



***TARGET* YOUR
READERS
TO MAXIMIZE SALES**

ABOUT ME



Bidinotto.com

- .Five decades as award-winning nonfiction writer and editor
- .Wrote high-profile investigative journalism for *Reader's Digest*
- .Wrote two nonfiction books about the criminal justice system
- .Magazine editor at a nonprofit organization
- .Hundreds of articles, essays, columns, book and film reviews, editorials, interviews, etc.

**I DIDN'T START TO
WRITE FICTION
SERIOUSLY UNTIL MY
LATE FIFTIES ,
MAINLY BECAUSE...**



**I WAS
TOO
*SCARED!***

So...what changed?

- .Unemployment during the 2008-2009 recession**
- .Emerging self-publishing opportunities**
- .I'd hate myself on my deathbed if I didn't TRY!**

I wrote *HUNTER*, a story I'd been toying with for years, between 2008 - 2011.

I vowed to self-publish my debut novel before my 62nd birthday – June 5, 2011.

I finished the manuscript on June 4, 2011...

. . . at 11 p.m.!

***HUNTER* went on sale on Amazon only 16 days later, as a Kindle ebook.**

Two weeks later, I published the print edition.

Over the next five months, it sold 4,000 copies.

Then, in November, the Amazon editors invited me to enter it into a sales promotion with about two hundred other titles.

***HUNTER* went on sale
November 27, 2011...**

**SEVEN DAYS LATER, *HUNTER*
REACHED #4 ON THE KINDLE
BESTSELLER LIST.**

**IT HIT #1 AMONG ALL
“MYSTERIES & THRILLERS.”**

**IT WAS A *WALL STREET JOURNAL*
“TOP 10 FICTION EBOOK.”**

IT SOLD 50,000 COPIES IN 35 DAYS.

I'VE SINCE WRITTEN THE AWARD-WINNING SEQUEL, *BAD DEEDS*, AND THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED POLITICAL THRILLER, *WINNER TAKES ALL*.

AND I'VE ESTABLISHED A NEW, LATE-LIFE CAREER AS A BESTSELLING THRILLER AUTHOR.



**TODAY, I WANT TO TELL YOU HOW
THAT HAPPENED . . .**

. . . WITH SOME LESSONS **YOU
CAN DRAW FROM WHAT I DID.**

**THE LESSONS ARE ABOUT HOW
AUTHORS CAN OVERCOME . . .**

THE PROBLEM OF GETTING VISIBILITY

**Millions of books are competing with yours
for eyeballs in stores and online retailers.**

**On Amazon, there are over 30 million books,
and among those, over 3.8 million ebooks . . .**

. . . and those figures are from 2015!

YOUR MARKETING CHALLENGES

1. ***Standing out from the crowd*** to become “discoverable” by your target audience.
2. ***Building “brand loyalty” from that target audience:*** a base of loyal fans who will buy all your books and become unpaid ambassadors for your work, telling all their friends and building word of mouth.

WRONG EMPHASIS:

short-term tactics and gimmicks

TACTICS: Pricing, ads, promotions can be useful – but can be quickly and easily copied by others.

GIMMICKS: Chasing shifting market trends and fads: vampires, zombies, *Hunger Games* clones, wizard schools, *50 Shades* knock-offs, etc.

- It's inauthentic and comes off as pandering.
- By the time you respond to the fad, public tastes have already moved on.
- Tactics and gimmicks are temporary at best, not the basis for a long-term, stable career

WHAT YOU *REALLY* NEED:
a long-term strategy

It should be based on doing something special *that nobody else can copy* – or perhaps even *want* to.



IDEAL MARKETING STRATEGIES...

...grow from things *intrinsically part of, and unique to, you and your work.*

- 1. Unique aspects of **your personality**, background, skills, expertise, etc.**
- 2. Unique elements in **your books**: original character(s), fresh subject matter and settings, distinctive plotting, an unusual point of view, your unique writing “voice.”**

YOUR GOALS:

- 1. “POSITION” YOURSELF AND YOUR WORK IN THE MARKETPLACE**
- 2. ESTABLISH YOUR “BRAND”**

POSITIONING: STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD



“Positioning” is about *differentiating yourself and your work in the minds of your target audience*, in order to stand out from your competitors and be seen.

BRANDING: PROJECTING AN APPEALING IMAGE



“Branding” is projecting to your target audience a memorable, appealing image, thus establishing a good reputation for what you are positioning.

Proper positioning will get you and your work *noticed* by your target readers.

Proper branding will get you and your work *liked* by your target readers and turn them into fans.

You can develop an appealing brand image, but if you don't **position** yourself well in the marketplace, your target audience will never find you or your work. Many talented writers have few readers, because their target audience can't find them.

You can position yourself and your work to be noticed by your target audience; but if you fail to develop a good **brand**, they will only remember that they *dislike* you. A pariah is well-positioned, but terribly branded. A “scarlet letter” is a bad brand!

So, you need to work on *both* your positioning *and* your branding.

Your goal is to develop a brand that is both **differentiated and **appealing** to your target readers.**



POSITIONING YOURSELF AND YOUR BOOKS



STAGES OF POSITIONING

People put the new things they encounter into pre-existing **categories** in their minds. That's how they evaluate and remember things.

Positioning is about *carving out and dominating* a distinctive **niche** for your work -- one that will stick in the minds of your target audience.

YOUR GOAL: to “position” your books to occupy such a mental category or subcategory, so that your target readers will more easily find and remember them *among fewer competing titles*.

There are **two stages** to doing this.

The First Stage:

Get your works into the right existing category

This means getting it on the right store shelf, or into the right category in online retailers like Amazon.

This whittles down the competitive options for your target audience to consider, making your book easier to discover.

Readers don't think "I want a book."

They think "I want a mystery" or "romance" or "thriller" or "sci-fi," or "history" or "art" or "math."

How I categorized *HUNTER* on Amazon

FICTION NONFICTION

NOVELS NOVELLAS SHORT STORIES PLAYS SCRIPTS POETRY

GENRE FICTION LITERARY FICTION

THRILLERS ROMANCE MYSTERY FANTASY SCI-FI WESTERNS
HISTORICAL (ETC.)

CRIME SPY MILITARY POLITICAL CONSPIRACY TECHNO
LEGAL MEDICAL PSYCH

VIGILANTE JUSTICE ORG. CRIME SERIAL KILLER NOIR
MURDER HEIST KIDNAP CAPER

There were over 40,000 Kindle crime ebooks, but only 602 titles in the “vigilante justice” subgenre. Putting *HUNTER* there made it far easier for my target readers to discover.

But among titles *in* your subcategories, how do you make *your particular book* stand out?

The Second Stage:

Create, then dominate, a new subcategory or subgenre

You can create a new subcategory in any category by *focusing on a specific setting, specialized subject matter, or by creating fresh and different characters.*

In *Mysteries*, writers created subgenres of hard-boiled, police procedural, cozies, historical, private eye, capers, etc.

In *Thrillers*, writers defined subgenres of espionage, crime, romantic, legal, financial, historical, military, techno-, political, assassinations, conspiracies, medical, etc.

EXAMPLES: THRILLER SUBCATEGORIES

Alistair MacLean: generic thrillers. **Ian Fleming, Donald Hamilton, and Robert Ludlum:** the international spy thriller. **Jack Higgins:** hybrid. **Dick Francis:** mystery-thrillers set in the world of horse racing. **Michael Crichton:** thrillers about cutting-edge science and technology. **Tom Clancy:** military techno-thrillers. **Vince Flynn:** political thrillers with military and spy elements. **Thomas Harris** carved out serial killer subgenre. **Dan Brown:** thrillers based on religious history and symbols. **Stephen Hunter:** sniper thrillers. **Brad Thor:** counterterrorism special-ops. **Lee Child:** a modern vigilante “knight errant.” **Me:** branching off “vigilante” subcategory with a modern urban Zorro who takes on corrupt elites.

SUMMARIZING “POSITIONING”

First, position your work in an existing category—the more specific and narrow, the better. E.g., don’t settle on generic “thrillers.” Position it into “crime thrillers.” Etc.

Next, carve out a new, even narrower subgenre niche from the existing category. “Vigilante justice” is a sub-subgenre of “thrillers,” and a subgenre of “crime thrillers.” But a new niche “political vigilante” further sets *my* hero apart from other vigilantes.

Try to be first of your kind in that category, imprinting your brand on it. If you aren’t first in *reality*, you can be first in *perception*. That’s what matters, because positions are really perceptions in people’s minds.

EXERCISE

Answer these questions on a sheet of paper. (Start working on this now; spend a lot of time on it later)

What kind of books do you write, or wish to write?

What subgenre or subcategory are they in?

What unique and distinctive quality, topical focus, or other element in your writing or approach sets your work apart from others in that category?

What label might you put on that *new* subcategory your own work represents?

**THE POWER OF
BRANDING**



**Thanks to fantasy author
Michael J. Sullivan
for some of the key concepts
in this section**

HOW IS A BRAND CREATED?

The Traditional Approach:

Build your target audience on demographics

Target plausible demographic groups of readers who seem to like your *category*; craft your marketing messages (even book content) to appeal to them.

The problem: *lack of authenticity*. You wind up chasing market fads, writing for the market rather than for yourself. **You are trying to conform to readers tastes, rather than finding readers that appreciate yours.**

This demographic approach attracts only shallow interest, not loyal fans. Such readers must be replaced with every new book you write; you'll retain few.

True fans don't love your books because they fit some demographic profile of age, race, sex, location, education, etc.

True fans buy and read *your* books **because they identify with you, your “voice,” what you believe.**

By chasing fickle market fads you will only disguise your uniqueness, attract the wrong readers, and remain invisible to the right ones.

THE MORAL:

Your brand should be based on *BEING YOURSELF.*

The Authentic Approach: “START WITH ‘WHY’”

Simon Sinek’s 18-minute TED talk on YouTube, “Start with WHY,” is must-viewing.

What is your purpose, belief, cause—the reason you are motivated to write what you write? That is your “why.”

Your goal is not to target everyone.

Your goal is to target those readers who already believe what you believe.

Your target readers are those who connect emotionally with your worldview and values, like what you like, believe what you believe. To reach them, you must communicate your *why*.

CREATING A DISTINCTIVE BRAND

EXERCISES (to be continued and completed at home)

A. Define yourself by your “WHY,” in two or three words
(Me: “justice crusader”)

B. Describe you, your work, your protagonist with taglines
(Me: “The Vigilante Author.” My books: “Thrillers for Thinkers.” My hero: “a modern urban Zorro,” “The New Face of Justice,” “a crusading vigilante”)

C. What do you want the world to know about you?

- * You have many facets; pick carefully and *thematically*
- * Limit number of details to avoid a muddled image
- * What do your *readers* say they like about your work?

D. Create *WHY-focused* author biographies

- * **Do *not* create a boring resumé of life facts, e.g.:**

“Robert Bidinotto is the award-winning author of five books and hundreds of articles and reviews. Born in western Pennsylvania, he now lives near Annapolis, Maryland with his musician wife and their cat, Luna.”

***Boring!* This won't speak to your target readers at all.**

- * **Instead, *base your bio on your “WHY.”* Tell a story about yourself—one that gives insight about who you are and what motivates you to write.**

- * **Create multiple versions of this: 20 words, 50 words, 200 words long (Amazon/Goodreads profiles).**

AUTHOR BIO #1 (22 words)

Motivated by a life-long passion for justice, award-winning writer Robert Bidinotto is author of the bestselling Dylan Hunter vigilante thrillers.

AUTHOR BIO #2 (82 words)

Ever since I watched "The Lone Ranger" and read Batman comics as a little kid, I've been passionate about justice. It became the theme of my award-winning nonfiction career. Now it's the central theme of my bestselling thrillers. Their vigilante hero, Dylan Hunter, can't walk away when powerful elites commit injustices against people he cares about.

If you like exciting tales of justice, I hope you enjoy *HUNTER*, *BAD DEEDS*, *WINNER TAKES ALL*, and the forthcoming books in the Dylan Hunter thriller series.

AUTHOR BIO #3 (138 words)

Ever since I watched "The Lone Ranger" and read Batman comics as a little kid in the Fifties and Sixties, I've been passionate about justice. It became the theme of my award-winning nonfiction career as an author, columnist, journalist, reviewer, blogger, and editor. Now it's the theme of my fiction, too.

Like me, the hero of my bestselling Dylan Hunter vigilante thrillers has a passion for justice. He can't walk away when injustices are committed by powerful elites against people he cares about. That's why Dylan Hunter became a vigilante -- why I call him as "the new face of justice" -- and why I call myself as "The Vigilante Author."

If you like exciting tales of justice, I hope you enjoy *HUNTER, BAD DEEDS, WINNER TAKES ALL*, and the forthcoming books in the Dylan Hunter thriller series.

Notice how my bios all underscore my *WHY* – the personal motive that will resonate with my target readers.

Notice how my taglines and terms of self-description reiterate my *WHY*, and the books' theme of vigilante justice.

Your *WHY* also should serve as the basis for your business cards, advertising, book product “teasers,” and all your other promotional efforts.

EXERCISE

Take a moment to scribble an idea or two for the first line of your new, “why”-focused biography.

Think “outside the box” about this. Try to be unusual and arresting. (“None of the other kids in her elementary school could imagine that the quiet little girl sitting next to them...”)

You can write this in first-person. (“Geek!’ That’s what they called me throughout my teens.”)

You can open with a question to the reader. (“What would you think of someone who has a passion for....?”)

Work on fleshing out your biographies. Spend a lot of time on them, and update them from time to time. Keep them handy for various publicity occasions.

YOUR PERSONAL IMAGE SHOULD REINFORCE YOUR "WHY"





ONE AUTHOR – MULTIPLE BRANDS?

If you write different kinds of books, brand each differently, with distinctive covers, typography, teasers, etc., to appeal to its own target audience.

- * Give fiction and nonfiction different types of branding**
- * Different branding for different genres, too**
- * Consider different pen names for different genres**

When romance author Nora Roberts wanted to branch out, she took up the pen name of “J.D. Robb” for her “In Death” mystery series.

Author Joanna Penn writes nonfiction self-help under her own name, but thrillers and fantasy under “J.F. Penn.”

“ELEVATOR PITCHES” FOR YOUR BOOKS

You need brief summaries of your works that convey your “why” to your target readers.

These should range from one-line summaries, up to full descriptions for dust jackets and Amazon product pages.

Examples of short “elevator pitches”:

***HUNTER:* A crusading vigilante’s war against a corrupt legal system may cost him the woman he loves. (16 words)**

***BAD DEEDS:* A crusading vigilante defends helpless victims from political conspirators and terrorists. (11 words)**

***WINNER TAKES ALL:* A crusading vigilante must stop a vengeful billionaire and a deadly assassin from hijacking a presidential election. (17 words)**

EXERCISE

Pick one of your books, or a work in progress. Try writing a brief “elevator pitch” for it.

Keep the summary under 20 words.

Try to work in your “why,” even implicitly, perhaps using some of the language you came up with earlier.

***If fiction,* focus only on the main protagonist and the main plot conflict with the main antagonist(s).**

Suggest a threat to the protagonist arising from the conflict.

***If nonfiction,* try to incorporate the subject, your “why,” and perhaps hint at a benefit to your target reader.**

BOOK DESCRIPTIONS, A.K.A. “TEASERS”

Your book description online or on its dust jacket are *critical* in “closing the sale.” It, along with your author bio, allows space to elaborate about your “why.”

“Less is more.” Curiosity is aroused by offering *insufficient information*. Like a strip tease, what arouses the audience’s curiosity is what you do *not* reveal!

A book description is a ***teaser***, meant to intrigue the customer by raising tantalizing *questions*. It is *not* a place for “information dumps” that try to *answer* all questions.



WRITING YOUR TEASERS

For **fiction**, your book teaser should name no more than two or three major characters – the protagonist, the major antagonist, and their irreconcilable conflict over some vital goal or value.

It should establish or suggest the *high stakes* for the protagonist, the *major threat*, and it should *leave the outcome in suspense*.

A **nonfiction** book teaser should *raise questions about a topic of interest* to the target reader, and offer the promise of specific answers and benefits.

For either fiction or nonfiction, the appeal should be tied (explicitly or implicitly) to your **WHY**.

**From the back cover of *THE FAITHFUL SPY*,
by Alex Berenson**

Years ago, John Wells was an all-American boy from Montana. Now, he is roaming the mountains of Pakistan as a member of al Qaeda.

After a decade away from home, he despises the United States for its decadence. He hates America's shallow, mindless culture of vice and violence. He is a devout Muslim. He is a brave warrior for Allah.

He is a CIA operative.

And he is coming home . . .

The teaser from my thriller *HUNTER*

Two people, passionately in love.

But each hides a deadly secret.

He is a crusading vigilante, on a violent quest for justice.

She is tracking this unknown assassin, sworn to stop him.

Neither knows the truth about the other.

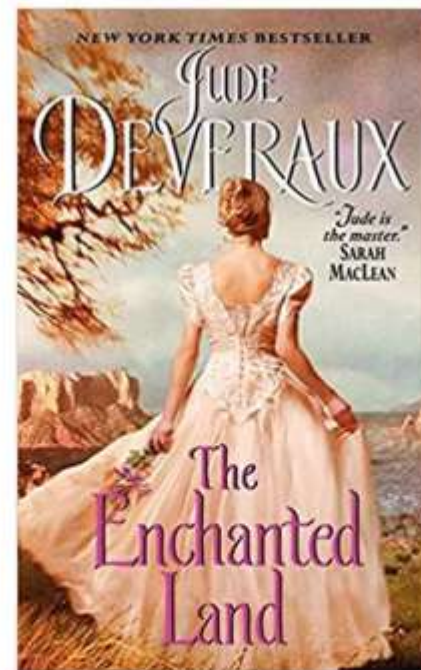
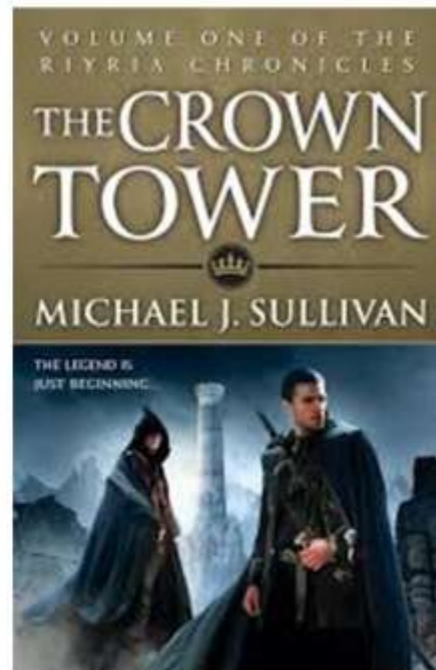
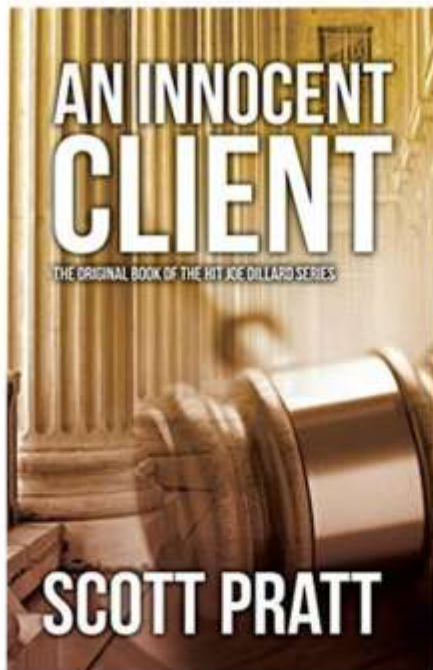
Neither knows a ruthless predator is hunting them both.

YOUR BOOK COVER . . .

. . . MUST APPEAL TO YOUR TARGET READERS

. . . MUST SUGGEST YOUR GENRE

. . . MUST BE PROFESSIONAL



ENHANCING YOUR BRAND

Strive to establish a reputation with your target readers for...

CRAFTSMANSHIP

The most important thing you can do is to constantly study and hone your writing skills.

CONSISTENCY

Don't ride on your past work. Maintain both the quality and quantity of your continued output.

CONNECTION

Forge a bond with your devoted readers via social media, email newsletters, and public events.

MARKETING TACTICS

The value of a specific marketing tactic is usually short-lived, and depends a lot on you being an “early adopter.” Being first allows you to stand out and be seen by your target readers.

But then “the Gold Rush” phenomenon occurs: Once a tactic starts paying off, copycats rush into the marketplace. Then you and your work no longer stand out as being visible or special.



MARKETING TACTICS LOSING TRACTION

Blogging and “blog tours” (you reach mostly existing fans)

Twitter (useless!)

Appearing on various bestseller lists (no “tail” anymore)

Promoting on Facebook book groups (too much competition)

Free or 99-cent pricing, except for the first book in a series

Book signings (unless you have a good local following)

Buying or swapping “reviews” (just...*don't!*)

Buying ads in email book promotion lists (except Bookbub)

Cross-promotions with other authors (limited value)

MARKETING TACTICS THAT *DO* WORK

Employing the positioning and branding principles discussed here

Frequent output of new work (*my* shortcoming!)

Writing books in a series, then linking them on Amazon

Creating a series character beloved by your target readers

Participating in the “Kindle Unlimited” borrowing program

Cross-promoting your titles (inside each book & in Amazon teasers)

Publishing in ebook, print, and audiobook editions

Releasing “boxed sets” of series books (especially good if in KU)

Maintaining a presence on Goodreads

Soliciting *authentic* reviews from fans for Amazon and Goodreads

Business cards for in-person encounters (“Are you a reader?”)

Developing an email notification list of your fans (“Mailchimp”)

“Sponsored ads” on Amazon (for keywords in your category)

Bookbub ads (they still pay for themselves, but have short “tails”)

VISIT ME AT...

Website/blog: www.Bidinotto.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RobertBidinottoAuthor/>

Email: RobertTheWriter@gmail.com

And check out my Dylan Hunter *Justice* Thrillers on Amazon!



FOR MORE INFORMATION . . .

. . . on all aspects of book marketing, check out:

Joanna Penn's "The Creative Penn" – www.TheCreativePenn.com

"The Vigilante Author" blog: www.Bidinotto.com

*** Scroll down the right margin to *"Helpful Links for Authors"***

*** Also, use the "search" function there to find the article:
*"10 Winning Marketing Strategies for Your Self-Published Book"***

Simon Sinek's videotaped talk, *"Start with Why"* (on YouTube)

***Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, by Al Ries and Jack Trout
A marketing classic, available on Amazon**