

## *RELIEF! Cures for a Lonely Writer*

If you've spent time at NSA meetings, you've probably come to a realization similar to mine. Most speakers believe they have a book inside them, and most haven't written those books. They know their subject, they have the stories to tell, and sometimes they even have a great title, they just haven't written. I've been trying to understand out why all these people who have a concrete dream can't seem to make it happen.

I think I figured it out. Writing is a singular activity and speakers like to be around other people. Maybe if speakers realized that they will need to get other people involved during the writing process - they'd start writing.

Look at all the people you'll need to interact with as you turn the idea in your head into a book on a shelf.

**NSA Writer's PEG** - Have you joined this PEG? It's the perfect place to start. You'll find friendly advice, useful resources, and a community of fellow writers. Many PEG members have partnered for encouragement and inspiration. You could too!

**Writing Groups** - How about gathering a small group of speakers who want to write, schedule regular sessions, and share your progress? Having other people to keep you accountable will often keep you writing.

**Co-Authors and Writing Partners** - What about developing a project you can do with another speaker? Other writers I know who have done a project with someone else will tell you that this experience was the best thing they ever did or the worst. My experience with C. Leslie Charles, CSP, was great, but writing with someone else can be tricky, so choose a partner carefully.

**Cheerleaders** - Every speaker who writes soon realizes that computers and yellow legal pads don't give applause, only other people can do that. So, you need a few people who will sit, listen, and tell you how great your writing is. Don't confuse Cheerleaders with Feedback Givers. Cheerleaders should encourage you and provide you with the enthusiasm to keep on writing.

**Feedback Givers** - As soon as you start writing, you'll learn about re-writing. First drafts are just that, drafts intended to be worked on and revised and polished. Feedback Givers read and answer specific questions. Here are the three questions I always ask:

- 1) Were there any places that you found confusing?
- 2) What parts did you like best or find most useful?
- 3) After reading this section, are you eager to read more?

Make sure your feedback givers understand that you are serious about asking for feedback, you won't take it personally, and your friendship is safe. As you read or talk through the feedback, make certain you do as promised and don't take it personally, and that you separate the feedback from the friendship. Remember, you asked for it!

**Subject Matter Experts** - In almost any type of writing you're going to need to bounce an idea or theory off someone with experience. These can be colleagues, experts in your field, or experts in other fields. They may be people you know, or don't know. You can use the Internet ([www.askjeeves.com](http://www.askjeeves.com) and [www.profnet.com](http://www.profnet.com)) to get access to people who know what you need to know.

**Your Local Librarian** - Do you read the dedications and acknowledgements in books? I do, and I'm always charmed by the thanks that authors give to their local libraries. Make friends with your librarians; they can find amazing information in a short period of time. It doesn't hurt to drop off a jar of candy once in a while as a thank you, either.

**Editor** - Whether you intend to self-publish or pitch your book to a publishing house, your writing will improve with technical editing. Ask other speakers who've written and published for recommendations on free-lance editors. Or, get creative and find a high school English teacher who'd like to make some extra cash by applying a red pencil to your pages.

At this point, you have to decide if you're going to publish your own book or sell it to a publisher. This decision will determine the final people you'll be interacting with as you bring your book to print.

**A Production Team (Self-Publishing)** - You'll need to assemble a team to get your edited manuscript into print - someone to design the cover, layout the pages, and print the book. Look for recommendations from your NSA colleagues, ask to see samples of their work, and get bids from several sources. These people are critical to the look and ultimately the salability of your book so, choose carefully!

**Agent (Publisher)** - Agents know publishers, most of us don't. Agents know the publishing language, most of us don't. That gives them an advantage as they negotiate on your behalf. Most literary agents charge 15% and are well worth it. Buy the latest edition of Jeff Herman's book, *The Writer's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers, and Literary Agents*. It is an excellent resource to help you find an agent.

Hopefully, writing no longer seems quite so lonely. Now that that excuse is gone...start writing!

*Copyright © 2001 Chris Clarke-Epstein*

*Chris Clarke-Epstein, CSP is a speaker, consultant, and author who works with leaders who want to lead more than they manage and teams who want to have fun while they're learning to be more effective.*

*Learn more about Chris at [www.ChrisClarke-Epstein.com](http://www.ChrisClarke-Epstein.com) or contact her at [Chris@chrisclarke-epstein.com](mailto:Chris@chrisclarke-epstein.com).*