra sales were triggered by the newspaper article, or whether it got into a self-perpetuating sales spiral thanks to Amazon's recommendation system, I don't know. (That's the one downside to Amazon: no customer details or metrics to track how they found your book). But still, quite an impressive result. And just one of many reasons why I love the internet.



After my brief foray in the media spotlight, I declined any further interest. The next suggestion had been television: *Breakfast*, *Loose Women* etc.. I feared that the focus might be more on my personal stories - specifically my marriage - rather than the book. Though I was keen to promote my book and pursue a level of success that I can share with my family, I wasn't prepared to hang them out to dry in the process. (Pardon the pun.)

So, life pretty quickly went back to normal. There was a bit of excitement at the school gate, as some of the mums had seen my feature in the paper. (My son's teacher was proudly waving it at anyone who would listen.) My book sales stayed high for the rest of that month then settled down a bit, but happily the new norm was much higher than before my brush with fame and celebrity.

Although I'd made the decision that my future PR ventures would be on a much more targeted scale, the whole episode was certainly an interesting experience. Plus, when you're 'in the media', you never know who gets to see it...

# Want more?

Click here for more details on the full version of

*From Wannabe to Writer*

## Discover...

- How I 'accidentally' wrote my first book
- The pros and cons of self-publishing
- The step-by-step sequence of how I reached readers (who became raving fans)
- How I landed an agent with just 4 emails
- Why I turned down conventional book deal offers
- My secret to being the media's go-to person in your niche

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