



## Become a “Guru” in Your Field (Part 2)

### *Position Yourself as an Expert to Attain Greater Levels of Success!*

By  
James L. Paris

Every field has its gurus...those people with immediate name recognition and thought of as the “go-to” people when someone wants to learn more about whatever subject area it is that the gurus represent. In the fields of psychology and counseling, names like Dr. Phil McGraw and Dr. Ruth Westheimer immediately come to mind as the “go-to” people in that realm. In law, it’s people like Alan Dershowitz, Gerry Spence, and Robert Shapiro. Every field of note has its gurus, who, we learned last month, do not achieve that status nearly as much because of what they know in their respective career fields, as because of a special and sustained effort on their parts to market themselves accordingly.

We began this topic last month defining the guru, in general, and coming to understand just what the overall process of becoming one entails. This month, we want to dig into the meat of just what is involved in achieving and maintaining guru status in any given field. I have narrowed the list down to ten activities in which a person much engage in a regular, ongoing fashion in order to get there. The list is as follows: *write articles; write books; produce and sell information; publish a newsletter; make speeches; present seminars; conduct PR campaigns; establish a website or blog; achieve critical mass; maintain your guru status.* It’s at this time that we want to examine each of these activities

more closely so that you have a better understanding of what is involved.

### Writing Articles

We all assume that a person whose name is attached in authorship to an article is an expert, an authority, in the article’s subject matter. Given that, I would ask this question: Why not have *your* name there? All you have to do is write the article. There are so many publications in your community that are constantly looking for new material. Of course, we talk a lot about online magazines and online article aggregators like Ezine Articles ([www.ezinearticles.com](http://www.ezinearticles.com)) as places through which you can easily become published in cyberspace, and all of that is perfectly fine and something you should do. However, do not neglect giving consideration to your local marketplace when thinking about this activity. Most areas have small, community periodicals of one sort or another that would be very easy to penetrate with a thoughtful, well-written article. It may not be the most glamorous credit, but it is something, and, importantly, can help you to get the ball rolling. Writing articles is a super way to position yourself as an expert, given the assumption of that status accorded article authors, and you don’t have to be in a large, national publication to have that benefit accrue to you.

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### Writing Books

Writing books has never been easier than it is today. When I wrote my first book, *Financial Boot Camp for Christians*, I remember sending my book proposal out to every Christian publisher, and receiving back rejection letters from all of them. After that initial go-around, I changed the proposal a bit, took a bit of a different angle, and sent it out once more to every Christian publisher...and again, every one of them rejected me. At that point, I began to rethink the whole idea of even doing a book, but ultimately decided to press on. I went deeper into the effort to re-work the proposal, and when that was finished, I sent the proposal out *again*. After this third time trying it out, I received something other than a flat-out rejection from one, single publisher. This publisher did not say at that point that they wanted to publish my book, but they did say that they were interested in meeting with me. Once they met with me, one thing led to another and my first book was published.

Whew! Can you imagine if everyone had to go through that in order to become published? Obviously, there was a time when that was the case, and that long, drawn-out process is something that I believe dissuaded a lot of budding authors from moving forward with putting their great book concepts into print. However, it is no longer the only way to get to print, and because of this shift in the culture of book writing and publishing, book authorship is far more accessible to people than it was even ten years ago.

First and foremost, the advent of the ebook is something that has opened up a world of possibilities for interested writers that simply did not exist previously. Because you don't need a publisher to create your ebook or bring it to market, you are not in a position of having to receive any sort of editorial approval, or “permission,” to write a book; if you want to write a book, you can just sit down and right it. Additionally, there need not be any middleman to take a portion of your sales revenue, there is no physical product overhead on which you have to spend money, no shipping, nothing like that. The appearance of the ebook on the writing landscape has revolutionized the opportunity for budding authors, as well as for experienced, seasoned authors.

With respect to the matter of achieving guru status, the authorship of books is a powerful tool. Think of the credibility and authority one gains as the author of an article, and multiply that by ten; that's the sort of weight book authorship can carry. What's more, if you would prefer to author a physical, printed book rather than an ebook, there are now some great ways to get that done that do not involve you humbling yourself to traditional publishing houses. One great resource in this regard is Lulu ([www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)), which offers on-demand printing, publishing, and distribution services. While Lulu's costs can vary substantially based on which and how many of their specific services you decide to use, the general guideline to keep in mind as far as revenue “split” is 80% for you and 20% for Lulu...which is a whole lot better

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than the five to ten percent most authors receive from traditional publishing houses.

All of this said, regardless of *how* you pursue the matter of book authorship...traditional publisher, non-traditional publisher, self-published...go ahead and pursue it; it is a key element to realizing guru status.

### **Producing & Selling Information**

The production and sales of information is an activity that could, in part, include the activities of writing articles and books, but is cited here to highlight other, less traditional ways of developing information for distribution. For example, creating videos and audios in this age of digital delivery are two excellent examples of what I’m speaking about here. Videos are especially popular these days, and you could create a variety of videos that highlight different sub-topics of your overall subject area. On that note, we had a student who knew a lot about the subject of nutritional cures for cancer. I’m convinced that if this person created a video of about 45 minutes in length, wherein he went over some of his great information, and perhaps included a companion, written outline along with it, he could price such a product at \$40 to \$60.

So what does creating this kind of product accomplish? Well, for one thing, it obviously gives you something else that you can sell. However, beyond that, creating digitally-delivered videos and audios makes you a true multi-media presence, which, again, adds to your authority. Assuming you write articles and put out a book here and there, and now make contributions to the information realm through these alternate resources, not only do you start to become ubiquitous in the sense that more and more people who

know more about your subject area will come across information that you’re personally disseminating, but when you have the opportunity to actively promote yourself, you can cite all of these different mediums and mechanisms as areas in which you have experience.

### **Publish a Newsletter**

Publishing newsletters is another terrific activity in which to engage to establish guru status. A LOT of recognizable gurus have newsletters of one sort or another as a part of their offerings. What’s particularly appealing about newsletters is that they convey the impression of providing special, unique information to which others are not privy. That is, there’s an air of sophistication about them that lends even greater stature to the person who publishes it.

While you can make your newsletter available digitally and have it delivered each month to the email addresses of your subscribers, I suggest, whenever possible, creating a physical product that’s mailed out each month to your subscriber base. There is a credibility and weightiness to a hard-copy newsletter that is more difficult to duplicate in a digital edition. Now, some people will make newsletters available free of charge as list-building tools, and in those cases, digital editions that do not carry the burden of fulfillment costs can make more sense, but when it comes to newsletters for which you are charging a subscriber fee, it’s a good idea to create those as hard copy editions.

### **Make Speeches**

Whenever I mention this, a lot of people will immediately conjure images of well-known

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figures on big stages, in front of thousands of people and a bunch of news cameras. I guess that’s understandable. However, the reality is usually much different. It might surprise you to learn that a lot of smaller groups in your local community are regularly looking for speakers on a wide variety of topics. While I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to speak in auditoriums to audiences numbering into the several thousands, I have also made plenty of speeches to much smaller groups in places that required no more travel than a short car ride from my residence. In addition to local groups looking for speakers for their own venues, like chambers of commerce and houses of worship, you can certainly solicit organizations in your area that are relevant to your chosen area of expertise. Additionally, it is very easy to rent a small space and make a presentation there, advertising the event in local community papers and other information resources in the days and weeks leading up to the event.

As with many of the other activities cited in this article, there is a two-fold benefit associated with making speeches on a regular basis. For one thing, it is a form of active, direct marketing that can lead to sales of your products and services. For another, it helps to establish and solidify your status as a guru. Every real guru is constantly out on the speechmaking circuit, and speeches, by their very nature, project real authority—think of the physical manifestation of a speech: At a speech, a group of people are quietly assembled, giving their full (ideally) attention to someone who has been promoted (either by himself or by others) as an authority on the topic on which the speech is being delivered. He is by himself at the front of the room or auditorium, and is frequently positioned

above the audience on an elevated platform or stage. He will often stand in front of a lectern, which is a prop that implies wisdom and authority. He may often use a microphone, which, again, makes for a commanding presence. The point is that speechmaking is one of those guru-molding activities that conveys a certain expertise even more greatly than does some of the other activities mentioned here.

### Present Seminars

People will automatically assume that if you are presenting a seminar on a topic, that you are an expert on that topic. We just talked about that with respect to the matter of speechmaking, and making speeches is a very close cousin of presenting seminars. If you are in the position of teaching a seminar, you are naturally and immediately accorded “expert” status; do we not draw that conclusion (at least initially) about all teachers? As with many of the other activities cited here, presenting seminars allows you a way to make some additional money *while* engaging in a pursuit that will assuredly build your credibility and, therefore, your brand.

### Conduct PR Campaigns

Public relations efforts can include efforts as simple as sending out a press release, perhaps once a month, on something that’s in the news and related in some way to your topic. The benefit? Well, once again, as with speeches and seminars, issuing press releases immediately connotes expertise and, therefore, guru status. Your ideal goal with a press release is to be contacted for an interview with a media outlet of some kind, but even if that does not happen, your press release, in the age of the Internet, becomes a

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permanent presence in cyberspace.

### Establish a Website or Blog

Chances are, if you’re subscribing to this newsletter, you’re already well into the practice of establishing a website or blog, because that’s what we’re all about here. Accordingly, we don’t have to discuss this like it is a new concept for you, but for the purpose of having a complete list of the required activities, I wanted to include it anyway.

Again, there’s not much we have to say about this here, but let me throw this out in consideration of the topic. If you’re like me, you will sometimes hear about a company or personality about which you’re curious, and do a search about that subject on the Internet. How do you feel when you see that the entity *doesn’t* have a proprietary website, if that is the case? I know how I feel—my kneejerk reaction is to regard him/her/it in a more diminished light than I might if an official website was available. These days, having a proprietary web presence is standard for anyone who wants to be considered a guru.

### Achieve Critical Mass

So what does this mean? I once heard someone describe it this way: In the early years of your business, it will take you ten units of effort to realize one unit of results. In other words, you’re going to work very hard, put in a lot of hours...and just one little drop of results will come from all of that effort and time. However, as long as you keep plugging away in that fashion, the day will come where *one unit of effort produces ten units of results*; it will be practically defined as a day where you get up in the morning, put in relatively little effort and time, and yet the re-

sults are just flowing in; once that happens, you will have achieved critical mass.

Note that with respect to this “activity,” we’re not talking about one, specific, identifiable task or chore to perform; this is more of a long-term goal that actually comes about largely as the culmination of incorporating a lot of these other activities into your efforts. That said, it’s still a benchmark by which to measure your guru status—if you have achieved true critical mass, you are likely now a guru at some level.

### Maintain Your Guru Status

Achieving guru status is not always synonymous with *maintaining* guru status. Think of it in terms of working towards becoming a black belt in karate. There are a lot of people who have studied karate for years in order to earn the coveted black belt. However, in order to maintain black belt proficiency, and thus truly *remain* a black belt, that person has to continue to work at both maintaining and even improving upon his black belt skill set. A person who attains the black belt, but then rarely steps foot into a dojo afterward or otherwise does little to keep in practice will not truly be a black belt in terms of being a martial arts expert. He will simply be someone who achieved black belt status at some singular point in time.

The same thing applies to the guru; you can reach the point where you’re being solicited for radio and TV appearances, and that’s a great sign that you’ve *achieved* guru status. However, if you don’t make it a habit to stay on the media circuit, your guru status will begin to diminish, and you run the risk of no longer being regarded as the “go-to” authority you once were. Now, you might be think-

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ing, “Well, if I am now being contacted for these various appearances, that will surely continue without me having to do anything to procure them.” Not necessarily...and not likely. When it comes to TV and radio, there is always going to be competition for slots, especially on those programs that are more highly rated. Don’t forget, too, that although you may ultimately achieve guru status in your subject area, it’s unlikely that you will be the *only* guru in that area; there will be plenty of alternatives, which can mean plenty of competition for coveted radio and television slots.

That said, I *can* tell you that once you get your foot in the door with one media organization, it’s easier to stay involved with that outlet; whether it’s a speaking engagement, an appearance on a radio or TV show, or some other sort of media event that is facilitated through a media company of some kind, once you’ve landed the first one, it will be easier for you to procure future engagements. Now, this assumes that your initial appearance went well, but assuming it did, and you also engage in the right protocols, like following up with a nice “thank you” note and generally staying in touch with that company from time to time, you should be able to count on future appearances through that outlet.

Moreover, when it comes to the general activity of maintaining your guru status, you have to constantly fight the inclination to want to coast for a while. We’re all human, and as humans, we’re all possessed, to one degree or another, with the desire to let up on the gas a bit when we feel as though we’ve finally “made it.” Don’t do it. It does not matter how ever-present you were on the event circuit three years ago...if you’ve done

little since then, consider yourself forgotten, for all intents and purposes.

I want to spend some time now further breaking down some of the mentioned guru activities in a little more detail, so that their facilitation is as clear as possible for you.

### A Closer Look at Writing Articles

One thing you can do here is head over to Google and do a search on your topic to find suitable websites or blogs on behalf of which you can write articles or guest posts. The truth is that this whole idea of writing guest posts has become very popular. In fact, I have been approached by an increasing number of people who’ve been interested in writing guest posts for my blogs; they approach me with an idea for an article, I decide if the article topic is suitable for the space it will occupy, and for those that I “OK,” I eventually receive an article that will be posted as a guest post in one of my regular blog spaces.

This is a very easy thing to do. You can find top blogs within your topic area on the Internet, and offer to write a guest post for one or more of those. Alternatively, you can find an online magazine that has relevance to your subject area and offer to write an article for *them*.

There is a fantastic resource that I highly recommend to you called *Writer’s Market*. You can subscribe to the online edition or you can buy the physical book. It is a directory of all of the different places at which you could conceivably have your work published. It is truly comprehensive, and provides excellent information on behalf of a variety of commercial sources of the written word, to include book publishers, magazine publish-

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ers, and various kinds of online publishers. You can get to the Internet presence of *Writer’s Market* by going to [www.writersmarket.com](http://www.writersmarket.com), or you can pick up the book from any traditional bookstore or at an online retailer like Amazon. One thing to note is that when you buy the *Writer’s Market Deluxe Edition* book, you are given a one-year subscription to the online edition free of charge, so even if you’re initially more inclined to just go with the online edition, you might want to keep that in mind.

Now, when you have an article that “breaks through,” and it appears in *Reader’s Digest*, or *Money*, or some other noteworthy periodical, not only will you receive a great deal of publicity and “bump” in your guru status...but you will also be paid, and paid handsomely, in some cases.

As for writing on the Internet, that usually does *not* pay very well, and, in most cases, does not pay at all. The principal reason for writing on the Internet is to cultivate the benefit of exposure, which is by no means a meaningless benefit...we know it is anything but; however, just know that your efforts in this arena will be pretty much exclusive to the pursuit of bolstering your credibility.

### A Closer Look at Writing Books

Let’s first take a look at a way to get an ebook professionally published and distributed. I want to look at this first, because with the onset of the digital age and the

way in which book publishing is now being treated (namely, for the benefit of the writer), the ebook is probably the best way, from the standpoint of ease and profitability, for you to become a writer.

On that note, let me mention a great resource that can be a big help to you in getting your ebook distributed. Calibre E-book software bills itself as the “one stop solution to all your ebook needs;” what it is, essentially, is a free software program that you can use to take your ebook and publish it so that it can be available for sale to people who have e-readers like the Amazon Kindle or Barnes & Noble Nook devices. The software will allow you to completely organize and publish your own ebook. It’s just another in the latest of the terrific innovations that will bring true authorship to the writer in a fashion that is supportive of the writer’s interests. You can find the Calibre download at [www.calibre-ebook.com](http://www.calibre-ebook.com).

Let’s talk a little about *self-published* books. If you do not wish to limit yourself to “just” an ebook...maybe you believe that there’s something marginal about creating only ebooks and you would like to have more traditional books available in your name...consider going the self-publishing route. What I’m really getting at here is taking your ebook and reconfiguring it into the format of a *physical* book; that is, I’m not suggesting that you forego writing in the ebook format altogether, but, rather, taking what you’ve created as an ebook and make it available in the alternative format of a physi-

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cal manuscript. (As an aside, let me mention that the term “self-published” is generally limited to use in the context of physical books, even though ebooks you write and distribute yourself could certainly be considered self-published.)

At this point, there are several ways you can go about self-publishing, but two of the more popular resources are Lulu ([www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)) and iUniverse ([www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)). Each of these places offer different sorts of arrangements, but they are known collectively as “print on demand” publishers. How this generally works is that these companies will split the profits with you, after the printing costs have been covered. They will actually print as few as one copy of your book, which is very different from a standard printing house, where you would have to agree to a minimum number of copies that can be very high. With places like Lulu and iUniverse, they will create the books as they’re being sold and ship them out for you. These kinds of evolutions are great ways to leverage yourself and your ebooks into printed books so that you can lay claim to the traditional book market, as well.

Then, of course, there is the option of having your book published in the traditional fashion. I mentioned *Writer’s Market* a few minutes ago, and am mentioning it again now. *Writer’s Market* is the ultimate source of information on book publishers, as well as all other types of publishers of the written word. With *Writer’s Market*, you have all of the contact information you will need to narrow down good candidates to query for the purpose of seeing your book published.

Going through the traditional channels to get a book published has its challenges, because

you’ll be dealing with editors who may or may not like your book idea, and you can run into the kinds of things I ran into when I first sought to get a book published this way. Remember that if you decide to go in this direction, you’ll need to formulate a book proposal in accordance with the requirements of the publishers to which you’ll be submitting it, and, again, depending on said requirements, you may have to include one or more sample chapters with the proposal, as well.

While there is an undeniable credibility benefit associated with having your book published through a traditional publisher, which is something that can very much work to the favor of enhancing your guru status, you have to weigh that against the difficulty of getting through the door at all, along with the generally unfavorable compensation structure typically available to authors who publish in this way.

I can tell you that what many have taken to doing in this day and age is to write the occasional “traditional” book for the enhanced credibility benefit, but writing more ebooks and self-published books for the superior financial benefit, as well as for the purpose of more easily getting books of any kind into the marketplace. In this way, all bases are assuredly covered.

As you can see, the process to become a guru and maintain that unique status will keep you very busy. However, ask any guru that feels he’s “made it,” and he will tell you that it’s well worth it. The most difficult part of the journey is staying with it in the beginning, when it’s all work and little return. That said, a lot of us have done it, and if you sincerely make these ten activities a regular part of your ongoing efforts, you WILL get there.