



The Women Masters Interview with Linda Sivertsen

AMY: Welcome to the Women Master fall teleseminar series expert call with Linda Sivertsen. I hope that all of you are really ready to be inspired. It's so exciting to be talking about books today because I know that all of you on this call today have a book in you, and I know that studies really show that so many of us want to write a book, and so today you are going to have a breakthrough and understand how to actually do this, with our expert Linda Sivertsen. As most of you know my name is Amy Ahlers and I'm the creator of the Women Masters and the CEO of Wake-up Call Coaching, and my vision for this series is to allow people from all over the world access to the most respected and inspiring women experts of our time, so they can be inspired and motivated. I really like to call this the stimulus package for your spirit, and I want all of you on today's call to wake up and step even further into your power and genius. Just take a moment right now and breathe. Take a deep breathe and stop multi-tasking if you can, and just get into that space of receiving, because Linda's going to be sharing so much valuable information with us. She's such an inspiration; I'm so delighted to have her.

Linda Sivertsen is a highly sought after, award winning, bestselling author who loves helping writers get book deals. She's an expert book proposal coach—I like to call her the book proposal coach to the stars—and she's written proposals for clients that have garnered six and seven figure deals. Last year alone she wrote the proposals for and then co-authored two bestsellers, the New York Time's bestseller *Harmonic Wealth* with James Ray, and *Generation Green: The Ultimate Teen Guide to Living an Eco Friendly Life*, with her son Tosh. Linda really believes that is' time for you to write now because in these competitive days a book with your name on it increases your market value, your credibility, your opportunities and your professional profile every single way. Plus, it is fulfilling. With that, welcome, welcome to the fabulous Linda. Welcome!

LINDA: Amy, you're amazing. I think that you should introduce me at parties and family reunions.

AMY: I know, right?

LINDA: Thank you.

AMY: I love it. Done; invite me everywhere, I'll be your sidekick, no problem. I'm so glad to have you back on the series. For those of you who don't know, Linda was in the first Women Master series and talked to us all about going green and living green, and it was such a great call. I learned so much, so I really encourage all of you to check that out.

LINDA: Thank you. You sent me a picture of your daughter covered in avocado, all over her face, and I still have it on my refrigerator; I think it's one of the cutest little faces I've ever seen.

AMY: That was fun; I enjoyed that. I enjoyed sending that to you. I knew you'd appreciate it. It's really fun today to have you switch gears a bit and talk to all of these hundreds of people on the call today about writing a winning book proposal and having a book idea, and what the



heck do you do, so I want to just start by giving a frame of how does a book upgrade your career and increase your income.

LINDA: The most surprising thing for people who write books is how it changes their lives. We all want a big advance, we all want a lot of money up front, but even for people who get paid small advances, my first book I had a small advance. At that time Health Communications, who did all the Chicken Soup for the Soul books, they said we wouldn't give the Queen more than \$5,000, so all of us at the time, we only got \$5,000 up front, but what happened was I was able to see how having a book opens doors for you in ways in which I had never seen doors open for anybody, other than people, maybe, who had a television show. In our society books have an incredible amount of respect and there's something about being the author of a book that just makes people want to befriend you, it makes people look up to you, it makes people trust you, and especially if you're writing a book with a traditional publisher. Those publishing houses have such stellar reputations and for the most part they're seen as a pre-screener, so if Simon & Schuster or Random House or Crown or any of those imprints or names, if they give you a publishing contract, then the media and everybody else already trusts you and looks up to you. It's a really bizarre experience to be an author and suddenly have radical amounts of respect. In fact it was so odd that when it first happened to me, when I first started doing the media for my first book, Lives Charmed, I started having people be so nice to me that I thought oh my god, this must be what it's like to be a celebrity, and I started not trusting people, thinking, well, what do they want, because everybody wanted something. They wanted to get to my agent or my publisher or one of the celebrities in the book that I'd interviewed. One time I'm in this store and this girl, who was absolutely gorgeous and darling, wanted to take me out to dinner and I finally looked at her and I said, I don't mean to be jaded but can you tell me what it is that you want, and she looked at me and she started laughing, and she goes, Linda, I'm married into Tom Hanks' family, I don't need anything from you but friendship, and I learned right then and there never to be paranoid ever again.

AMY: Oh my lord, and I just love the story that you tell, and this is in your audio course which Linda, just so that all of you know, you're going to just love hearing all about Linda, and she's going to give us so much incredible information on this call and I really want to direct everyone to her website, called WinningBookProposals.com. She has this amazing audio class that she taped and it gives hours and hours of incredible information. I've done the audio class myself. I've almost finished all of it. I've done all of your particular classes, I haven't listened to all the expert interviews yet, but it is so valuable and I just wanted you to tell that story real quick, if you don't mind, about being in the closet, on the phone, getting interviewed for Lives Charmed.

LINDA: You mean the one where I was so broke I couldn't eat? That story?

AMY: Yes. I just think it's so funny.

LINDA: Okay, let me think back. At the time I had just written Lives Charmed and it had just been published with the Chicken Soup for the Soul publishers, so we had a lot of PR. I was on the radio pretty much every day, but at the same time, and I think all of you guys in your lives



have had this experience, where you're seen as an expert and maybe you're having amazing things happen in your life, but at the same time, on another level, the shit is hitting the fan and everything is going to pot, right? So here I am, I've got this book about being charmed, and suddenly, for the first time in my life I'm totally un-charmed. My husband had an operation and almost died on the operating table, and we had no money because he couldn't work for nine months. My best friend bailed on me. I had so many bad things happen all at once. Here I am, broke, I had to leave my house in New Mexico because we couldn't get cell service out in the forest, so here I am, I'm living in a crappy little apartment in Burbank so I can talk on the radio every day to promote my book, and literally, because my husband hadn't been able to work, I was now working at Trader Joe's, the late shift at night, stocking shelves with eighteen year olds, listening to "I'm Going to Hate You This Christmas," Marilyn Manson, at night, crying. But at the same time I'm on the radio. So I'm doing my little radio show and we couldn't afford food that night, so we had oatmeal for dinner, oatmeal and bananas; it was all we could afford for about a month. I'm in the closet and I'm doing a radio show with somebody from the east coast, and the radio host goes, Linda, how does it feel to be so successful? Here's the irony, right? I'm on CNN, I'm on E!, I'm on all these different programs, I'm on the radio every day, and I'm eating oatmeal every night.

AMY: Oh my gosh, I know that there's so many people . . .

LINDA: Are you sure you thought that was funny, Amy?

AMY: I think it's . . . well, I just love it because a) your story has such a beautiful ending because hello, co-authoring the New York Times bestseller Harmonic Wealth with James Ray, and I know that you've done so many amazing things, but it's that up-leveling that happens, as you put it on one of the calls, and I was like oh, I so understand, and sometimes it takes a while for the income to catch up with it, but talk about really going over, leaping several buildings in a single bound. It's just amazing what can happen.

LINDA: I think that when you trust in your dream, I mean it's really, for me, it's always been just about listening to that little whispering voice inside of me. I didn't finish college, I don't have my college degree, I was a dog walker in Beverly Hills and I had this dream that told me to write this book about my celebrity clients, and I just trusted and people seriously laughed at me at every step, and I just didn't care. I just always knew that I had something to say and I knew it was valuable, I knew it would help people. I just never, ever doubted it, and that doesn't mean I didn't get insecure and it didn't mean I didn't feel like sometimes I wasn't smart enough. All of those fears are normal and I think they're normal at every level. I work with bestselling authors, I work with award winning authors and they're just as insecure as everybody else, so those insecurities never go away, but you just have to trust that if you have the desire to do it, it's because God gave you that ability and you just have to go for it.

AMY: Yes. I love it and I think that is, it's about inspiring everyone on this call. If you have been, and like you said, I know that you've seen studies where it's like 75% of the population says I have a book in me.



- LINDA: You know what, Arielle Ford is one of my best friends in publishing. She just put out something today that said it's 82% of Americans desire to publish, and only 2% do. It's a pretty staggering discrepancy and I think now that I've worked with so many people, and people at high levels in the publishing business, and they tell me they're intimidated by this sort of fails process, they're intimidated by the book proposal. I get it. I get why people aren't doing it, because there's so many . . . first of all time-wise, people don't have time. There's never a good time to have a baby, there's never a good time to train a puppy and there's never a good time to write a book. I mean, we all get that, so people don't have time, they're intimidated, it's kind of expensive sometimes because you feel like if you really want to get support, you're sort of investing in your dream with no guarantee, so there's all sorts of reasons why people don't do it, and I'm just here to go hey, I had every reason and every year it just gets better. Every year it's easier for me to publish. I have that much more success. In this last book we just keep winning awards and getting, like Family Circle just did a big promotion thing on us, so every time I turn around something good is happening with very little effort now, because it all adds up, but you've got to start.
- AMY: Absolutely, so let's just invite everybody on this call, if you're sitting there going yeah, I do have that book, or maybe you're someone that's already starting writing it, or maybe you're through a proposal, maybe you're on your third book. I don't know, but let this call inspire you—you can do this—and getting help is obviously such a key part of that.
- LINDA: It really is, and I can help. All of us at my level, we all have our buddies who we call and say you know what, I'm too close to this; what the heck? This doesn't sound good.
- AMY: Yes, absolutely, absolutely, and I know that as a coach, I've coached so many clients through the book writing process and it's so amazing to witness it and to partner with people, and I know that you coach people through their book proposals. I want to get to the book proposal but I know that there's so much information out right now about self-publishing and then traditional publishing. Can you just give us an overview of what the heck the difference is and what that's all about?
- LINDA: Yes, sure. Really either or; they both work. Self-publishing is a great tool for people who want to just get it started, who maybe already have a really strong platform, meaning that they already have a way in which they can sell books; they have a fan base. One of my clients is a cop who was shot and blinded on a drug bust and he and I did a book together, and he actually self-published one on his own because he's a speaker and he's out there speaking 250 dates a year, and he can make a fortune with a self-published book, and he has. He invested maybe \$5,000 to start printing them and he's made \$350,000, which is more than a lot of advances, so for people who have a great fan base, self-publishing is fantastic. Or for people who can't get a publishing deal. I always say write your proposal because the proposal's going to be the blueprint for your book, so you need one whether or not you're going to self-publish or not, because it gives you the template for your whole book, and then you've already thought out everything you're going to need to promote it, even if you're promoting it on your own. You're going to have your hooks and your sound bites and your arc, all the different things that you need to go out there and really promote your own stuff, which isn't easy if you haven't thought it all through. The proposal is your map. But for



me, and again it's all personal, you just have to decide what it is you want, I wanted credibility and I wanted media, because I just had this inner feeling that I was going to be in this for the long haul, so traditional publishing is better for people in my situation because like I said before, publishing houses, when they give you their stamp of approval, they're saying to the world, we have pre-screened this person. In our book, Generation Green, when they say it's the ultimate teen guide to living an eco-friendly life and it's Simon & Schuster, who has the largest teen imprint in the world, the media immediately trusts us and when Teen Vogue or Family Circle comes to us, or Seventeen Prom or any of those magazines, they're not even asking questions, they're not asking us to prove anything because we've been pre-screened. But when you self-publish that's a lot trickier because there's so many people out there self-publishing, so I just always recommend try to write the proposal, if you're up for the task, write your proposal, see if you can get a deal traditionally. See if you can get somebody to pay you for your book, and even if you can't, then you have your blueprint, and you've already got a lot of it written, you've already got it all mapped out, so there's no waste of time, is what I'm saying.

AMY: I think one of the things I know for me, in writing my book, that really surprised me is I wrote my book and then I went and I was like okay, now I want to go get a publishing deal and I was shocked. I had no idea about the whole proposal. I was like, oh, and then all of the sudden I'm reading books and this and I have to tell everyone, I wish I would have taken your WinningBookProposals.com, your virtual class, at a minimum, before getting into the whole writing.

LINDA: Did it make it easier for you?

AMY: Oh, yes. Now I'm editing it, but I really want to encourage people that if you're thinking of writing a book and if you're not just one of those people that needs to get the book out, which some people are, but if you're not, write the proposal first, because it's like writing a whole other book.

LINDA: Well and that's why people are intimidated by it. In the old days it used to be you wrote your beautiful book, usually the book is inspired or channeled or it comes through you just magically because you're supposed to write it. Obviously there's a lot of hard work there but a lot of times, I mean, my uncle was a bestseller, a New York Times bestseller, and he wrote the thing in two weeks; the thing was just coming through him gangbusters. Then you have a book, just like I did—I wrote Lives Charmed first and then my agent was Jeff Herman at the time, who has a book out called Write the Perfect Book Proposal, so I sent him my entire manuscript, he loved it, he signed me, and I'm thinking, oh great, I'm going to have a book soon. Then he goes oh, by the way, you need a proposal. I had no idea what he was talking about. I was absolutely devastated because once you go to the trouble to write a book the last thing you want to do is write 100 pages of marketing about anything. Not that it has to be 100 pages, but my first one was, so it is intimidating and that is why I actually created the program that you're talking about, only because I had so many people calling me about helping them, and there was no physical way for me to do it all with my deadline, so I just thought okay, how can we break this down, how can we de-mystify the process. Everybody's intimidated, we all get it, okay, so how can we make it easy, because it is easy. It's just a



series of steps. That's why I included, as you saw, the templates and the proposals that already sold, sections of winning proposals, so that people could read them and go oh, god, it's not hard. I think we have something like seven and a half hours of taped tutorial, walking you through it, and I am glad it worked for you, Amy, because I didn't know how else to help people. I couldn't physically do it.

AMY: Yes, it's awesome. Again the website for that and by the way, Linda is, at the end of this call, Linda is going to be giving one lucky caller that WinningBookProposals.com virtual course for free, which . . . how much is that?

LINDA: The course is \$485. If I do it with somebody in person it's thousands of dollars, but I just wanted to make it affordable; it's \$485. We'll take \$50 off today if they order it by 5:00 today.

AMY: Oh, awesome!

LINDA: If they go online they're going to get just the \$485 template, so what they can do is they can e-mail my assistant and she can . . . I have her e-mail written right down here, and of course I don't know what I just did with it.

AMY: I have it right here. It's NCKottke@Gmail.com.

LINDA: Yes and if they're driving or something, they can also just go to the website and e-mail me. They can go to my website, which is DreamItGreen.com and just e-mail me, and we'll send a PayPal link with the \$50 off.

AMY: Great, and you can also just e-mail my office and I'll forward it all, if you're confused, so Admin@WakeUpCallCoaching.com, which is an e-mail you guys are used to. And at the end of the call we're going to give away this \$485 worth of material to one person, and I'm going to do it different, so you don't have to be in front of a computer, so thanks, Barbara, for your suggestion. I hope you're listening. We're going to do it a little different at the end of the call today for the winner.

Let's get back here. We've mentioned this whole book proposal thing. Let's say there's someone on the call that says okay, I have an idea for a book, I'm excited about it, I'm energized by it, and where do you start? What's the first step?

LINDA: Okay, so the first step is they have to really, really ask themselves if they're in love with the topic, if they understand the topic, because there are a lot of people who, especially in the New Age world, get really excited about, say, coincidences or magic and they think okay, I'm going to write a book about it, and the first thing to really think through is do you realistically have some level of expertise and passion, and it's all about passion. If you are really passionate about your topic you're going to be able to sell it in the end whether you're self-publishing or selling to a traditional publisher, but you will go the distance and it will work, but you have to ask yourself, do you really, really love this topic. That's the first thing, just to weed it out immediately. Do you love it and is this something you're aching to do? If that's the case then what you do is you really want to make sure that you're a good writer. Really, it



all boils down to a couple of things, and the first of which is the prose on the page. If you're a reader you know what sounds good and you just have to be really objective and look at yourself and say, am I good? If you're not on a level yet where you think that you are good, then get yourself into classes. Go to a local writing course or go to your college community course. Do something to really feed that, and practice. Everybody believes in practicing if you're an athlete; it's the same thing with writing. You really need to practice. Keep a diary, keep a journal, try to write every day and if you believe that you have all of those things, then you start getting really specific. On that web, DreamItGreen, we have downloads, free downloads, about what are some of my favorite proposal headings and sub headings. Start to investigate the business side of the business and find out what it is that people are looking for. What are agents and editors and everybody looking for? Then, like I said, you just make a series of steps, give yourself homework, give yourself realistic goals. One of the things that James and I wrote about in Harmonic Wealth is that people tend to overestimate what they can do in a year and underestimate what they can do in a decade, and I think that's brilliant. One of the reasons why I do write so many books is because I just do it every day. It's not a big deal. If you realize that if you only wrote one page a day, in a year you've got 365 pages, so it's not that hard. You just really have to start and try to give yourself some accountability. Maybe get a writing buddy, a writing partner, give each other homework. I certainly offer that as well with my clients, where I keep them on goal and have them deliver things to me, so find somebody in your life that you can do that with.

AMY: Great; really, really great. If you're someone that you feel like you have the chops already for writing or maybe you're someone that's taking classes right now, and I love the way that you put it, Linda, of a topic that you're aching to write, the book that you're aching to write, because it does take that sort of passion. It takes a long time to get a book written.

LINDA: Yes. You want it to be exciting because only then . . . it's like, you know how busy you are, Amy, with you daughter and with your business and with your husband and with your family and friends, and it's like what is it that's going to make you constantly deliver. You're only going to do it if it's something you're in love with. I joke and say that I always felt like I had another lover. I couldn't wait to get up in the middle of the night and write while I was a mom. It's like you've got to take care of the kid during the day and then at night you've got to sleep, but I set my alarm for 3 a.m. every single night so that I could write from 3 to 7 a.m. unencumbered, and never have to feel bad about it.

AMY: Oh my gosh; you're my hero.

LINDA: No, but that's the thing, but you know what I did? Okay, here's another extreme thing. I knew that I couldn't physically do that without being healthy, so I exercised every single day and I stopped eating junk food and I ate primarily raw food—I ate fruits and vegetables for years—and in fact at that time I was almost a vegetarian. I ate a very clean and clear diet and I led a very clean and clear life, so that I would have the energy, because how else can you wake yourself up at 3 a.m.?



- AMY: You crack me up. I'll never forget this on our last call, too. You were, like, yeah, you can eat raw foods, I mean, like today I had this beautiful bell pepper for lunch, and I was like okay, where's the quesadilla, where's the burrito, and can I please have a pizza?
- LINDA: Wait a minute, don't get me wrong, I just had peanut butter and jelly before I called you. Don't get me wrong, I still eat like a pig, but if you're under a deadline and you're stressed out and you've got a young kid, I mean, I don't anymore, so now I sleep a lot more, but I did. I had a young kid. You have to be willing to feed your passion and to take care of yourself, so that in the long run your art will take care of you.
- AMY: I love that, Linda. Take care of yourself so that your art can take care of you.
- LINDA: I mean, really, that's how it works because right now, some of your callers, if they know me, they know that my husband left me two years ago and I was married for 20 years. It was devastating and I look back and I think, oh my god, I can't believe I took so much time to take care of myself and my marriage. I took so much time to feed my art and now when I need it, my art is taking care of me.
- AMY: That's lovely, that's really lovely. I love it and I just think that it is about passion, it is about this and I know that there's people on this call right now that maybe are out of work right now, maybe they've gotten laid off, maybe they're in that situation, and so what an amazing time to think about writing a book.
- LINDA: It's also . . . I have had people call me, clients, and say you know, it's because I'm losing everything that I'm realizing there isn't a lot of guarantee in the 401(k)s and in the jobs and in this traditional life that we've all set up for ourselves, so if I'm not going to believe in my art now, when am I going to? It's almost like now is almost the best time, and I'm not saying by signing up with me, my god. My work is expensive. But sign up by just getting yourself a writing book at the bookstore. Go for Natalie Goldberg's writing books or like I said, The Perfect Book Proposal by Jeff Herman. Just start feeding your art. If you can't work with somebody like me, that doesn't mean you can't do it. I didn't work with anybody like me. I did it on my own, so don't allow your lack of money or time or anything stop you another day, is really what I'm trying to say.
- AMY: I love it. Give us a little bit of the elements, kind of the nuts and bolts of a proposal, and some of, maybe, your favorite strategies for getting that proposal done.
- LINDA: Sure. As I said, at DreamItGreen.com you can get the free downloads, which will give you the sections of a book proposal, and there are many, many sections, and you don't always have to include every section, either. Some proposals will have a hook page which I'll talk about a little bit, I'll talk about it in a minute, but I do think a hook page is really special and I want to go over that with the listeners. Every proposal's going to have, obviously, a cover page and a table of contents, so that an agent or an editor can find what they're looking for. They're going to have an overview, which briefly explains what's coming—what the book is about and why you're the best person to write it, and a little bit about who your market is.



Then you go into that more specifically in an actual market section and in About the Author section.

You're going to include a competition section, which talks about if _____, what books would people be reaching for. You don't want the agent or the editor to have to do the research for you and typically they don't want to hear that your book is the first one of its kind. Sometimes you can say that and sometimes that's okay, but for the most part they want to know what books are similar and how popular they are, because everybody loves a winner and it's okay to have something similar it just shows there's a big market for it.

Then you want to have a PR or a media section and it doesn't matter if you've never done PR or media in your life. I never had but I came up with all these ideas about what I would create and I outlined them in my proposal for Lives Charmed and it worked. I ended up getting . . . it was almost like I created a visualization or a blueprint for what I was going to have happen and it worked, and that's one of the things, that whole proposal is actually in the download course that we talked about earlier. I give away a lot of those things so people have visuals.

If you're speaking or you're teaching seminars or you have clients that are based, that you work with, that are based on things that you teach in your book, you would want to put a section about that. Obviously testimonials, and I talk a lot about that in the course, too, about how to get testimonials from friends, from family, from famous people, from people in your field that you don't know. There's a lot of different tools for getting those.

Obviously if you have a website, certainly if you have a great book idea and you have a title already in mind, always register the domain name if it's available, and always register your own name, too, first and last name, if it's available. Sometimes they won't be and that's okay, don't worry about that, but if you can, I would get that, and you certainly would want to talk about that in your proposal.

Then if you think that this is a series and you have spin off books, you would talk about that as well. Then you just let the agent or the editor know any specifics that are going to help your case—how quickly you can deliver the manuscript, if you're going to give anything to charity, any sample chapters that you can deliver—you would always want to put in chapter summaries, so this would explain to them, briefly, what the whole book looks like—any press clippings you have from the past, any media that you have that maybe you could put on a reel. There's a lot of different elements. I think, Amy, maybe we should go through the topic of the hook page because it does seem to be something that people get really excited about.

AMY: I love that, and I just again want to say if they go to DreamItGreen.com they'll be able to actually download something.

LINDA: Yes. DreamItGreen.com and there's a writing clients button, and that's where they'll find downloads for the book proposals. It just gives some of my headings and talks a little bit about it.

AMY: Great, and that's free?



LINDA: Yes.

AMY: Oh my gosh, that's great, so everybody, make sure to check that out. DreamItGreen.com and you can click on the book writing section there, that's great, and then the WinningBookProposals.com is about what you offer authors, for those people that are interested in finding out more about working with you.

LINDA: Yes, that's a whole course. It's nine hours of tapes and the \$250 _____; that's the whole kit.

AMY: Okay, so there's something for everyone here on the Women Masters calls.

LINDA: Yes, we've got to give as much value as possible, which is why I love to go through the hook page because I do think . . . I've had so many people ask me, they say how can I differentiate myself, how can I make this unique, my approach unique, because with so many people trying to get published, you really do want to make sure that what you're putting out there to agents or editors is really popping and really special. If they don't know you and don't know your enthusiasm and how fantastic you are in person, it's really all on the page, so whatever they see is all they're going to get, right, of you. So what I like to do is I like to start proposals with a hook page, and it's not necessary. I don't necessarily think I made this up, but I have talked to agents and editors who say that they very rarely ever see them, and that to them they're very powerful, so I do recommend that you use them. It's similar to an overview but it's short. It's almost like this is your hook, this is your media, the best thing that you could tell the media. I have here . . . I'm just going to actually read through a part of the download that we were talking about earlier, but what I say is: The hook page is not at all necessary. It is one of my favorite sections. If done correctly a hook page will grab the attention of your reader, agent, editors, interview subject, potential supporter and motivate him or her to read on with enthusiasm. Read the following samples and see what you can come up with on your own. If it's okay, I'll just read a few examples.

AMY: I would love that.

LINDA: Okay, so one of my clients is Rhonda Britten, who is a life coach. She won an Emmy on the show Starting Over, where she helped a lot of women in a house overcome all manner of obsessions and catastrophes, and Rhonda is the author of Fearless Living, and she has now four books. She came to me, she hadn't written yet, and she was speaking, and her hook was that her father had killed her mother when she was fourteen, in front of her. He had shot her mother and then he put the gun on her, changed his mind, and then shot himself, so she was witness to this whole act and it was terribly traumatic, and she tried to kill herself three times in the next couple of years. She wasn't very good at it, so she lived, and then she created a way for herself to get out of the fear, and then starting teaching how to live fearlessly. I really felt like we had a great potential with her, and I just said let's create a really powerful hook page. What we did was we started with these words, and this is at the top of just a blank piece of paper: Fear is a killer. It kills hopes, it kills dreams, it kills careers. It kills relationships. In a flash in killed my parents. It almost killed me. I'm sure you've heard of the bestselling book Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway. Some people just can't do it anyway.



Then what we did was we created two columns. On the left hand side it says My Past Existence and on the right hand side it says My Present Reality. Then we just juxtaposed the past to her present. The past was things like nightmares and then the present was peaceful sleep. The past was alcoholic; the present was sober twelve years. Her past was nervous breakdowns; the present was transformational breakthroughs. The past was three suicide attempts; the present was facilitator of grief groups. I love this one—this one is the past, dumped by therapist and then the present is teaches therapists at conventions. So it's just things like that, with the past and the present. Then we went into instead of going into a traditional overview, we went into nine pages of the murder suicide, and made it as riveting as possible. We outlined the whole day, her dad was coming to pick up her mom and they were all going to brunch for mother's day. What I tell people in my course is you don't have to be married to you have to have this section and this section and then this section. The book proposal, or anything that you send to anybody, is a very creative process. While you need to definitely have specific sections you can get very creative with how you outline things. Normally I would not start a proposal after a hook with nine pages of a personal story, but if the personal story is good enough, heck yeah.

So that was one.

AMY: I'll just say about Rhonda that she was a Women Master in the first series as well, so for those of you who want to know more about this incredible technique that Rhonda has for dealing with fear, you can absolutely check that out on the first series. She gave us a lot of really great value on that call, of how to deal with fear and her specific . . . the specific thing that she used to move from being suicidal to being an Emmy award winning life coach; amazing.

LINDA: Right. That's a great idea, because she's invaluable. Sometimes the hook can be as simple as a quote. I had a client named Nick Newmont and he's a psychic, and he's a numerologist, and I said you know what . . . he was telling me he had gone to some big television meeting and that the producer, a woman named Susan, had loved him and said all these glowing things about him and how good he was. I said, you know what, let's just write down her quote, let's ask her if it's okay, and it was, and then we just put it ahead of his hook page, and it was really effective. Then his hook page was just . . . let me give you one more quick example. At the top of the page we just said: Imagine how your life would change if you could . . . and then we had bullets—foresee stock market trends and predict the fluctuations of different stock. The next bullet, choose a name for your child or business that was guaranteed to thrive. The next bullet, know what numbers are lucky for you, regarding your address and phone number. Then we had two more: understand which friends or partners will bring the most joy and fulfillment into your life, and be forewarned of significant cycles for world events, leaders and celebrities ahead of time. I have to say, he was right. He told me that year that Britney Spears was going to take a huge fall and I so didn't believe him because she was at the top of her game, and then he talked about the world . . . he didn't say World Trade Center, but he said the towers are going to fall under Bush, so he was pretty good, so I felt like we were very accurate in what we were putting down on this hook page. But then he followed those bullets with: Everyone you know has important decisions to make at some point in their lives, regarding their address, phone number, e-mail address, children's



names, investments or even who to vote for in an election. We all wonder if we are making the right choices. Should predicting the future be left only to psychics? Everyone has a future and this author believes you should be able to predict your own. Then we just closed up the hook page with a short little ditty about him and the book: Numerology will be the first numerology book to hit mass appeal by empowering business oriented people with the ability to perform life and career changing calculations and predictions for themselves. The author, Nicholas Newmont, has accurately predicted all of the above on national radio and television, and in his classes and workshops, in boardrooms and in relationships. Readers throughout the world will embrace the opportunity to be able to do the same.

Like I said, hook pages are not a must have, but if you have something dramatic that you can put on the page, sometimes they're incredibly effective.

AMY: So great. When you look at how you were able to navigate this . . . because I know that there's probably a lot of people on the call right now that are saying, okay, I don't have that amazing story like Rhonda Britten or I don't have this ability to predict things like that. How do you get through that? How do you find that originality?

LINDA: Well, like I said, you don't have to do a hook. You can just start writing with the overview. In fact in my Lives Charmed proposal my overview was simple, and I'll just read it to you real quickly. I had no hook and the overview just said: In American society we are witnessing a bipolarization effect taking place. As many people thrive in exciting, creative and spiritually fulfilling lives, and equal or larger number of people face day after day of spiraling frustration and negativity. Then I just explained what the book was and said that we're going to give you a lot of great stories of people succeeding, so that you can stay focused on the positive. There was no hook there. Nothing big and nothing exciting, but the book itself had value.

AMY: Yes. I think most people do find the book proposal process intimidating. How did you navigate that? How did you figure that out?

LINDA: Like I said my agent was the expert. My agent had written the bible on the topic, and he basically just said go get my book. So I got his book and I was horrified. I was so depressed that I had already written the whole book, I had no idea I was going to have to do this new big thing, and I went and I got the book and I just started . . . I'm one of those people that is really, really good about taking direction, even if there isn't a lot there. I just really . . . I'm so passionate I just run with it, and I'm very obsessive about having to understand every conceivable which way. I got the book and I studied it for a year. I literally underlined every single word and I studied it for a year, and I wrote a proposal over and over. I wrote my proposal 50 times and then I sent it to him and he sent it out, and we got twelve rejections, but the rejections were fantastic. They really explained what was missing, what they still wanted, and I re-wrote it. I took another year and re-wrote it and by the time it went out we immediately got a deal, so I learned by doing. Then Rhonda came to me, Rhonda Britten, and Leeza Gibbons had done a show on Lives Charmed, and she came to me and said please will you write a proposal with me, and I thought, oh heck, I've only done it once. But I had confidence because I had worked so hard and I knew I knew what I was doing. When Health Communications bought my proposal it was a unanimous vote within the publishing



house, which is really rare. Publishers all get together, all the editorial and the art department and marketing, everybody gets together and votes on proposals, and they had told me it was very rare that you get a unanimous vote, so I thought you know, I think I'm good at this, I think I have a brain for this. My parents were very much into marketing and I think I was raised with that sort of business sense. I said yes to Rhonda and we created hers and it sold and it had a huge bidding war, like the president of Penguin was writing her love letters and the bidding war went for four days and she was a total unknown at the time. Then the proposal itself went overseas and sold in twelve countries, which is rare again. Usually your book has to be a bestseller here before it sells all over the place, so I just thought god, I think I'm good at this. It just kind of comes naturally to me and I think it's because I love it. My parents were total bookworms, my mom started a book club at Stanford University years and years ago that's still there today, and I was raised with book clubs, and my uncle was a bestselling author, so I always wanted to understand the machinations behind everything, so I'm just sort of in love with the whole process, so I think it comes easy to me. Since then, once you hang your shingle and have a little bit of success, it just keeps happening, so I think I just got smarter and smarter with each project.

AMY: What is one of the biggest mistakes that you would say people that are more green, newer starting out authors make?

LINDA: Oh gosh, there are so many. The first and foremost one that I see every single day: newbie writers repeat themselves. They'll use the same phrase or the same words in the same paragraph over again. One of the biggest red flags of a new writer is somebody who repeats themselves, who uses phrases that editors and agents don't like, things like the word so or pretty or very. There's red flag words, words that take up space but don't really add to anything. Or their work doesn't look professional. They have typos. I can't tell you how many people have come to me and said I have a great agent but my proposal's not selling, can you tell me why, and I'll read it and there's typos on the first page, and what happens is agents, surprisingly, don't always catch stuff. They're busy, they don't always read the next draft, sometimes they don't read the full proposal. I had a proposal once that came to me and it was talking about the Donahue Show and the Home Show, both of which had been off the air for years, and I just said you know what, your agent is crazy bones to be sending something out that's not accurate. Most agents are really good but they're not all trained as editors, and they're human and they miss stuff, and sometimes they don't even review it all, so I would say not getting somebody to proof your work. Everybody can find a local college English major or somebody to help them—a teacher—everybody can get help and I think it's desperately needed because we're all too close to our own work to be objective.

AMY: Right.

LINDA: So those are two of the biggest ones, and I would say the third biggest one is not knowing all the steps, not being clued into the business side and really making themselves aware of the business end and what people are looking for.



AMY: Absolutely. That's perfect because that's my next question, is what are agents, literary agents and editors looking for? What are they looking to find right now? What's their mindset?

LINDA: One of the reasons why I spent that time going over the hook page is because I think that they're really looking for exciting projects. They're looking for . . . one of the things that's cool to remember is these people want to learn, and yet they're seeing pretty much everything out there. Good agents and editors are seeing 500, 1,000 projects a week or a month, so they're seeing a huge cross section of stuff. You want to make sure that you have a fresh take. They definitely want things that are beautifully written. They want things that they're going to learn something from, so if you're an expert in your area and you think that your stuff is common knowledge, it probably isn't, and it certainly isn't to everybody, so you don't want to forget to say the most obvious things that are necessary, but to be able to put a fresh spin on it, or to be able to say it in a way that's a little bit different, and to use humor. It's so important to make things entertaining and to make things fun and funny, and to be self-deprecating. Don't take yourself too seriously. They want to see that you're smart about the industry. They don't have time to hold your hand, they just want you to know what you're doing, so know that the best way to sell books is to be speaking on your topic, and know what your topic is. If you're teaching self-help, if it is that you're writing self-help, you need to know that that's a real glutted arena, so there's certain things that you can do to really help your cause and one of them is to be speaking on the topic, and trying to get your message out there. You can be speaking for free or to local churches, but you need to be out there. They're looking for people who are connected online, who are doing things like Facebook and MySpace, who are willing to invest in a website. There's endless things that they're looking for, but they certainly want you to know what you're doing and to be really, really professional, as far as your proposal should never be single spaced, it should always be on a laser printer and look really crisp and clean and again, no typos, if you can help it.

AMY: Yes. Let's say that there's people out there that have a book proposal or they're like okay, so I write the book proposal. Talk to us a little bit about the process of finding an agent.

LINDA: Okay, so they say that the hardest thing to do outside of getting an editor is to get an agent. It is true that agents and editors turn away something like 95% of everything they see, so it's not necessarily an easy process, but the more prepared you are and the more ready you are the easier it is. I've never done it cold. I did it cold fifteen years ago, but I only picked one agent. I didn't do it "the right way." The way you're supposed to do it is you get a lot of agents' names. You can do that by going through the bookstore, seeing books that are similar to your topic and writing down their names, and finding out online; it's really easy to get people's addresses now, address or e-mail, and you send them a query. You tell them it's a multiple submission because if you're going to approach one agent at a time it's going to take you probably too long, because agents, sometimes they'll take months to get back to you. I did it all the wrong way, I just sent it . . . I only wanted Jeff Herman and I sent it just to Jeff Herman. It was amazing that he wanted it because that really is the slow boat to China. I did it all wrong, too; I sent him the whole manuscript, which is a really crazy don't. Really I should have sent a query letter, but I didn't know any better. With me, with my clients, I'm only successful if my people are successful, so I always try to get everybody agent ready and



- then I make those introductions if and when they're ready. Not everybody's willing to do the work it takes to get ready. Some people are amazing out of the gate and they're easy to introduce, and some people, when I tell them this, this and this you need to do, they say, mmm, I'll get back to you and I never hear from them again, so it just depends. But there are books that list agents. Jeff Herman has a great guide to literary agents, and you just scour them and find out who to send to, and make sure your query letter is fantastic and have a sample ready, and you're on your way.
- AMY: Awesome and I know that you can really see from being on this call a) that it's so inspiring and a tremendous amount of work to make it happen, so what makes it worthwhile, do you believe, Linda? You've worked with so many different people. Why bother? Why is it fulfilling to do this?
- LINDA: Oh my gosh, Amy, I know you know the answer to that. It's just about what's in your heart. Everybody has seen the people on television, the actors, who are talking to Regis and Regis says, is your daughter acting, and she's like yes, I told her not to, I said only do it if you have to do it, and it's about having to do it. It's about this makes you happy. I mean, I can sit and write for ten hours and it feels like a half hour. It's the thing that gets me up in the morning, it's the thing when something traumatic is happening in my life, which always happens—you know, both my parents have died and my husband left and last month I lost a cat and a dog, they're both gone—so it's like life can be really, really hard but the writing is the thing that you can't wait to get to. It's the thing that you can always give yourself. It's the thing that informs you and lightens you up and relieves you of the burden of carrying it all around in your head, and gets it up and out and makes sense of it. My favorite writer is Liz Gilbert. She's probably everybody's favorite writer right now, Eat, Pray, Love, and she said she wrote the book because she had to, to get through what she was going through, and it's sort of the thing that keeps you sane. In my opinion it's like meditation, only just easier.
- AMY: Right.
- LINDA: Because I'm not very quiet and I don't sit still that well.
- AMY: Oh my gosh, you're so funny. So again Linda, obviously, I know that everybody on this call is like I want to work with Linda, because you're just so lovable and know your stuff, but ways to get involved with working with Linda. So you have this incredible virtual course, which I personally have taken, and it's filled with valuable information. We got a little snapshot today, an overview, and you go so in-depth on this course. That's available at WinningBookProposals.com and then you also have this retreat coming up in Carmel, California.
- LINDA: Right.
- AMY: Tell us a little bit about that.
- LINDA: That's just so much fun, retreats, and I never thought in a million years I was going to be one of those teachers that does retreats, because I'm not a traveler, I don't care about that stuff.



But what happened, I did a teleseminar with James Ray's people and so many people wrote and said how can I work with you privately, we need to go somewhere, and I thought hmm. So we did a retreat in Breckenridge and now we're doing one in Carmel, November 2nd through the 6th, and I will say I'm so addicted now, I get it, because when do women, especially, ever give themselves time to just turn off the phone, not have to deal with children or dogs or dishes or anything, and go somewhere where it's just about their art. There's something . . . you'll see we do have the WinningBookProposals.com/Retreats has testimonials from people who, literally, almost everybody said it was the best week of their life, if not one of the best weeks, and Natalie and I felt the same way, too. We came home and we were floating for a week, and then we got depressed. We were like why can't we go back, because it was just women supporting each other. We read our work to each other, we go off and write privately all day, and then I work with everybody one on one. Then in the evenings we eat together and we read and we give feedback, and our first one was so much fun that now we have a monthly call where we just laugh and support each other because we're such good friends now. So it builds community and it's about really, really being there for yourself and your art, where you're focusing on nobody else, other than the women there, that you love, that you want to help support, but it was pretty magical. I don't even know that I can do it justice by putting it into words, but you can see a lot more about it on the site if you want.

AMY: Okay, great, so that's WinningBookProposals.com/Retreat, and I know that you're offering a \$500 discount off that retreat to people that are on this call. Whether you're on the call live or listening to the recording right now, let Linda know when you sign up, Linda and her amazing assistant Natalie, let her know that you're from the Women Master from Amy Ahlers and she'll give you a \$500 discount. I think you only have five spots left; is that right?

LINDA: That's it, yes.

AMY: Okay.

LINDA: We may do another one in January, I don't know. I'm on a couple of book deadlines right now so I'm pretty crazy, but we may.

AMY: Okay, great, and then you're also doing that \$50 off the audio course, so you can e-mail Natalie or e-mail us and we'll get you in touch with Natalie to get \$50 off the audio program, which is at WinningBookProposals.com.

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Then something that I always like to ask, Linda, all of our speakers, and we're going to give away, so don't go away you guys. We're going to give away, in a moment here, our big giveaway of an almost \$500 virtual course, so you're going to love that, so just one moment. I always like to ask the masters to just, if people take away one thing from this call, what's that one takeaway piece that you want to give them?

LINDA: I think it's just to reiterate, and I said don't repeat yourself too much in your writing, but I'm going to do it here, and I'm just going to repeat myself in a way to say that there's never really a good time to write a book, and it's true. There's never really a good time to have a kid and



sometimes the most valuable things we ever do in life are the hardest to make time for. I just . . . Toni Morrison, the Pulitzer Prize winning writer, she was on Oprah one day and she said that she had three little kids, I think at one point she was a single mom, and she said that she wrote at the edges of the day, and I've done that for years. Now I'm a full time writer, but I wasn't for a long time, and I just wrote whenever I could. I just think that because there's never a good time, because finally there's maybe never going to be a good time, that the reason why so few people in this country publish that say that they want to, is because the ones who do it are the ones that say you know what, I'm actually going to make time for it and nothing's going to stop me. I think it's that attitude of nothing stopping you that therefore makes sometimes divine intervention just sort of rush in, and things make way, and suddenly you have support, and help comes like you weren't expecting it, finances come that you weren't expecting, all because of the commitment. It's really that commitment that people say makes all the difference.

I'll just say real quickly, last week I thought you know, I have the time now to do television, I have . . . my son and I have just been going through so much with the divorce and we haven't had time for that, so the other day I said, you know Tosh, I think let's do some TV for Generation Green, that'll be fun. The Sundance Channel called us that day and they're coming to film Tosh and me here on Thursday, and I literally . . . the only difference was that I had just made a commitment.

AMY: Yes; got it. So making a commitment. So here's what we're going to do and Barbara, again, hopefully you're on the line; thank you so much for the suggestion. I know some of you aren't in front of a computer, so here's what I'm going to do. Go ahead, if you are interested in winning the Winning Book Proposals e-course that Linda has, \$485 is what's charged, and really it's worth thousands, press *6 on your phone right now and that's going to put you in a queue, and then I'm going to have Linda pick a number. Press *6 on your phone if you want to win that Winning Book Proposal. You're going to know you're the winner because you're going to hear your line un-muted, so just give me a number, Linda, between one and 25.

LINDA: Seventeen.

AMY: Seventeen, okay, so now I have to count. I'm going to go ahead and un-mute our winner, and if you hear your line un-muted you're a winner and you can say hello.

LAURA: Hello.

AMY: Hello, you're our winner. Who's this?

LAURA: My name's Rosa.

AMY: You won!

LAURA: That's awesome. I've been listening to your call and _____.

AMY: Excellent.



LINDA: That is so great. Amy, what a good idea.

AMY: Yay, and that was really Barbara that said you know, you've got to do something for those of us that are driving or whatever, and can't email, so congratulations. Here's what I need you to do. Go ahead and e-mail me, Amy@WakeUpCallCoaching.com, and we will then get you all the information, so that you can get that course.

LAURA: Thank you so much. I'm so excited; this is amazing.

AMY: My pleasure. I'm going to go ahead and un-mute the entire line for everyone, so please take a moment and go ahead and say your thank-yous to the amazing Linda Sivertsen. Check out her website, WinningBookProposals.com. Linda thank you so very much.

LINDA: My pleasure, Amy; thank you.

AMY: I'm going to un-mute everyone.