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Laugh. Laugh often.



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## Letter from the President

### LAUGHTER

I missed last month's meeting while on a retreat with three writing friends. The retreat was successful. I wrote the normal amount of words for me that I write daily at home. So why was it a success?

Laughter. Hysterical uncontrolled, burst out loud until your belly hurts laughter. It was the first retreat or get-away that I wasn't in charge of something or served on the

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board or was responsible for a guest or attending a workshop or even feeling guilty for NOT attending a workshop. We went. We wrote. We talked. And we laughed.

"I believe that if people can get more laughter in their lives, they are a lot better off," says Steve Wilson, MA, CSP, a psychologist and laugh therapist. "They might be healthier too."  
~[WebMD](#)

**Wait. Hold everything. Is that a real title? LAUGH THERAPIST? People get paid for this? That is so cool!**

I had to "Google" it. Here are some results:

- [Laughter Therapy Enterprises](#)
- [Laughter Therapy as Stress Relief](#)
- [What is Laughter Therapy](#)
- [Laughter Therapy: Cancer Centers](#)

I knew the weekend had helped me. I thought I just needed to get away, but who knew Laughter therapy was a real occupation. "Laughter therapy, also called humor therapy, is the use of humor to promote overall health and wellness. It aims to use the natural physiological process of laughter to help relieve physical or emotional stresses or discomfort."

"And laughter appears to burn calories, too. Maciej Buchowski, a researcher from Vanderbilt University, conducted a small study in which he measured the amount of calories expended in laughing. It turned out that 10-15 minutes of laughter burned 50 calories."  
~[WebMD](#)

**Well, that's a cool benefit.**

"Laughter is part of a larger picture. "Laughter is social, so any health benefits might really come from being close with friends and family, and not the laughter itself."

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I can accept that.

Scientific or not, all I can say is that laughter is good for me. I hope you get a weekend of laughter.

Here's just a little part of [our weekend](#). (I'm behind the camera.)

~Angi



[Subscribe](#)[Share ▼](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[RSS](#)**MEMBER NEWS**

BLUE SUN, YELLOW SKY -- Jamie Hoang's book will be published in paperback the first quarter of 2015. In addition to placing 3rd in the North Texas RWA's "Great Expectations" Contest, BLUE SUN, YELLOW SKY was recently named one of Kirkus Reviews' Indie books of the Month (February 2015 issue).



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## DID YOU KNOW by Angi Morgan

I appreciate long-time member Karen Whiddon. She doesn't make it to very many meetings. But I had dinner with her a couple of weeks ago and have loved knowing her over the past decade (and a half). DID YOU KNOW that Karen works with [Legacy Boxer Rescue](#)?

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Rescuing animals is near and dear to me. And I always admire folks who help get animals back on their feet to be adopted by the right family. We all have our hidden super powers.

Wait a second! Did you know that one of our newest members, Krystal Shannon also helps by fostering Beagles?

Send a shoutout to Karen or Krystal or someone else you admire you volunteers their time.

Karen: KWhiddon1@aol.com

Krystal: KrystalShannan@yahoo.com



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## ***SOCIAL MEDIA***

Social Media is important to a writer's world. Complete the social media form <http://ntrwagreatexpectations.blogspot.com/p/ntrwa-social-media-form.html> and get connected with other NT members.

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#### FOLLOW ON TWITTER

Let us know if you have a # (hashtag) specific to promoting North Texas authors. Share other hashtags on our loop or with the hashtags below.

#TXauthors

#ntrwa-gecontest

#dara-ntrwa-pals

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*The following article first appeared in the April 2015 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.*

## TOP TIPS FROM EDITORS AND AGENTS: An Editor's Take On Criticism

by Donna Maloy

### The Wakeup Call

Many new authors, shiny new publishing contract in hand, think all the hard work is over. And then they get the first editorial letter. The one that's a dozen pages long. The one that starts "I really love this" and then goes, "But there are a few things I think you need to change."

It's even worse if the writer has won some contests and has an agent who keeps saying he/she is brilliant. (Note: that's what agents are supposed to do.)

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*It's so brilliant, why is there so much red ink on my manuscript?*

### Constructive Criticism

Today's comments come from editor Anne McNeil, Publishing Director at [Hachette Children's Books](#), [speaking at the Mountains to Sea Book Festival](#) in Ireland this year. She talks about the role of the editor in shaping the final book.

McNeil believes even an “immensely strong” writer, like writer [David Almond](#), celebrated for award-winning children's and young adult novels, can benefit from a fresh look by an editor. She said this with Almond sitting right beside her. In fact, Almond himself said a writer needs “a sense of someone beyond [himself]” – being part of a publishing team.

Editing is not a simple job. One of the complexities, according to McNeil, is “stripping a book down to its nuts and bolts.” Similar in concept to that discussed in my blog on killing your “darling, puffy babies, this part of the job may involve taking out dialog or whole scenes that don't move the story forward—in the opinion of the editor.

This horribly bruising experience may be accompanied by the editor's suggestions to expand some parts of the story, broadening the author's vision.

McNeil calls her approach, “constructively critical,” hopefully ending up with “the best of what the author wants.” Notice, she didn't say everything the author wants.

### Sometimes You Just Have to Trust the Editor

In an [earlier interview](#), McNeil said

*Astonishingly, passion still lies at the heart of this business. This, coupled with a good awareness of market – and a tenacity about putting the original voices at the heart of what we do. It's not a science, although nowadays we do mix intuition with strong consumer data.*

Hmm. *Strong consumer data.* Sounds like something that could turn a good book into a

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bestseller. Something an editor would know and an author might not.

McNeil also mentioned that today's editors have to take a "360 degree" view of each project – looking at apps, enhanced e-books and other digital platforms. Something else authors might not know much about.

When you add everything up, all that red ink might actually be a good thing.

*Donna Maloy writes fiction and plays for teens, tweens and young adults. Her first book for middle grade, CELIA AND THE WOLF, is available for Kindle at Amazon.com and in print from online bookstores, including BarnesandNoble.com. Check out the latest five-star review: "...This is the kind of book that you can't stop reading. When you reach the end, you close the book, sit back with a grin and say, 'THAT was a great adventure.' " Donna's website ([www.donnamaloy.com](http://www.donnamaloy.com)) and blog ([www.TangledWords.com](http://www.TangledWords.com)) are focused on tips and resources for teens and other beginning writers, including semi-regular Monday Advice from Editors and Agents. Donna has also taught fiction writing classes at College of the Mainland and the Verbal Skills portion of GRE and GMAT exam prep for the University of Houston-Clear Lake.*

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*The following article appeared in the March 2015 issue of Heart of the Bay, the newsletter of the San Francisco Area chapter of RWA. Permission is granted to RWA chapters to reprint or forward this article with proper credit to the author and chapter.*

## **Marketing Prep for Authors: 11 Key Pieces to Prepare Your Author Promotions Even Before You Finish Your First Book**

By Beth Barany

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promotions? What if your first book isn't finished? What if you're in the editing phase and just don't have the head space for marketing?

Here are some things you can do to prepare for promotions, marketing and promotional campaigns, setting up your social media accounts or your website, or preparing material to send to an agent.

These elements you're going to need no matter what kind of promotional campaign you will be running. They will change with time and with each book or genre of books you write.

Let's get going!

### 11 KEY PIECES

1. **Author bio:** I've written about this before in this column but to summarize the core elements, you want you author bio of 3-5 sentences to include your humanity, credibility, and clear message.
2. **Categories:** Even if your book is only half finished or you're in the editing phase, think about the categories where your book could be shelved in an online or brick and mortar bookstore. Most of our books these days can be more than one. For example, I could put my romance in paranormal romance, fantasy romance, and sweet paranormal romance.
3. **Genre:** Many authors know their genre. I personally define genre by how a book ends. I write romance and young adult fantasy. But if you're not clear on what genre you write, check in with your writing colleagues. Especially those more experienced than you to help you define what you're creating.
4. **Adjectives to describe you as an author:** These words will help you build your tagline. What are some adjectives that describe you and your writing? For example: Sassy, comedic, sexy, sensual, smart, sweet, electric, magical, intriguing, suspenseful. I use magical, adventurous, and unconventional.
5. **Tagline:** Jumble together your adjectives to create a tagline that suits your writing where you are now. You can always change this as your brand grows. Currently I use "magical tales of romance and adventure."
6. **Verbs that describe you as an author:** Hats off to Damon Suede, who shared how he gives all his characters a verb to define them. (RWR, January 2015). Why not do that for ourselves? My verb is "to empower." I've seen other authors use words like "to engage," "to inspire," "to encourage," "to seduce," to name a few. Pick one that works for you and test it out with your friends.
7. **Your big WHY:** In leadership and entrepreneur training teachers talk a lot about understanding your

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and do the work? What motivates you to share the kinds of stories that you like to share? When I think about this, I want to transport readers into worlds where anything is possible. I want to bring hope, I want to bring other ideas of how life can be, I want love to be the vehicle for change. (Whoa, I like that last one! I hadn't thought of that before.) Brainstorm on this topic and then share them with your trusted friends. This why may deepen and clarify with time.

**8. Your clear message:** I covered clear message in another article in this column. You can go here to read full article:

[www.writersfunzone.com/blog/2011/01/04/your-clear-message-get-your-potential-readers-curious-now/](http://www.writersfunzone.com/blog/2011/01/04/your-clear-message-get-your-potential-readers-curious-now/)

In essence, you want to craft a one sentence message that encapsulates what you write, who you write for, what impact you want to have on them, and what the experience you want them to have when they read your stories. Sounds complicated but this sentence is totally doable. I've been teaching this tool for years and many students get lots and lots of Ahas and find it useful for their social media marketing, in their author bio, and in their other marketing communications.

**9. Author photo:** A photo or avatar is an important aspect of our marketing and promotions. If you've never had a professional photo taken, you may want to do one now. If this step feels out of your budget range, have a friend take a picture with a smart phone in good light for outdoors. Look your best. Test out different outfits and taking photos with or without makeup. See what looks the best, what you can live with, and conveys the experience you want to share with your readers. I'd leave this exercise toward the end, after you have thought about and brainstorm on all the other aspects shared here. Doing a photo shoot is like stepping into an acting role. In this case the role is you as author.

**10. Branding questions:** Ask your friends and beta readers these questions:

- How do others describe your writing?
- How do others describe how yours stands out?
- What makes your stories have pass along value?
- What creates surprise within the genre and your stories?

To create these elements you'll need to enlist the help of your buddies, your critique partners, your friends, your beta readers, and other people.

Promotions are about sharing our message with other people. This is a good time to practice. Practice asking for help. Practice stepping outside yourself to look at your work as other people might. Practice hearing praise about your work. All these things are challenging for beginning authors, I've noticed. If they're not, awesome. Promotions will be a breeze for you.

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reader. As objections, I'll hear: "I don't have any readers." or "I don't know who my readers are." or "I don't know how to reach my readers." I totally understand. Especially if you're at the beginning of your author career, you don't have the answers to who are readers are yet. But you know who is your primary reader and that is you. So craft a profile based on yourself, as you would a character. Do the GMC and character background on yourself. Then generalize and extrapolate out to other age groups and backgrounds.

As you think about your ideal reader, also brainstorm on their demographics and psychographics. For demographics, think trackable statistics like age, education, income, where you live, marital status, children.

For psychographics, think: hopes, fears, worries, dreams, religious beliefs, what inspires, what they wish for themselves and their children. Essentially, you want insight into the psychology of your reader. Start by analyzing your psychology. What's your most important belief? What is your most important identity? What are other beliefs that shape you?

### **PROMO PREP MASTER DOCUMENT**

I recommend that you keep all of this material in one document. Label it "Promotion Preparation" or "Marketing Preparation." You can update as you go. Revisit it yearly or with each new book. I find myself updating my bio as I add a new genre. Or when I add a new book to my stable of books.

The first time I started creating my marketing material as an author I was really nervous. Was this how I wanted to present myself? How did I want to present myself? Just take a stab at it and then show it to some trusted cohorts and get feedback.

Share with me on Twitter or Facebook how your promo prep is going! I know you can do it.

*Beth Barany writes magical tales of romance and adventure, inviting readers into worlds where anything is possible. Her latest sweet paranormal romance novella is *A Labyrinth of Love and Roses*, #4 in her *Touchstone* series. Find her on Twitter@beth\_barany and on Facebook by her name. More at: [author.bethbarany.com](http://author.bethbarany.com)*

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### **A Note from the Newsletter Editor:**

Please note photos included in the newsletter are provided by the members. Any photos you'd like to

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photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

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## March 2015 Meeting Minutes:

### CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, March 21, 2015 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President-Elect and the Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 11:11 a.m. The minutes for the February 21, 2015 meeting minutes were approved.

### OFFICER REPORTS:

#### **President: Angi Morgan was not present. Suzan Butler reported:**

- Texas Two Step will be a one day conference with a minimal fee for members (cost of lunch). First Saturday in April 2, 2016. We need a coordinator for the event.
- Social Media: Audra Lewandowski reminded the chapter to open the chapter's social media spreadsheet and "Like" members' pages.

#### **President-Elect: Suzan Butler reported:**

- No report.

#### **Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:**

- Minutes approved and filed for audit.

#### **Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- The Treasurer's report was presented and filed for audit.
- Audit Committee: Jen requested two to three general members for the audit committee to review the 2014 books for the April meeting. Carolyn Williamson and Faith Stencel agreed to serve on the audit committee.

#### **Program Director: Lara Lacombe was not present. Suzan Butler presented:**

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Matters Most. Confidence, Focus, Self-Discipline, and Competitiveness.

- April 18, 2015 ~ Melissa Cutler ~ Dr. Strangelove: or, How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love Writing Synopses.
- May 9, 2015 ~ Renee Groskreutz ~ Blogging.

**Membership Director: Gina Nelson reported.**

- Guests at meeting: Chris Weiler-Allen and Martha Ponce.
- Please renew your membership for 2015. Renewal was due at the end of February.

**Communications Director: Kim Miller was not present. Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- Send information / articles / photos for inclusion in the newsletter to [newsletter@NTRWA.org](mailto:newsletter@NTRWA.org) by March 28, 2015.

**Website Director:**

**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:**

**PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present.**

- No report.
- Jamie Wesley is now a member of PAN.

**PRO Liaison: Dakota Byrd was not present.**

- No report.

**Great Expectations: Lisa Fenley reported:**

- 130 entries (one entry went under contract and the author decided to pull both of her entries. She donated her entry fees to our chapter fund, however.)
- \$3255 in gross proceeds. Net proceeds TBD--will be less PayPal fees and \$450 in first place prize monies.
- Congratulations to our finalists, especially our own Sidney Bristol.
- Final standings announced on March 16, 2015. Please sign the congratulatory sheets as they come around! (One per finalist)

[Subscribe](#)[Share ▼](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[RSS](#)**Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- 115 entries to date. Down 13 from last year.
- Mainstream with Romantic Elements, Young Adult, and Series Action / Adventure categories did not make. Six categories made.
- First round scores due today.
- 2460 gross, \$1729.24 net.

**Hospitality: Michelle Welsh reported:**

- Need donations of writer's critiques to use as raffle items.

**Audio Librarian: Debra Owens was not present:**

- No Report

**Writing Incentives: Christine Crocker was not present. Suzan Butler reported:**

- Presented the report.
  - Pages written / edited:
    - Top 5 Most written:
      - 140 Suzan Butler
      - 137 Lavender Daye
      - 120 Roni Loren
      - 67 Cindy Dees
      - 50 Diana Bueno
    - Top 5 Most edited:
      - 475 Roni Loren
      - 322 Carolyn Williamson
      - 260 Suzan Butler
      - 227 Lisa Fenley
      - 200 Cindy Dees
  - Requested: Carolyn Williamson had four requests from Harlequin, Worth the Risk and Taking Chances with Patience Bloom and Six Days to Live and Evil Lurks Quietly with Katherine Pelz
  - Sold: Suzan Butler *Scoring His Heart*, Roni Loren *Yours All Along*, Marsha West *Second Act*, Jamie Wesley *Slammed Dunked by Love* and a second untitled novel, Mia London *Perfect Seduction* and *Perfect Surrender*,

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- No Report.

**Spotlights: Marty Tidwell was not present.**

- Chrissy Szarek is our spotlight for March.

**Unfinished Business:**

- No unfinished business to report.

**New Business:**

- No new business to report.

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*Email questions, comments, or articles to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org).*

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