



BY TIM GRAHL

I get a lot of email from authors asking for my help. And I love it, really I do.

The whole reason I do what I do is to help authors get their books into the hands of more readers. Any time I can help an author reach more people, it makes me happy.

Unfortunately, many of the emails that authors send me are written in a way that makes it hard for me to help them.

Reaching out—the right way

A big part of my success has been due to my ability to surround myself with people who are way smarter than I am. Input from other authors and business people—clients, colleagues and mentors—has dramatically aided me in getting where I am today.

[We all need each other](#). We all need people who have walked similar roads to help show us the way, and to help us step over the pits and potholes that so many of

us fall into. I believe in that process.

But I see many people making fundamental mistakes when reaching out to their chosen mentors and advisors. Those mistakes keep them from making great connections with people who are in a position to help them.

I'm going to walk you through the right way to reach out and connect with amazing people who can help you reach your goals.

I offer this advice based on three important perspectives:

- I live in Lynchburg, Virginia. I'm at least three hours from anything that could be called a major city. I've had to do the vast majority of my relationship-building remotely.
- I know what it's like to feel like a "nobody" reaching out to a bunch of somebodies.
- As I've become a quasi-, low-level "somebody," I've

come to see what it's like to have people who are just getting started reach out to you for help and advice.

Put these in your toolbox

These tools will help you get connected in the right way, so you can start building the relationships that will help lead you to success:

1. Get into the right mindset.

You cannot, in any way, have unhealthy expectations regarding the person you're reaching out to.

If you've got a copy of my book [Your First 1000 Copies](#), **re-read the first six sections of the Outreach chapter** (pages 80–87 in the print edition).

If you feel you are owed something—and that you'll be angry if you don't get the response you want—stop now and re-route your thinking, or don't contact this person at all.

2. Take a calculated risk.

This is a good time to exercise [your experimental side](#). Of course, not everybody you reach out to will respond and be helpful, but some will.

Take a risk and put yourself out there. It's no fun to be ignored or to get a “no,” but it's much worse to never even try.

3. Start with the B-listers.

There are only ever a handful of A-listers, and most people are trying to get help from them.

So many people forget that the B-listers are also having a lot of success, and are **much more available to help unknown authors than the A-listers are.**

Everyone is clamoring for help from Stephen King, John Grisham and Malcolm Gladwell. Shoot for authors who are selling tens of thousands of copies of their books, not

millions.

They're still seeing a lot of success, and probably have more time on their hands—and a greater inclination to help you—than the bigger names do.

4. Keep it short.

I honestly wish I could sit down and have a long afternoon coffee session with every single one of you. I love hearing author's stories and giving advice that's specific to their situation. However, as you can imagine, that doesn't scale very well, given how crowded my work week is.

The same goes for email. When you send out a message, keep it short! Don't share your entire life story. Don't share a lot of needless details. Get right to the point.

If you show respect for this person and their time, they will be far more likely to respond in a timely and respectful way.

5. Do your research.

I once received an email from someone who claimed to have read my book and all of the articles on the [Out:think website](#). They then launched into a bunch of questions regarding the intricacies of building a following on social media.

If you've read or listened to [anything I've said about social media](#), then you'll know this isn't a good place to start with me. I never even responded.

Every answer this person needed is easily findable in my book or on the [Out:think website](#). *Do your research first!*

Read this person's blog posts. Listen to their podcast interviews. Read their books. If *you're* not willing to invest time in your own learning, why should they?

6. Ask a specific question.

Please do not send a huge backstory of what's gone wrong (see #1) and then ask a question like "What should

I do now?” A big, ambiguous question like that would require a lot of back-and-forth emailing to sift through it all.

When you send an email to someone who is an established authority or success story in their field, *ask just one or two specific questions* that can be answered quickly and concisely.

7. Take their advice, then report back.

Most people ask for advice, get advice, then promptly do the opposite, or never act on the advice at all. Please, don't be this person.

People love to help other people. Every author I've worked with loves to add positively to other people's lives. But after they've gotten burned by advising a lot of people who never act on their advice, it's hard to keep trying.

However, if you're respectful of them and their time, do your research, ask a specific question, then promptly

implement the advice—you become someone they love to help, and will keep on helping.

Case Study: Do it this way...

A good friend of mine used this method to get a very prominent and successful author to become his mentor:

First, he read everything the author had published—in this case, two books.

Second, he listened to every podcast interview with that author that he could find.

Third, he took a specific problem he was having and sent the author an email asking for advice. That quick, concise, thoughtfully worded email showed he had done his research. And most importantly, it was something the author could answer very quickly.

The author almost immediately responded with a short email, answering his specific question and giving a bit of advice.

Fourth, my friend *immediately dropped everything* and implemented that advice. He then fired back an email the following day, describing the results and asking a short follow-up question.

The author then sent my friend *his personal phone number* and told him to give him a call.

Now, tell me: What do you think would have happened if my friend had instead sent a 500-word email describing his entire background, then asked a vague, open-ended question that the author had already answered in one of his books?

Exactly.

Get in their corner, and they'll get in yours

It's no fun to feel alone on your journey. It's also extremely frustrating to repeatedly make the same mistakes that so many others have made. Take the time to

connect in the right way with those who have walked the same road and found success.

You will reach your goals much faster. You'll also be inspired and encouraged by the company you meet along the way.

Thanks for Reading!

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