

BY TIM GRAHL

I cannot overstate the importance of picking the right title for your book.

That title is the handful of words people will use to make a split-second decision: to either click onto your book or to move onto the next.

When it comes time to actually deciding on a title, it can be very hard to figure out the right choice. How can you know that you're picking the right title? How can you know that one title is better than all the others?

As I've worked with authors, I'm constantly surprised by the methods even top publishers use to make their decisions. It often starts with these two words: "I feel."

"I feel like X will get people more interested than Y."

"I feel like X embodies the ideas in the book better than Y."

"I feel like X will convert better."

Here's the problem: Your feelings are probably wrong.

You, your partner, your friend, your editor and your readers are too close to the project, and know too much about you. Anybody who has read your stuff before or is involved in getting your book out into the world is going to make a biased decision, based on the fact that they are already familiar with your work.

That would be fine if you were only selling the book to your existing fans. But you want this to be a title that new people—people who have never heard of you before—will click on and buy.

## Throw out the feelings and get some data

The first thing we need to do is to stop basing our decisions on everyone's feelings. This will only steer us wrong. Instead, we need to get some data.

When it comes to book titles, this is the kind of data we're looking for:

- 1. Unbiased.** The final data has to come from people who don't know you. We need strangers.
- 2. A/B split.** People should choose between just two potential titles at a time.
- 3. Numbers.** We need more than five or 10 people. We need to test titles on hundreds of people.

If we can get a large number of people who have never heard of you to make a split-second decision between two different potential titles, we'll be able to see exactly what strangers will think when the title of your new book shows up on Amazon, Twitter or anywhere else.

But how can you possibly find these people and run these tests?

## How to test and find the perfect book title

When I was trying to choose the title for what would become *Your First 1000 Copies*, I knew I was too close to the project to choose objectively. My favorite title was

*Relentlessly Helpful*. When I asked a friend of mine if he liked it, he said "Tim, that's a horrible title."

I'd *felt* that that title nicely summed up the principle behind the book. However, as you'll see shortly, my friend was right. It was a horrible title.

*If I had stuck with my gut on the title of my book, I would have made a huge mistake.*

Instead, I used a proven process to pick the perfect title for my book. You can use the exact same method to find your perfect title, and skip those wasted nights lying awake, wondering if you made a huge mistake.

### 1. Get lots of suggestions.

The first thing you need is a list of potential titles. I recommend at least six, but the more the better. Where do you get the titles?

**Past Readers.** People who already know your work. You can send them a short synopsis of the book and then get

their input. This is a great time to use your own website, social media or email list.

**Early Readers.** Who read early drafts of the work? Get them to provide potential titles as well.

Here's a few that were on my list of eight titles for testing:

- Relentlessly Helpful
- The Connected Author
- Don't Be An Asshole

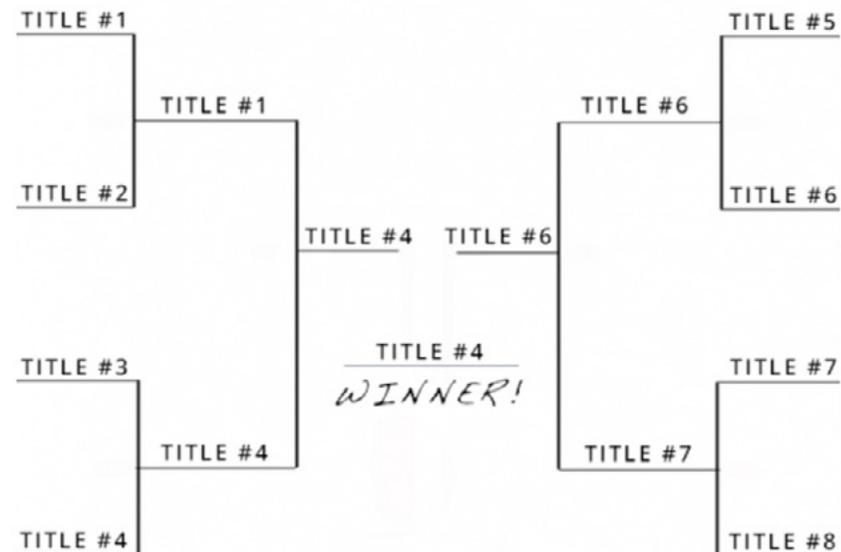
Once I had the title set using this process, I also did it for subtitles:

- Winning in the New World of Book Marketing
- The New How-to of Book Marketing
- The Breakthrough Guide to Book Marketing

Once you have your list of at least six titles, you move on to step #2.

## 2. Create a bracket system.

If you've ever been involved in the March Madness basketball championships, then you know about the bracket system. If not, here's what it looks like:



[\[Click here to download an empty PDF version to print\]](#)

Print out a clean version of the above, and write in your titles on the first few lines. We're going to pit the titles against each other to find out which one is the best.

### 3. A/B split test the titles against each other.

A/B split testing is a method for validating which title out of two options a person is most likely to be interested in. Testing only two titles at a time makes the choice simpler for the responders—and we’re more likely to get a split-second decision.

The tool that I use for A/B split testing titles is [PickFu](#).

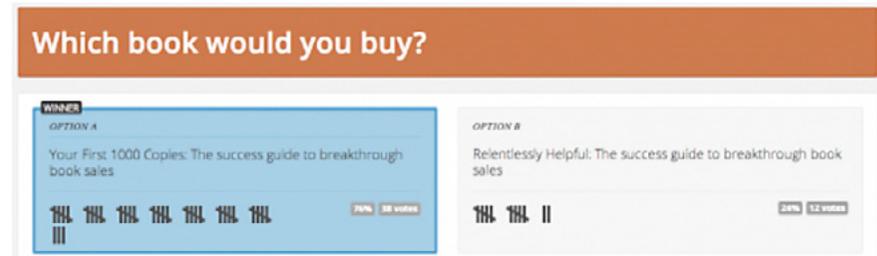
It’s a simple, affordable tool that is exactly what we need to test our titles. In fact, after I used the tool to test my own title, I reached out to the guys who built it, and they were kind enough to provide a coupon code for my readers to use.

**Use the code “FIRST1000” when checking out, and get two free polls.** Once you are signed up, here’s how to use the tool:

- **Set each poll question to “Which book would you buy?”** Keep it purposefully vague so that you get the most unbiased response.

- **Do a new poll for each of your brackets.** Pit TITLE #1 against TITLE #2, and record the result. Same for TITLE #3 against TITLE #4, and so on.

I promise, you’ll be surprised at the results. Remember that title *Relentlessly Helpful* that I loved so much? Here’s what happened:



That title actually got one of the lowest rankings. The same was true for the sub-title I liked best, *The Breakthrough Guide to Book Marketing*.

### 4. Use the title that wins.

Trust the data. If hundreds of people keep picking the same title over and over, you know that’s a title that catches people’s attention.

## This is about selling books

Selling books is hard. But you put a lot of work into your latest manuscript, and now it's time to give it every chance to succeed. Picking a great title—one that will catch people's interest and get them to click onto your book listing—is an important part of your book marketing strategy.

Don't pick a title based on your feelings. You're too close to the project, and will make an extremely biased decision. The only way to make a good decision is to get strangers' split-second, unbiased feedback.

By using this approach, you're leveraging the [experiential mindset](#), and ensuring that you make the right choice for your book title.

# Thanks for Reading!

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