

# 5 Ways to Immediately Connect With Readers

**A Writer's Action Guide  
by Dan Blank**

Thank you for showing up and taking control of your writing life. In this guide, I am going to take you through five simple actions that will supercharge your ability to create meaningful connections with readers.

This is not about gaming social media to get 'likes' and 'follows' that feel hollow. You need to truly connect with readers in a way that feels fulfilling.

Everything I share here is based on my work in the trenches with thousands of writers. These are the actions that serious authors take to ensure their writing truly connects with people.

Let's get started...

-Dan



Step #1:

Avoid  
“Best  
Practices”



Too many writers believe they should seek best practices when what they really want is a shortcut. They want to know exactly what worked for others, then they do it half-baked. They want to see the 20 steps that worked for someone else, then do the eight steps that they are most comfortable with and can do most easily.

The problem? They end up with an inadequate copy of a copy of a copy. Then they are disappointed when this doesn't lead to success.

Researching “best practices” is something we justify because we want to feel we are preparing to do things smartly. The reality is we are waiting until we feel less afraid, or the world makes it safer with established, accepted practices. We tell ourselves this research is to make “informed choices,” so we delay action.

Instead, you are duplicating strategies that thousands of others are imitating at the same time, which are often tactics that worked for someone else—once—two years ago, and now deliver a tiny fraction of the value it delivered that one time.

Most people I know are overwhelmed by this type of secondary research. They have a never-ending pile of “best practices” to go through—hundreds of blog posts, webinars and courses, all of which are selling them tactics to copy. Every week I speak to a creative professional who bemoans “all the things expected of them.” The problem? They are so busy chasing all of these “best practices” that they never feel like they are developing meaningful practices that work for them and grow over time.

I want to encourage you to do primary research in consistent and action-oriented ways. While there are many benefits, these two reasons are critical:

- To truly understand who the ideal audience for your work is. Not in vague demographics, but because you have met them, and have a deep experience of understanding what engages them and why. You can put names and faces to them.
- To develop colleagues. To find others who work in your genre or topic, advocate for that kind of writing, and care about the same audience of readers.

# Take Action:

Instead of asking yourself, "How many new people have I reached this week? How many new 'likes' and 'follows'?", ask yourself "What have I learned about my ideal reader this week?."

If you do that each week, you will have collected 52 insights in the next year. This becomes the foundation for your platform and marketing, and one that is 100% unique to you.

Go to your calendar, and every Friday for the next month add in a prompt: "What have I learned about my ideal readers this week?"

Step #2:

Discover the  
Voice of the  
Reader



I speak to a lot of authors who feel distant from the publishing world. They feel like outsiders because they don't live in New York City or have never met another author. But... you have a key to understanding the most important part of the publishing world: the voice of the reader.

Most people think of Amazon.com as a marketplace for books, and nearly everything else. I want you to change your perception of it, and instead see it as a research database where millions of readers have shared with you what they read and why they loved it.

For a historical fiction author I was working with, we began with Diana Gabaldon's book *Outlander*. In studying the tens of thousands of reviews for *Outlander*, I began to notice a couple of trends:

- Many readers said they don't normally read romance novels, but they loved this one and its romance elements.
- Many readers only mentioned the historical accuracy as a secondary reason they liked the book. For instance, if their review was three paragraphs long, they would talk about the story and romance in the first paragraph, the historical detail in the second paragraph, and the romance in the third paragraph.



Why are these things important? The first item illustrated that readers were sucked into story elements that they have resisted in the past. They seemed to take pride in never having read a romance novel before, almost as if they looked down on them. In the reviews, they encouraged other non-romance genre readers to give this book a try.

For the second item, many historical fiction authors take pride in all of the historical research they have done in writing the book. They want to put it all in because they feel it gives the book a sense of accuracy and weight.

However, the reviews are telling us that readers want is to be sucked into a story, not a history lesson. They want to feel a human connection to the characters and contexts. For someone who writes historical fiction who wants to engage readers in a way similar to Diane Gabaldon, they should focus on engaging readers with the human side of their novels.

# Take Action:

1. Go to Amazon.com and find a popular book published in the past five years in the genre or topic you write about.
2. Read the reviews. All of them. Look for statements that come up again and again and make note of them. Elements that engrossed the readers, surprised them, or turned them off.
3. Identify some keywords or phrases that come up again and again in reviews. Then, in the reviews area, you will notice a search box. Type in those keywords or phrases to see how often they come up in other reviews.
4. Identify three insights that helped you understand what engaged readers and what turned them off.
5. Identify how you can use those insights to describe your own writing and in other areas of your author platform.

Step #3:

What is the  
Identity Your  
Reader Seeks?



The books people read help define who they are. A book may reframe how the reader sees the world, or it makes them feel understood for the first time. Perhaps it takes them somewhere they never knew they wanted to go, but once they arrived they felt they never wanted to leave.

This is part of the process of becoming who they want to be, and the narratives by which they experience the world. When you understand the narratives your ideal audience seeks, you know how to grab their attention, how to get them to lean in and listen, and to become so enamored with what you share they can't help but tell their friends.

Isn't that the heart of what writers want? To not just get attention, but change people's lives and get people talking? It's more than just "word-of-mouth marketing," it is the idea that your writing is truly connecting to someone and creating conversations.

# Take Action:

Ask people what they read and why. It doesn't matter who these people are or what they've read. They can be a friend or colleague, or a stranger sitting next to you at a local cafe. You can ask questions such as:

- What was it about the book that stuck with them weeks, months or even years after they read it.
- What was the most unexpected part of it, the element that got them thinking or surprised them.

If you know exactly the types of books you write (or would like to write), yes, you can make an effort to seek out readers of that specific genre or topic. But you don't need to. Just talking to readers about books will tell you a lot about why they read them.

# Take Action:

Then, take out an index card and create a Reader Trading Card. Write their name on the top. Then write down the name of the book (or books) they mentioned and why they loved this book. Extra credit if you draw the book cover and a simple illustration of the reader!

Become a student of readers — of why they read and how books affect them. This will quickly tell you the identity your readers seek and what lights them up, gets their attention, and gets them talking.

Then, use these cards to make decisions about what you share and where you share it. Are you wondering if you should spend more time on Twitter? Look at your Reader Trading Cards and ask, “Do these readers spend time on Twitter? If so, what do they love reading and sharing on Twitter.” This is a system to make proactive decisions based on the readers you hope to reach.

Step #4:

Share  
Your  
Story



Are you unsure of what you could possibly share with the world on social media, a blog, newsletter, or podcast?

Share your process. Why you write, how you create, the experiences you have, the people you meet, the wisdom you pick up.

This helps create a meaningful — and human — connection with your work. Too many writers share what they create — “buy my book, buy my book!” — but not a connection to the deeper reasons why they write.

Instead of creating some fake “author brand,” simply document what lights you up each day.

Writing opens us up to new worlds, characters, and stories that help us experience our own lives in new ways, and help us develop our own sense of self.

Make this the center of what you share online and off.



# Take Action:

Consider these three ideas you can share:

1. **A compelling STORY.** Share why you write what you do, what excites you about other books similar to yours, and what aspects of this process fill you with joy and wonder.
2. **Your life as a WRITER.** Share the process of creating, the ups and downs. Bring others into your story as it unfolds.
3. **The TOPICS that light you up.** What did you see or experience this week that inspired you?

Then forge meaningful connections by sharing it in one of the following ways:

1. **A longer text update** on social media. If you are on Twitter, it can even be a series of Tweets back to back. Take people deeper.
2. **A photo update** on social media (e.g.: Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter.) Humans are visual creatures — find a way to engage people by leveraging that. Even simply sharing your face is a powerful way to connect with someone.
3. **Or, simply share it with someone you know** via email, letter, phone, or in-person. Sharing who you are and what you care about is a habit that can begin wherever you are, with whomever you are with.

# Example #1

Here is one example of sharing a simple image and social media update of something that inspires you. On Instagram, I shared a quote from Fred Rogers that inspires me. The text update was simple: "Hanging on the wall of my studio..." The fact this is a physical artifact that hangs in my studio makes it more personal than if I just copied a quote and shared it digitally.

The image is simple as well: a photo of Fred Rogers and the quote. This took zero risk on my part.

I quickly got more than 60 likes from it, plus five comments, all from writers.



## Example #2

Here is an example of a longer and more personal update. In this Instagram post, author and illustrator Rebecca Green talks openly about coping with creative burnout.

The text portion is 314 words. If you talked to a “social media guru,” they would likely tell you that Instagram posts have to be short and flippant and fun.

But that isn’t what Rebecca did. She went deep. The result? More than 10,000 likes and 275 comments of support.

For the photo, she didn’t have to take a photo of herself crying, she instead shared one of her illustrations. We each get to determine our own boundaries of what we share online.



Step #5:

Connect to  
a Person Not  
an Audience



Connect to a person, not an audience

If you can have a single conversation that connects your writing with someone who appreciates it, you have cracked the code.

If you can do this once, you can do it twice. Fifty times. A hundred times.

In doing so, you are no longer guessing at what attracts people to your work. You now understand why they love your work — you understand this on a human level, not as some vague demographic.

When you know this, everything becomes clear.

You know where to show up online and off to meet these people. You know what questions to ask and what things to say. You know if you need to send a newsletter or start a blog. You know what to write in an email to get someone's attention, for them to see you as someone who "gets them" instead of someone spamming them.

Too many people desperate to build an audience begin with social media. Don't. Start with one human being.

# Take Action:

For this exercise, I want to flip things. Instead of reaching out to a reader (as we have done in previous steps), I want you to email an author instead. Someone whose book you read recently and you enjoyed.

Look the author up via Google, and see if their website has an email address or contact form on their "Contact" page.

Then, write them an email of thanks. Be specific about which book you read and the sections that resonated most with you. Be sure to overtly thank them. Don't ask anything of them, don't try to promote your own work.

When I give this assignment to writers, they often share their objections: how an author would never write back, or how this email will be a disruption in their day.

But the results astound them: more often than not, this email is not only received, not only read, but cherished by the author. It reminds them that their work is truly connecting with another human being and that it matters deeply.

If you hope to have readers connect with you, then start by modeling that behavior and being generous to other writers.

Then, repeat the process. Keep caring. Keep listening. Keep sharing who you are.

# How Can I Help?

Email me and let me know how this guide helped you: [dan@wegrowmedia.com](mailto:dan@wegrowmedia.com). I am happy to answer any question you have, or to hop on a 15 minute call to provide any additional advice.

If you want to dig in more to this topic, please consider taking the following actions:

- Read my book: [\*Be the Gateway: A Practical Guide to Sharing Your Creative Work and Engaging an Audience\*](#)
- If you want a support system to explore these concepts, consider joining myself and a small group of other writers in my next Creative Shift Mastermind. [Click here to learn more.](#)
- If you need a co-pilot to connect with readers or launch your book, [check out my one-on-one consulting services.](#)

Thanks!

-Dan Blank

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