



Improve Your Writing and Sell More Books Using Beta Readers: What Every Writer Needs to Know

by [Cherie Postill](#)

Every new product is beta tested to uncover problems and validate strengths before launching to the mass market. The results drive the direction of manufacturing and marketing. I know this from working with global product marketing giants like Anheuser-Busch, 7-Up, Nestle Purina, Rawlings Sporting Goods, and AT&T. Beta testing isn't an option. It is a prerequisite, and manuscripts are no exception.



Cherie Postill

When I completed my first manuscript, I began looking for existing methods to beta test a novel. I found excellent blog posts written by literary professionals offering a wide variety of information. I discovered bits and pieces of advice scattered like an unfinished puzzle, including varying descriptions of what

**7 pm, February 10
via Zoom**

beta readers are, how to use them, and why they are important to writers. I could not find a comprehensive strategy to pull all the information together or even a method for writers to implement the process.

As an author, I had to know if my target audience would relate to my characters, love the plot, and keep reading my story. I needed that confirmation before writing further or paying professional editors and book designers. My story needed beta testers; more precisely, beta readers. So I began my own beta testing. I made mistakes, added changes, and retested until I got it right. My new book, *How to Train a Beta Reader and Sell More Books*, is the result of my research and testing.

Continued on page 2.

Join us on February 10 and learn how to "Improve Your Writing and Sell More Books Using Beta Readers," featuring Cherie Postill.

Cherie Postill is a speaker, marketing professional, and the author of *How to Train a Beta Reader and Sell More Books*, a nonfiction guide for writers. Her debut fiction novel for middle-grade readers and the first in a planned series, *Cory Summers and the Wrath of Naytas*, is scheduled for publication in Fall 2021. She is a member of the SLPA, a vice president on the board of the St. Louis Writers Guild, serves as a liaison for more than 21 school districts, and also teaches workshops for young writers in grades 4-12.

Visit Cherie at cpostill.com.

ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS:

Sign-up is free. You can join from your smartphone, computer or tablet. If it's your first time, follow the prompts and allow it to access your camera and microphone. Click on this link for the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>. Meeting ID is 867 8214 4399. Password is 668448.

The Memoir Process: Turning Tragedy Into Triumph featuring [Patrick P. Long](#)

Join the St. Louis Publishers Association on March 10 at our next monthly Zoom meeting for *The Memoir Process – Turning Tragedy Into Triumph*, featuring SLPA member [Patrick P. Long](#) (featured in our [August 2020 newsletter](#)). Patrick will share details of his journey from writing to publishing to promotion, and the lessons learned along the way.

In March of 2019, Patrick's wife, Melanie, passed from breast cancer. In the months that followed, Patrick was compelled to tell their story, but was too grief stricken to engage fully in the writing. Refusing to give up, he continued writing notes and outlining the story while talking to friends and family about Melanie and their lives. After a few months, he found his voice, the story began to flow, and he started writing.

Several months later, Patrick completed the manuscript and dove into the process of publishing his story beginning with an extensive editing process. With the memoir successfully published and launched, Patrick quickly learned that his journey was just beginning.



Patrick Long

He partnered with the American Cancer Society and Camp Kesem, a camp for kids who have a parent with cancer. He landed interviews on [Fox 2 News](#) in St. Louis and [St. Louis Public Radio](#), made multiple appearances on podcasts and radio shows, and was featured in several magazines.

Continued on page 2.

UPCOMING EVENTS

via ZOOM

February 10, 7–8:30pm
Improve Your Writing and Sell More Books Using Beta Readers
with [Cherie Postill](#)

<https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>

March 10, 7–8:30pm
The Memoir Process—Turning Tragedy Into Triumph
featuring [Patrick P. Long](#)
(meeting ID link will be provided on the website in March)

Using Beta Readers continued from page 1.

Beta readers are an incredible writer’s asset, yet they are often overlooked and frequently misunderstood. In my book I’ll show you how to identify, locate, and use beta readers. The included questionnaire and tool kit are the main ingredients in a recipe that will give you a window into your reader’s mind.

Your beta readers will give you actionable feedback to improve and validate the quality of your manuscript. You will also get reviews, referrals, and book comps (comparable titles) to use in query letters, promotional materials, and on your book cover.

In today’s crowded market, your manuscript needs to stand out more than ever. The methods outlined in *How to Train a Beta Reader and Sell More Books* will give you a competitive advantage and make you a better writer. Not only will you perfect your story for your target audience, but you will also learn where to find your ideal readers, use their input to attract a loyal fan base, and sell more books.

Memoir Process continued from page 1.

Quickly learning the value of networking, connections, and trusted referrals, Patrick engaged with coaches and publicity programs and continued seeking promotional opportunities, including speaking engagements. He was interviewed by Jack Canfield, co-author of the bestselling *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, after Jack heard of Patrick’s book through mutual connections.

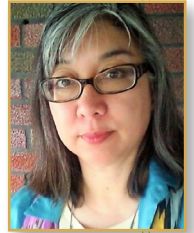
After several months of promotion and publicity, Patrick isn’t slowing down. He is expecting 2021 to be a transformational year in his career and is diligently working to expand his network and his promotional efforts even more.

Patrick P. Long is a widower and father of four young kids. He lives in St. Louis where he was born and raised. While pursuing his lifelong ambition of being a writer, Patrick has earned his living as a systems engineer and database architect.

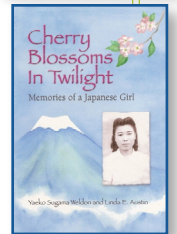
Connect with him at patrickplong.com.

KUDOS CORNER

SLPA Member:
Linda Austin



SLPA Board Treasurer **Linda Austin** began her professional career as an author when she wrote and published her mother’s memoir, *Cherry Blossoms in Twilight*, detailing stories of growing up in Japan during the Depression, World War II, and the Occupation. On February 13 Linda will be the featured speaker, along with SLPA member Vivian Gibson, for “The Art of Memoir: Capturing life, culture and history,” hosted by the [Missouri Professional Communicators](#), a state professional development organization that advances communications opportunities, equity, and excellence. Vivian is author of the memoir *The Last Children of Mill Creek*.



As an advocate for life writing and memoirs, Linda is dedicated to helping people tell their stories and leave a lasting legacy for family and friends.

Visit Linda at moonbridgebooks.com



LAST MONTH’S RECAP: Video Content Creation for Indie Authors – Simplified



EG MEDIA GROUP
CREATE · CONNECT · CONVERT

Special thanks to Noah Benoit, Ted Sloan, and SLPA member Scott Ragain of EG Media Group, for sharing behind-the-scenes details with valuable tips about “Video Content Creation for Indie Authors – Simplified” during last month’s meeting. Visit EG Media Group at egmediagroup.com/welcome-home.

WHY you should use Video Marketing/Branding

- Share your brand
- Effective way to connect to your audience
- Establish yourself as a legitimate author

HOW you can use Video Marketing/Branding

- **VLOGS**—Post consistently, at least once per week. The more you interact, the higher you will rank on web searches.
- **Q&A**—Pre-set your questions so you’re in control. Include family, friends, and fans for an interactive experience.
- **Testimonials**—This is your opportunity to include dedicated fans. Trade endorsements with other writers.
- **Your Author’s Journey**—Share your process from start to finish. Include details about your research, character origins, story concepts, and future projects.
- **Challenges and Giveaways**—Interact with your audience. Dress up as your favorite character or include promos for merchandise like shirts, hats, cups, etc.

- **Book Trailers**—Use as a mini commercial to promote your books. Be creative. It can be as simple as a slideshow or be a full recording with actors and props. Platforms like iMovie can transform your videos into a memorable experience.

WHERE you can reach your audience through Video Marketing/Branding

- **Instagram** is better for short videos (60 seconds or less).
- **YouTube** ranks longer videos higher. Why? The amount of time a viewer’s eyes remain focused on the screen is primary (3–5 minutes of steady viewing is great).
- Long-form videos perform better on **Facebook**. Items to include in your post: title, announcement, hook, key points, call-to-action, last point of contact, and hashtags.

Your videos don’t need to go viral to be successful—they can be educational, entertaining, or heartfelt. Just let your personality shine through and have fun!



Meetings on the second Wednesday of the month

In-person gatherings are suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions. All meetings will be held online until further notice.

Admission and Membership

- Monthly meetings on Zoom are FREE
- **Membership is \$60 per year.**

Visit: stlouispublishers.org/join
stlouispublishers.org/benefits

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Editor: [Kerri Holloway](#)
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