



• *Cheat Sheet* •  
*for*  
:: *Book (or Art) Business 101* ::

*by*  
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The following tips come straight from my article series  
*How the Sound Logic of Self-Publishing Finally Won Me Over*

1. **Making money off of your work is as much about making logically sound business decisions as it is about being great at your craft.** Work on craft and work on being a better businessman: you are a business.
2. **Declare war on your own ignorance.** This means autodidacticism supplemented by frequent trips to the library — the top three job qualifications for *any* job are reading comprehension, logical thought, and the capacity to explain yourself verbally. (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric.)
3. **Novels and poems are telescopes for seeing other lands.** Use them as often as you can — read a lot and write a lot. Especially read old books: I recommend something like the following ratio that I call The Life Learner's Waltz:
  - a. read 1 old book (novel or classic).
  - b. read 1 modern novel.
  - c. read 1 nonfiction book.
  - d. repeat: *old book* step, *novel* step, *nonfic* step

4. **Fiction bends the truth as a reverse prism will bend light waves: refracting the details of specific colors together, uniting them back into the brilliance of white light.** Fiction and exaggeration isn't lying at all but a way of conveying the truth of both the emotion and themes through a trick of light. That means *every* book makes a sermon of sorts. What are the books you're reading smuggling into your mind? More importantly: what do you want to smuggle into the minds of your readers?
5. **Make bets you *know* you can win 9 times out of 10.** Even if the impossible happens, you will win in the long run. Bet on things that have a margin of safety built in and will provide a suitable return over the long haul. Rule #1 in this department? Don't *lose* money.
6. **If you want to make money as a writer, you do not pay to publish.** You reinvest profits. That includes fees to competitions — only pay out of money you made.
  - a.  $\text{CONTEST FEE} = \text{MONEY MADE WRITING} / 10$
7. **The *point* is daydreaming.** Not awards. Not money. Not the elusive praise from that Biology teacher who called you a turd-flinging monkey while you mis-dissected a pig fetus in your sophomore year of high school. Daydreaming of the future, of another world and a better tomorrow. Dream. Record those dreams. Move on. That's *why* we do it.
8. **Rejection will point you in a way you did not intend to go.** Embrace the wayward path because not all who wander are lost. Some wander with purpose. Some people are border stalkers wandering the lands between the known and unknown, the accepted and the rejected — that's how they give us visions of tomorrow, of things we're unwilling to accept. Rejection reforms you. Let it wash over you and cleanse you from the impurities that hold back your career.
9. **Trust your internal compass.** I was probably on my third time through Stephen King's *On Writing* at the end of college and enchanted by the idea of hanging my rejection slips on a wall so I drove a nail into my upstairs and mimicked him. And I too eventually had to get a larger spike — a massive roofing nail — to hold it all up. And I too found that the more I paid attention to that internal compass, that internal scorecard, the more I started getting personal notes and acceptances, sometimes from the strangest of places. The McSweeney's piece, for instance, was written in an hour and sent immediately without revision. I don't recommend this, but somehow I knew on that one would win. I got an email accepting the piece that afternoon.

The point is the compass. I've dabbled in other things and the same process will happen: first timid from rejection with a lot of stops and starts, then a general apathy for what people say to you unless it relates directly to that internal compass. You must become unknowing and uncaring in regards to your success. Have integrity and move forward.

The internal compass is integrity. Integrity of soul. Integrity of mind. Integrity of work and the goals you're after. You will come to love rejection as much as a basketball player loves having a coach. Those rejections coupled with my internal compass will point out your future path.

10. **Should I quit my day job?** It depends on several factors:

- a. *Do you have a family or a spouse?* If so, their provision comes first. “Having a family” is your primary art.
- b. *If you’re single, consider staying single until you’ve succeeded.* Join an intentional community or a new monastic order to give you the intimacy you need with human relationships.
- c. *Don’t quit your day job if it gives you plenty of time to write.* I worked in between rotations on nightshift at the hospital.
- d. *There are two ways to be wealthy: hoard much or need little.* If you need little, C.D. Wright says, “Poetry will not go quietly. You would have to starve it out, and it can eat on very little. Hunger and love move the world, didn’t Schiller say so.”
- e. *Consider moving to a very cheap place to live.* For me, this was Joplin. Joplin’s not as cheap these days but the world is small — you have no need to move to New York. One of the great strengths of writing among the creative disciplines is its low overhead cost. Use that to your advantage!
- f. *Your day job will give you story fodder.* There are few more colorful characters than those who work the average blue-collar job. Trust me. I grew up around them.
- g. *Find a way to generate passive income.* Though you shouldn’t own a brothel like Faulkner, you *should* consider becoming a landlord or owning a good chunk of dividend-paying stock. Patreon or similar monthly support systems work great. So do residuals from intellectual property, which we hope to create through a strong backlist.
- h. *Do what you love and the money will follow.* The Universe tends to reward steady work with momentum. And momentum works exponentially. As Einstein said, “The most powerful force in the universe is exponential interest.” He was talking about matter and speed, but it works for money as well as time and talent. Take what you’ve learned, earned, and grown and dump it all right back into the same thing and it’ll pay off double the next time. Then keep doing that. It worked for Warren Buffett, the Beatles, and Michael Jordan. And it’ll work for you.

11. **Quarterly assignments are double-edged swords.** Yes, they provide steady income.

However, they may lull you into complacency and you must never sacrifice your momentum on the altar of a regular check. That momentum? \$100 worth of momentum is worth \$1000 someday. But \$100 of a regular check, if it’s draining your momentum, is only ever going to be worth \$100.

- a. *Work regularly at will.*
- b. *And then reinvest your profits from your regular, chosen work.*

12. **Did you go from being a starving artist to the kind of person who profits off of making artists starve?** Shame on you. Shame on me. Shame on all of us for accepting this as normal. It’s not normal. It’s distinctly *American*, but not everything distinctly *American* is

distinctly *good* — like Japanese internment camps and African slavery and legalized usury that results in political bribery. It's unacceptable that we convert our brightest minds and best hopes for tomorrow into people who exploit those with the brightest minds and best hopes. I reject my shadow careers and embrace my real, my true, my überself — the man I was made to be.

You too.

Become you-i-er. Today. Right now.

***Stop making money off of that shadow career.*** I'd rather you work in a field completely unrelated to your writing (or art), a field that can give you space to write or create than for you to compromise your vision and passion, sacrificing it all to that golden calf on Wall.

13. **Contracts in publishing are no different from contracts in banking: they're meant to favor the big guy over the little guy.** As a little guy, you must find ways to work this towards your advantage starting with a refusal to sign contracts that (1) don't pay, (2) take away your right to a fair trial, (3) take away large swaths of your intellectual rights, (4) cripple you from the long play. DO NOT accept short-term gains over long term, exponential momentum.
14. **Build your platform by turning strangers into advocates for your work.** Read everything Tim Grahl has to say about this — the guy had five clients on the New York Times Bestseller List *at the same time*. If you don't, at least know this:
  - a. **Outreach** means finding people outside your normal sphere.
    - i. Podcast interviews
    - ii. Guest articles and posts
    - iii. Speaking at conferences
    - iv. Taking classes in other disciplines
    - v. Being friendly everywhere you go and asking people about *their* work first
  - b. **Permission** means getting people to agree to hearing from you more often.
    - i. Get an email address.
    - ii. Add it to your email list.
  - c. **Substance** means provide free work — great work — delivered directly to individual people who will want to keep coming back to read. This will help:
    - i. Prompt people to share your work (for new outreach)
    - ii. Prompt people to give you permission (for new emails)
    - iii. Keep people subscribed and engaged (for current audience)
    - iv. Help those who are long-time fans and advocates.
  - d. **Sell** means you simply make an ask.
    - i. Let them know your work is available *early*.
    - ii. For early buyers, offer them bonus rewards to help them further in their own work.

- iii. Include in the work other chances to buy other work — outreach, permission, and substance for those who stumble upon your work and pay for it on a whim.
- e. **Advocacy** means turning buyers into people who help you push forward into broader uncontested marketplace. You can:
  - i. Ask them if you can meet any more of their needs.
  - ii. Ask them to share specific social media blasts.
  - iii. Ask them to review your work.
  - iv. Ask them to recruit others to your team of advocates.
  - v. Ask them to support you regularly as patrons.
  - vi. Ask them to join your team of beta testers or beta readers.
  - vii. Finally: the best advocates *come* to you and *ask you* where they can help. Some of my best advocates are other writers, photographers, sculptors, and musicians.

You know why they advocate for me?

Because I advocate for them. *I am in their corner fighting hard, sometimes raising money for their work-in-progress.* I commission artists as often as I can. You should too: contribute to the publishing landscape, don't just exploit it.

15. **Your backlist becomes your passive income.** When that happens, you should by all means quit your day job. It would be financially stupid to do otherwise.

- a. *Your backlist is your career, in aggregate.* When I said you shouldn't sell your birthright for a bowl of soup, I meant that \$2,500 in intellectual property today will be worth \$25,000 ten years from now
- b. *It does not matter what you create because if you're improving constantly and if you're consistently creating, then time is on your side.* The trajectory of the artist? It's the exact opposite trajectory of the professional football career. The professional football player gets drafted from highschool by a college, gets drafted from college to NFL, tears his ACL at 28 after making his millions and, if he's lucky, gets to be a coach or an announcer on ESPN. The author? The painter? You seldom meet has-been authors, has-been painters. Oh you'll meet has-been football players and has-been politicians.

But the artist?

The artist is often a might-have-been or a could-become. So be. And become.

- c. *The better you get, the more people will pay for your work* — and that includes stuff you've already created.

16. **Self-published authors are outselling traditional authors in every category.** Check out AuthorEarnings.com for more. Build your own backlist.

17. **If you want to succeed as a writer, or an artist, you must take the path that's yours alone.** Don't take advice that goes against the grain of you *know* will work. If you're responsible for people, don't assume that the favors they're asking from you will translate into a working methodology for *how* to achieve the favors they're asking.
18. **In the end, do the thing that brings you joy and makes you come alive.** The world doesn't need bad men to become good. It needs dead men to come alive.

