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The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

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- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!

Those of you who have joined in the past month (about 200 of you are new since my last issue), welcome to my e-zine! You can find all the previous issues on my web site at:  
<http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/html/afwezine.html>

This month marks the beginning of the second year of this e-zine. The past year has seen phenomenal growth. As far as I can tell, the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine is already the second largest fiction-only e-zine on the web, and we're within a few hundred subscribers of being #1! At the rate we're growing, I expect we'll take the lead before your taxes are due.

In this issue I'd like to talk about a number of issues that have nothing to do with writing your fiction and everything to do with marketing your fiction. So for those of you who don't write fiction (some of you subscribe just for the Tiger Marketing info), I hope you'll find this issue especially interesting.

Are you a "thpammer?" I hope you know what "thpam" is--that irritating unwanted email that clogs your inbox. I use the word "thpam" instead of the "S-word" because you probably have filtering software that searches for the "S-word", so I can't call it what it is here, or this e-zine will get filtered out. Oh the irony of it all. But my point is that you may be "thpamming" inadvertently, and that could be illegal or tragic or both.

Fame has its cost. If you're a published writer, you've probably been approached electronically by someone creepy. What can you do about it? And how do you know if it's too late? Find out in my article on privacy.

I've written a number of articles in this e-zine on Tiger Marketing. The great thing about Tiger Marketing is that it applies to marketing ANYTHING you have to sell, not just fiction. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to describe a Tiger Marketing venture I'm almost ready to launch. No, it's not fiction. Yes, it uses viral marketing in a particularly potent way. I hope you'll be intrigued, and get some ideas for your own brilliant Tiger Marketing ventures.

Have you ever considered buying ads on Google to sell your books? Should you or shouldn't you? I'll show you the simple calculation you can make to decide. And I'll point you to an excellent source of information on making Google Adwords work for you.

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## 2) A Big Thank You on Fiction 101 and a Special Offer

Last month, I launched my Fiction 101 CD with an unbeatable offer--40% off and free shipping anywhere in the world. A large number of you took me up on it. Thank you!

The launch was almost too successful. It took me hours to print out all the invoices. My family and I spent most of a morning stuffing over 200 envelopes with all those CDs. We had orders from the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and even Brazil.

I've already heard from a number of you about the CD. Diana White emailed me over the weekend to tell me how much she liked Fiction 101. Like any Proud Papa, I was thrilled to hear how much my brainchild is helping her. I asked her permission to share her comments with you:

"I just started listening to fiction 101 and cannot get enough. It is cohesive and incredible! For the first time in years I am truly beginning to understand the framework needed in order to structure my writing. I actually remember what you say and think about what I am learning. Unlike most of the things I've read, this course takes the complex and

makes it accessible. The contents of this course supercedes all of the many books on my shelves. It is concise, cohesive, practical and a real help. It must be your physics background that allows you to break down complexities and explain them so that end-users can apply knowledge to experience. If I'd not found this course I would probably have given up. Thank you and thank Google!"

Randy sez: You're welcome, Diana! This is why I like teaching--I live for those big adrenaline shots to my ego. I hate to admit it, but I have a vain streak a mile wide.

Diana thanked Google above, and that reminds me of a little story about Mae West. Somebody once said, "Thank goodness!" in Mae's hearing and she instantly answered, "Goodness had nothing to do with it." Clearly, there are at least two big differences between me and dear old Mae, because I'm happy to acknowledge that Google had a LOT to do with it.

In any event, I thought it would be appropriate to thank you all for your enthusiastic support of Fiction 101 by running a special Thank You Offer. For the next three days (until Saturday at midnight Eastern time), I'll give you an electronic coupon worth 25% off on Fiction 101. This coupon is good only for subscribers to this e-zine.

By the way, I already give volume discounts for 2 CDs (30% off) and 3 or more CDs (40% off), because multiple orders save me labor and shipping costs. This 25% coupon is ON TOP of those discounts. So if you buy 2, your discount amounts to over 47%, and if you buy 3, your discount zooms to 55%. Team up with your friends and rob me blind! I promise not to hold it against you.

And shipping is still free, anywhere in the world: Priority Mail in the US; Global Priority Mail to most other countries; and Air Mail to those few countries that don't accept Global Priority Mail.

To use your coupon, you must click on this link:  
<http://www.kickstartcart.com/app/adtrack.asp?AdID=208675>

Once again, this coupon expires at midnight Eastern time, Saturday, March 11, 2006.

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3) Are You a "Thpammer?"

Your filtering software will nuke this issue of my e-zine if I spell the S-word, but I think you know what I mean by "thpam."

So are you a thpammer?

You are if you're sending your email newsletter to anyone

who didn't specifically request it. I know a lot of writers who believe that it's OK to add their family and friends to their email database, because after all, family and friends don't mind.

It doesn't matter whether your family and friends mind or not. If they didn't ASK to be on your mailing list, then you are thpamming them and you are violating federal law. There are large fines for violating this law, and it only takes one person complaining to get you in trouble--if they have a valid complaint.

My friend Staci Stallings discussed all this in an article in this e-zine about a year ago (April, 2005). About 3500 of you are new since that article was published, so I think maybe it's time to revisit the topic.

You can find Staci's article in my e-zine archives at:  
<http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/html/afwezine.html>

In brief, the law only allows you to send email to people who "opt in" to your email database. It is NOT OK for you to sign them up and then give them the choice to "opt out". They have to sign up themselves, or specifically ask you to sign them up. To protect yourself, you should keep records of the date on which your subscribers opted in, along with the "IP address" of the computer from which they signed up.

In practice, the easiest way to do this is to find a service provider to give you the tools to create an "opt in" form on your web site and to maintain your records for you. You have a number of choices:

Yahoo will host your email list for free, but it'll insert ads into your emails. You can sign up at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com>

There are several other options that will cost you money. The level of service you'll get depends on how much you're willing to pay. I can recommend the following three services, because I know people who use each of them.

Constant Contact: <http://www.constantcontact.com>

Ezine Director: <http://www.ezinedirector.com>

KickStartCart (the service I use):  
<http://www.kickstartcart.com/app/default.asp?PR=31&ID=61527>

Please don't be a thpammer! You could get in real trouble. If you're not legal, then get legal--as soon as possible. Research the various service providers and use the one that's best for you.

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#### 4) Privacy And The Working Writer

From time to time, female writer friends of mine get rather creepy emails, such as the following:

"Dear Ms. Writer: I've read a bunch of your books and I've visited your web site. You are really beautiful and I think I'm in love with you! Really! Until recently, I was incarcerated, but I'm now out on my own and I'd like to meet with you to tell you my true feelings for you and discuss our relationship. I'll be in your town next week. Looking forward to meeting you. With all my love, Jim Bob Convict."

Now, I've juiced up this letter a bit to make it clear where the problem areas are. Usually, the emails my friends get are slightly more subtle, but you get the point. The internet has made you accessible to the whole world, and there are some weirdos out there.

Female writers generally get more of these than males, but we guys aren't totally off the hook. There are all kinds of weirdos, and one of them may have a thing for you, Mr. Macho. Or your wife. Or your daughter. Or your son. Or your sheep.

There is a lot of information out there on the web, and it's ridiculously easy to find your home address and phone number. Odds are good that you are listed on this web site, or others like it:

<http://www.zabasearch.com>

Check it now. Are you there? Are you angry? Are you feeling just a little paranoid right now? Do you want to get your name off those pesky databases?

Unfortunately, there's not a lot you can do, once you're on the web. Information is ubiquitous. Once the cat is out of the bag, it's out for good.

Here are a few guidelines for you that will help protect your privacy a little bit. Some of these really won't help much unless you actually move to a new home, but it's a good idea to develop good habits now:

- a) Get an unlisted phone number.
- b) Get a PO box to use as your public mailing address.
- c) Don't list your phone number and home address on your web site.
- d) Buy the "privacy option" for your web site registration so people can't look up your contact information for your web site.
- e) Don't give your phone number and home address to your

alumni organizations.

f) Don't put pictures of your family members on your web site. If you look at my web site, you'll notice that I don't show any current pictures of my wife and daughter, with one exception: my daughter Gracie was in the National Spelling Bee a few years ago and her picture landed on their web site. So I use that same picture in a few places on my site. But it's rapidly getting out of date, and I don't intend to update it.

g) If you get a vague and generic email from someone and it sounds at all suspicious, don't respond. Some of these folks are sending the same letter to many writers, looking for anyone to answer. Your response verifies to them that your email address is accurate and that you have a pulse. Once they know that, they have reason to look for more information about you. If you don't respond, then they may not look any further at you. Some red flags to watch out for are phrases like, "I've read all your books" when you only have one book in print. Or, "I've been a fan of you for years" when you've only been published for a short time. The less specific the information they give about you, the less likely they are to actually care about you in particular. Sometimes they're just fishing. Don't bite.

h) If Jim Bob Convict is fresh out of the slammer and heading to your town to have dinner with you, call the cops now! It's likely this won't ever happen to you, but if it does, you don't have a lot of time to react. Don't hesitate to bring in the Law. Jim Bob might think you go nicely with fava beans and a nice Chianti.

Few of us writers are famous enough to really have to worry about stalkers. But you can't predict fame. You might hit it big next year. The time to start protecting your few fig leaves of privacy is NOW, before you get famous.

I'll admit that I've not been careful enough about my own privacy. I've been in my house for 12 years--long before I got published or had a web site. If I had it to do over again, I'd start out unlisted and with a PO Box. But I DO have it to do over again. I'll be relocating soon, and I'll take the opportunity to get that unlisted number and PO box.

Next time you move, think hard about what level of privacy you want and need. Because once it's gone, you can't get it back.

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##### 5) Tiger Marketing--A Real-Life Example

This is an e-zine on the craft and marketing of fiction. So imagine my surprise to learn that not all of my subscribers

actually write fiction. I've got editors who read this. And agents. Publicists. Non-fiction writers. I've even got people who don't have anything to do with publishing at all.

Why?

Tiger Marketing is why. I've really hit a nerve with my articles on Tiger Marketing. As you'll recall, Tiger Marketing is nothing more than electronic marketing to people who are already interested in what you have to sell.

So I'd like to talk now about a Tiger Marketing venture that fell into my lap a few months ago. This venture has nothing to do with writing, but the techniques I'm using apply to a wide variety of products, including books.

Back in November, I got to talking with a long-time friend of mine, Dr. John Martin. John is a clinical psychologist who teaches at San Diego State University. He specializes in motivational psychology.

As near as I can understand, John helps people do things that they kind of want to do, but which they don't have the willpower to do. He's worked with alcoholics. He's taught people how to adopt the diet and exercise lifestyles they know they should be living. He's trained AIDS counsellors in Africa to teach poor people how to lower their risk for HIV/AIDS. And he's been doing research for 25 years on how to help people quit smoking.

Many smokers want to quit. But quitting smoking is hard. As Mark Twain said, "Quitting smoking is easy--I've done it a thousand times."

The statistics are pretty scary. Of all the people who try to quit smoking on their own, more than 95% of them will relapse to smoking within a year. Less than 5% of them manage to quit and stay off tobacco for a full year.

That's the gold standard in smoking treatment--the success rate after one year.

The numbers are hardly higher with a doctor's supervision. Or with nicotine patches. There are any number of quit-smoking programs out there, and some of them are nothing but quackery.

A one-year success rate of 15% is considered very good.

I was appalled when John told me all this. I knew quitting smoking was hard. I just didn't know how long the odds are. And I didn't know why it was hard. I thought it was nicotine addiction. Nicotine dependency is part of it, but that's not the biggest piece. Like Yogi Berra said about baseball, "90% of this game is half mental."

John has spent a number of years working with alcoholics who smoke. These are the real "hard-core" smokers, with multiple chemical dependencies. These are the "almost hopeless" cases.

John's motivational "SmokeFade Program" has been getting one-year success rates of 25% to 30% for several years with these hard-core smokers. John believes that with "ordinary smokers" he could achieve one-year success rates close to 50%.

That's . . . amazing.

So when we started talking in November, John told me he was working on a book on how to quit smoking. Since I'm a writer, he wanted my advice on how to get it published.

I immediately saw that here was a case where Tiger Marketing could take John's motivational psychology methods to the masses much more quickly and economically than a book could. Books are great. I think someday John should write a book. But I told John that he ought to start a web site first to help people quit smoking. Then write the book later.

John loved the idea. I talked to him for a good hour on Tiger Marketing. I gave him a pile of suggestions on things he could do. He was on board right away. The only problem was that he's not a computer geek. And some of my ideas needed some serious geeking to make them work.

So I decided to help. I figured I could put a SmokeFade web site together, run it for a few months, and then hand it off to John. He could get rich. I could take a few percent as my cut and go back to writing fiction.

It didn't turn out that way. John and I spent a few days talking in December, and we realized that he was NEVER going to be geeky enough to do the tech stuff. We also realized that I am seriously interested in seeing this project succeed.

See, it's personal for me. My dad smoked for years and years when I was a kid growing up. Now he's got emphysema. Emphysema is one nasty condition to have, and it gets worse and worse and worse. Smoking destroys lives. I realized that John Martin has the goods to help a LOT of people. To save a lot of lives. To increase that quality of life thing.

So John and I teamed up to create a Tiger Marketing plan to take his SmokeFade Program to the web. I'd like to describe that plan now.

Our plan was based on two facts from John's research:

a) The best way to quit smoking is a gradual approach. A "cold turkey" approach usually fails. John uses what he calls a "warm turkey" method in which he applies the principles of motivational psychology at each step along the way.

b) Some people don't WANT to quit. They don't think they can. They'd be happy to just cut back on their smoking. Virtually nobody is helping these people cut back.

John and I devised two programs.

a) The "SmokeFade Cut-Back Program" gradually weans the smoker down to smoking 5 or 10 low-tar cigarettes per day, using John's advanced motivational methods to make it as easy as possible.

b) The "SmokeFade Quit Program" then takes the smoker the rest of the way down to zero smoking and teaches the smoker maintenance skills to avoid relapse.

Understand that there is no safe level of smoking. So the SmokeFade Cut-Back Program is not at all the ideal. However, it does lower the dose of harmful toxins to the smoker AND it gives the smoker the confidence that it's possible to quit. A lot of smokers feel hopeless about quitting. If they can cut back to 5 or 10 cigarettes per day, they develop a hope that they can quit all the way.

Each of the programs is a 28-day program. We'll deliver a daily message by email telling the smoker exactly what to do for that one day. We'll do the delivery using an "autoresponder". An autoresponder is nothing but a timed series of emails. You can program them to be delivered at set intervals. We'll time them to go out once per day for 28 days. The delivery cost for this is minimal, so it's a very economical way to run the program.

Each 28 day series of emails contains a substantial amount of John Martin's intellectual property. This is the product John wants to sell, and it will be very effective by itself.

I suggested an improvement--a "Buddy Program." Suppose the smoker could ask several friends to provide emotional and social support during the SmokeFade Program? Suppose we taught those friends how best to help the smoker? Wouldn't that make the program even more effective?

John thought that was brilliant. A large part of smoking dependency is psychological and behavioral and social. By enlisting "buddies" and telling them each day exactly how to support their smoker friend, we could improve the success rate of the program. That's the first benefit of the Buddy Program.

But there's a second benefit. Smokers hang out with smokers, so some of the buddies are bound to be smokers. If they agree to help their friend quit smoking, they'll see the value of the program and then they'll be interested in taking it themselves.

That is the essence of "viral marketing"--the customer's USE of the product creates word-of-mouth advertising FOR the product.

John and I have created a SmokeFade web site and we'll soon be launching the first program, the SmokeFade Cut-Back

Program. We'll sign on an initial group of one or two hundred smokers to test the system and make sure we've got it working perfectly before we release it to the millions. Of course, we'll give those early testers a steep discount on the program.

Take a look at our web site, if you're at all interested in seeing how a carefully designed Tiger Marketing plan is done:

<http://www.kickstartcart.com/app/adtrack.asp?AdID=208689>

You'll find two things that are especially interesting on this site:

a) On the main page, there's a quiz: "How Much Do You Really Know About Smoking?" The quiz exposes some common myths about quitting smoking and it uses elements of motivational psychology to help smokers realize that quitting is POSSIBLE.

b) We have a second quiz that follows on the first one: "How Ready Are You to Cut Back on Smoking?" After the smoker takes the quiz, our system automatically generates a custom-built response that again uses motivational psychology to move the smoker one step closer to making a change in smoking habits.

These quizzes are John's intellectual property, and they're brilliant. I used my geek-skills to do the customization part.

There's more I could say, but I've gone on long enough on this subject. On our site, we have a signup for our email list, SmokeFade News. When we're ready to launch the testing phase for our programs, we'll notify the members on the list and give them the option to be testers at a steeply discounted price.

John and I are excited about the SmokeFade program. This is a chance for us to really make a difference in the world! We expect that Tiger Marketing will make it broadly available at a low price.

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6) Is Google Advertising For You? The Brutal Numbers

Ever thought about advertising on Google? The name of their advertising program is "Google Adwords". Google Adwords is cheap and it's easy. You can write an ad in minutes and start seeing hits on your web site within hours. If you're lucky, you can get traffic from Google for as little as a penny per click, which is pretty darn good.

But SHOULD you?

The world of Google advertising is very specialized and there are people who do nothing but figure out how to make their Google ads earn more money for them. I'm not going to go into that here.

But there are three numbers you need to know FIRST before you do anything. If you hate numbers, I'm sorry. There's no way to make accurate decisions about advertising without talking about numbers. I won't pretend that I'm going to make it painless. I'll have to settle for making it as simple as possible--but no simpler.

The first thing you need to figure out is what outcome you're trying to achieve with Google advertising. Are you trying to get people to buy a product? Sign up for your newsletter? Or something else? In a word, what event will count as a "successful outcome?"

Once you've decided that, here are the three numbers you need to know:

a) How much money will you earn from a "successful outcome?" (If you're selling a book, what is your profit on the book? If you're trying to add names to your email database, how much is a name worth to you?)

b) How much does each click cost you? This might be as little as a penny, if you're advertising in a non-competitive market. I hear that some lawyers are willing to pay fifty bucks per click! The amount you need to pay depends on who else is advertising in your niche and how much they're paying.

c) What is your "conversion rate?" The conversion rate is the fraction of people who click through to your page who end up giving you that "successful outcome" you're looking for.

Let's look at an example. Suppose you're selling your book on your web site and your profit is \$5 per book. Suppose you're paying a nickel for every click from Google Adwords. And suppose your conversion rate is 1% (one person out of a hundred actually buys your book.)

Here's how your numbers work out. You're paying a nickel for everyone who clicks through to your site from Google. Out of a hundred clicks, only one of those converts to a sale--earning you \$5. But you paid a nickel for all 100 clicks, so you wound up paying \$5 for those 100 visitors. If these are your numbers, then you'll break even. It'll cost you \$5 to find a buyer, and that buyer will earn you \$5.

Let's consider changing the numbers a little. We'll consider three scenarios.

a) Suppose you only pay a penny for each click from Google.

Then those 100 visitors will cost you \$1, but you'll earn \$5 from the one guy who actually bought. So your net profit from those 100 visitors is 4 bucks. That's good.

b) Suppose you have to pay a nickel for each click from Google, but now you're selling a product that earns you \$50. Then those 100 visitors will cost you \$5, but your profit from the one buyer is \$50, so your net profit for the 100 visitors is now \$45. That's really good!

c) Suppose you're paying a nickel per click, and your product earns you \$5, but now you've got a GREAT sales page that persuades 10% of your visitors to buy your product. Now for each 100 visitors, you pay \$5 to Google, but you make 10 sales, each earning you \$5. So you earn \$50, and your net profit after paying off Google is \$45. That's also really good!

We can reduce all this to a simple formula. Multiply your profit per sale by your conversion factor and that tells you the maximum you should be willing to pay Google per click.

For example, if your profit per sale is \$5 and your conversion factor is 1%, then don't pay more than 1% of \$5 for each click. That's a nickel per click. If you pay more than that per click, then the more you sell, the more money you LOSE. If you pay less than that per click, then the more you sell, the more you EARN.

I have told you a tiny fraction of what there is to know about Google Adwords. One reason I'm interested in it is that I expect that the SmokeFade web site I described above will get most of its customers through Google Adwords. So I need to know everything there is to know about the subject. Google Adwords can be a valuable tool for a Tiger Marketer.

I have this theory that sometimes it's best to pay an expert for their knowledge, so I went out and bought an electronic book by Perry Marshall on how to make money using Google Adwords. It cost me 50 bucks and it's EXCELLENT. It should save me months of learning time, which is worth a lot more to me than half a C-note. I highly recommend this book, IF you think Google Adwords might be something that could earn you some money.

Before you buy a book on Google Adwords, I'd recommend that you first check out Perry Marshall's very helpful e-course called "5 days to success with Google AdWords." There's no charge for his e-course, and it will give you enough information to know whether you really might want to advertise on Google or not. You can find out about Perry's e-course here:

<http://perrymarshall.com/cmd.php?pg=368152>

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## 7) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

As I mentioned last month, I'm relocating to the Portland area with my family. At this very moment, I've got painters outside working on my house and landscapers working on my yard. As my realtor told me, a house never looks better than the day you take ownership or the day you sell it. This is tragic but true, and it's making me very irritated, but I'll live.

In the meantime, I'm working furiously on my Tiger Marketing efforts for the SmokeFade project and looking forward to Making The World A Better Place. I have hopes that this will ultimately lead to me becoming Supreme Dictator For Life And First Tiger. However, in a pinch, I'm willing to settle for Total World Domination. I'm easy.

See ya next month with more stuff on the craft and marketing of your fiction!

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## 8) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth three billion times what you paid for it. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2006. My lawyer says that I have to tell you that. I hate my lawyer, but he knows about lots of disgusting things that I don't, so I usually take his advice. But I sometimes spray-paint his cat pink as revenge. Don't tell him, because it does irk him quite a bit! (But I think the cat LIKES it.)

Extremely tasteful postscript: I encourage you to email this E-zine to any writer friends of yours who might benefit from it. I only ask that you email the whole thing, not bits and pieces. That way, they'll know where to go to get their own free subscription, if they want one.

If you email it to a friend, remind them tactfully that when they sign up they should name YOU as the person who referred them. When my subscriber count reaches 5000, I'll hold a drawing for a brand-new iPod Nano. Your name will be entered once for each subscriber you referred. Subscribers who name themselves as referrers unfortunately don't get credit, so they might as well be honest and admit it was you!

At the moment, there are two places to subscribe:  
My personal web site: <http://www.RSIngermanson.com>  
My new web site: <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

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Randy Ingermanson  
Publisher, Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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