

# A book coach can help you get your writing noticed

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Book coach Lisa Tener: “Even in this competitive market you can get a deal with the right idea and the right proposal.”

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NORTH KINGSTOWN — From a spare room in her house near the water, book coach Lisa Tener chats with 14 author hopefuls on a conference call.

“Hello,” says Tener into a headphone. “I help people write books. Even in this competitive market you can get a deal with the right idea and the right proposal,” says Tener, who has helped some clients publish their own books, and others land five- and six-figure book deals with publishers like Random House. She ends with a pitch for her \$997 course, “Inspiration to Author in 8 Weeks.” It includes CDs, a binder and lots of bonus material, including a strategy session with Tener and a copy of her book, “The Secrets of Compelling Writing.” Other services cost less, and the advice on her blog is free.

Many need help navigating the changing world of publishing, says Tener, the coauthor of “The Ultimate Guide to Transforming Anger: Dynamic Tools for Healthy Relationships.”

Once, an author like Hemingway could finish a novel, hand it to a trusted editor and start work on a new project.

Now, potential authors need a website, a blog and a Twitter account — something book agents call a “platform,” or a way of reaching potential readers. And they need to be savvy marketers.

“New authors think the publisher is going to pay for all this publicity and they will be famous,” says Tener, who has been working with writers for the past six years. “It doesn’t work that way.”

Tweets, blogs and websites help budding writers develop a loyal following — “people who will want to buy your books and recommend them to others,” says Tener, who has her own site at [www.lisatener.com](http://www.lisatener.com).

The field is growing, in part, because it is easier than ever to self-publish a book, she says.

“There are book coaches and book doctors. There are more people teaching writing. And there are more courses on how to write books.”

A bad economy is also driving more people to write, she says.

“With so many layoffs in the last few years, people say, why don’t I just do what I love? So they write. In America, there is this desire to write that magnum opus.”

Narragansett author and book coach Martha W. Murphy agrees the demand for help is growing.

But the number of writers who snag a deal with a major publisher is small, she says.

“Everybody does have a story to tell,” says Murphy, the author of three books and a contributor to several others. “But not everybody has the stamina” or skill to write a good book. “It’s an arduous process,” she says.

Both women spoke at the recent University of Rhode Island Ocean State Summer Writing Conference, where Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Jennifer Egan gave a keynote speech.

Tener, a New Yorker, went to school at MIT and took a seminar with Frank Conroy, the author of the classic memoir “Stop-Time.”

But her father, who wrote unpublished musicals, told her she should do something practical. At MIT, she took classes in marketing. She moved to Rhode Island 11 years ago,

She now teaches on the faculty of Harvard Medical School’s continuing medical education class on publishing books. She teaches several workshops for writers as part of a Harvard Medical School book publishing course.

She also teaches locally at All That Matters in Wakefield.

“My goal is to help people get unstuck and get published,” says Tener.

Murphy, a Navy child who grew up in Maryland, operated a bed and breakfast before she wrote “The Bed & Breakfast Cookbook,” “How to Start and Operate Your Own Bed & Breakfast” and “A New England Fish Tale.” She has worked on other books, too, including “The Encyclopedia of New England.”

The manager of marketing and communications for South County Hospital Healthcare System, she works part time as a book coach.

“I only work with topics I have a strong interest in,” she says. She edits, she adds, “with a cold eye.”

She has been working as a book coach for the last six years.

“When people ask me how can you coach people to write, I say, if you practice piano a lot, you can teach someone else to play.”

In addition to her own books, Murphy has helped several authors publish books. Three others have books due next year.

“I tell people, I’ve been on the path. I think I can help you get there.”

The path can be a hard one.

“Most people don’t realize they need a platform and a way to reach people,” Tener says. “A lot of writers I work with say, I’m not into marketing, but then they learn to love it. It’s all about connecting with readers, whether it’s online or through speaking.”

Publishing, she adds, can help people start over. “I’ve had clients quit their day job or retire and launch a new career” as a speaker, a workshop leader or a consultant. A book establishes credibility and attracts clients.”

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