

Case Study: Surveying for a Winning Title

Special Report

by Diane Eble

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Summary

This report is a result of a survey I did to find out which title people preferred for a mini-course I was planning to offer to people who land on my site at www.wordstoprofit.com.

I deliberately did not give any more information besides the titles from which to choose. This is important! When you survey to find a winning title, you do not want to give anything more than the title (and sometimes, the subtitle).

You also want to make sure you allow people to tell you WHY they chose the title they did. Those answers are pure gold.

The titles I tested were:

- Writing Made Simple: The A-B-C's of Becoming a Successful Author
- The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System for Writing a Successful Book
- The F.A.S.T. Way to Write a Successful Book

What I Did

I set up the survey, initially, on a special page on my wordstoprofit site, using the AskDatabase survey software.

I sent the survey to my list on 7/31/08. I simply asked people to vote (see Appendix A for the email copy). I told them it would only take a few seconds, and there was a rather nice incentive attached: the Special Report, "How to Choose Your Bestselling Title," a \$14.95 value. This would only be available for around 24 hours, so they had to act right away. (Note: It was important to take the incentive down when I said I would. People have to trust your word.)

Glitch

The survey was supposed to be a multiple-choice with comments. The comments were the most important part, and when I found out that somehow, all comments just said "Other," I quickly set up a survey in Survey Monkey (which is free and very simple to set up) and sent another email to my list, asking people to re-vote so that I could get comments.

This admittedly might have skewed the survey. However, sometimes "mistakes" lead to golden nuggets of information.

In this case, those who took the time to re-vote would have been most passionate about their opinion. Therefore, the Survey Monkey results would have been more valuable.

Results

The glitch definitely complicated things.

The AskDatabase results were:

- Writing Made Simple: The A-B-C's of Becoming a Successful Author - 17 votes (36.2%)*
- The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System for Writing a Successful Book - 14 votes (29.8%)
- The F.A.S.T. Way to Write a Successful Book - 16 votes (34%)

As you can see, the results were very close!

The Survey Monkey results were:

- Writing Made Simple: The A-B-C's of Becoming a Successful Author – 11 votes, (34.4%)*
- The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System for Writing a Successful Book - 17 votes (53.1%)
- The F.A.S.T. Way to Write a Successful Book - 4 votes (12.5%)

(*These are percentages of that survey, not of the two taken together.)

If I take the totals from both surveys, the results are almost tied between "Writing Made Simple: The A-B-C's of Becoming a Successful Author" and "The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System for Writing a Successful Book."

"The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System " got 14 votes on AskDatabase, 17 on Survey Monkey, with a total of 31 votes or 39.2 percent of the total votes (79). However, if you just look at the SM results, this title was the winner.

"Writing Made Simple" garnered 17 votes on AD, 11 on SM, with a total of 35.4 percent.

"The F.A.S.T. Way to Write a Successful Book" got 16 votes on SM but only 4 votes on SM, with a total of 20 votes or 25.3 percent.

Analysis

The difference between 39.2 percent and 35.4 percent is not very great. In essence, I was faced with a tie.

However, as mentioned, I should probably give more weight to the SM survey, since some of the people who would have voted would have re-voted to get their comments in. These are the ones who would have been most involved, and presumably the kind of

person who would take action to sign up. So, I give slightly more weight to those results, which show "The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System" the winner by a slight margin.

The comments are always important, but when you have such close results, they become critical.

Many comments were extremely helpful. Here's what comments can tell you:

1. **The main problem your prospects want answers to.** For instance:

"I can write but sometimes it requires a more focused concentration than just knowledge."

"I think that I am already focused on to do, I am still just in need of how to."

"I have difficulty getting to work because I work from home and have so many distractions."

"I have problems staying focused, and judging from the course description, it might prove to be very valuable."

2. **What they think of the title itself—what attracts them (or turns them off):**

"It gives me more information and it tells me that it's simple implying easy."

"It gives direction about the course that will teach not only a fast method, but specific steps."

"I like the word focused. It sounds more serious than the other 2 titles."

"Focus => depth and quality. Fast = may be 'thin' in content Writing made simple => for beginners."

"The first two sound like a fluff type of course, the kind a person who has never studied the craft of writing would take because they "know" they could write a book that would sell well because they have had "wonderful or special" experiences. The third sounds like sounds like a course one would take when wanting to improve his/her writing."

3. **What your prospects want:**

"I don't just want to be an author, I want to be a successful author. Whether it is simple or complicated I don't care - I just want to be a success."

"Help in keeping my focus in finishing my book."

"The first two sound like a fluff type of course, the kind a person who has never studied the craft of writing would take because they "know" they could write a book that would sell well because they have had "wonderful or special" experiences. The third sounds like sounds like a course one would take when wanting to improve his/her writing."

"I have so many ideas that I would like to get out on paper!"

All of the comments also give you the emotions and the language you want to use in your copy. Watch what I do with the above copy on my web site as I invite people to opt in to the courses. Comments are gold! (And I am most grateful for all who shared them!)

My Conclusions and Resultant Strategy

Since the results were, essentially, tied, I am going to do both courses!

Some advice I learned from some successful marketers is to always make sure you have something to offer beginners, and something to offer those who are more advanced. Makes a lot of sense to me, and fits what my clients have told me in the survey.

So, the free opt-in course will be called, "Writing Made Simple: The A-B-C's of Becoming a Successful Author." To accommodate the comments that said "simple" implies "fluff" or simplistic, I'll make sure my copy stresses that I've boiled down the essence of being a successful author, but that doesn't mean it's only for beginners. (I've got a great quote from Albert Einstein I plan to use.)

The paid course, which will be targeted toward more advanced readers—or at least those who find focus a real issue—will be called either "Get F.O.C.U.S.E.D.—The Insider's Guide to Writing a Successful Book" or "The F.O.C.U.S.E.D. System for Writing a Successful Book." I like the word "System," but I also like the "Insider's Guide" approach. (What do you think? Comments still welcome: diane@wordstoprofit.com.)

The copy will make it clear that this is not a "fluff" course, that it will give you a system that you can use again and again for writing any book (or I might add, creating any successful information product).

Suggestions for You

1. Titles of books and information products are very important. Make sure you test them.
2. Brainstorm a lot of possible titles first. As many as possible. 50 is not too many!

3. From your titles, do an informal survey of a few people (5-7) who are in your target market. (Not your mother or best friend, but someone who would be likely to actually buy what you have to offer.) Ask them to pick their top 5 titles. (You can do this via email. Ask for comments as well.)
4. From these, narrow down to the top 3 titles, using your own judgment as well.
5. Design a simple survey via Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). You have to open an account first. This service is free. (If you have a larger list and would like to be able to sort by keyword—very handy—you might want to get an account at AskDatabase [www.wordstoprofit.com/askdatabase.html] to test it out. Full disclosure: this is my affiliate link. You pay the same amount, but if you don't mind my getting a commission, use this link. Otherwise, go to www.askdatabase.com. Note: You can sign up for a 21-day trial for \$1.)

How you word the survey is very important. If it's something like a free mini-course, as I did, say this: "Which free mini-course would you be most interested in signing up for?" If it's for a book title, word it thus: "Which title would you be most likely to buy if you saw it on a book shelf?" If it's a course: "Which course would you be most likely to sign up for?" Make sure you use the words that describe the action you want them to ultimately take.

Test only 3 titles at a time. You may isolate just the title, or test titles and subtitles. It's best to test only one element at a time, for book titles, i.e. first the title, then the subtitle (once you have the title).

6. Offer some kind of incentive for those who complete the survey, which they will get right away. Something, ideally, that's related to whatever it is you're testing. (In this case, it was the title course.)
7. Make sure you have a way to capture email addresses. With Survey Monkey, you get up to 100 responses, and you can download the email addresses to a database. I prefer to get the responses integrated with my shopping cart, and the next surveys I do will do that. The Ask Database allows you to do this.
8. Use the language your respondents used in your sales copy (web site, back cover, even your book proposals). Mine it for how to approach everything: what your main benefit is, bullet points, the emotional words that will persuade people this is what they want and need. (Remember that people buy what they want, not necessarily what they need.)

Where to Go for More Help in Choosing Your Bestselling Title

1. I have designed a course called "Choosing Your Bestselling Title" that teaches you the process for coming up with winning titles, chapter headings, headlines, article and press release titles, and more. Find out more at <http://www.choosingyourbestsellingtitle.com>.
 2. You may also get the Special Report, "How to Choose Your Bestselling Title" at <http://www.howtochooseyourbestsellingtitle.com>.
 3. Ask your question about titles:
<http://www.askyourbookpublishingcoachabouttitles.com> You'll get to hear a replay of a teleseminar in which I answered quite a few questions.
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Appendix A

First Email I sent on July 31, 2008

[Subj. line]:

Help me choose my title, and learn how to choose yours ...

7.31.08

Hi \$firstname,

Ever suffer the quandary of too many ideas?

I want to create a mini-course on how to write a successful book, and I have all these ideas, so I thought I'd just let YOU decide.

And in the process, you can learn something about how to choose a title.

Please take my one-question survey (should take you 20 seconds) and tell me which mini-course you would be most interested in signing up for (it's going to be no-cost).

<http://www.wordstoprofitnow.com/Minicourse-Survey.html>

As a thank-you for taking my survey, you will get

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www.yourbookpublishingcoach.com www.PublishingCoachWeekly.com

a complimentary copy of my Special Report, "How to Choose Your Bestselling Title."

Fair warning, though: This \$14.95 Special Report will only be available at no cost until 9 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 1.

So please vote now, and enjoy your Special Report. (As you'll see, I'm taking my own advice from the report.)

Stay tuned ... you'll know the winner by the mini-course I create!

Have a great weekend, and thanks for voting!

To your success as an author,

Diane

P.S. Still getting duplicate emails? That means you still did not UNSUBSCRIBE to any emails that say, "Hi [your name], after SUBSCRIBING on the LEFT PANEL at <http://www.wordstoprofit.com>. (If you want the audio class of "How to Write Irresistible Queries and Book Proposals," that is.)

If you're getting more than one email that says, "Dear [your name]," do let me know. That would mean the new system isn't working right either. Thanks!

Appendix B

Second email sent, August 1, 2008

[subj. line]

Last chance for the Special Report (takes only 30 seconds) ...

7.31.08

Hi \$firstname,

Oh dear, what to do--the votes are very close!

If you haven't voted yet, please let me know which mini-course you would be most interested in signing up for (it's going to be no-cost).

<http://www.wordstoprofitnow.com/Minicourse-Survey.html>

Remember, as a thank-you for taking my survey, you will get a complimentary copy of my Special Report, "How to Choose Your Bestselling Title."

Fair warning, though: This \$14.95 Special Report will only be available at no cost until 9 p.m. (Eastern) tonight.

So please vote now, and enjoy your Special Report. (As you'll see, I'm taking my own advice from the report.)

And please tell me WHY you like the title you chose. (There was a glitch in the first survey, so whatever comments you made if you already voted were lost. If you care to revote with the new survey, and give your comment, I'd be most appreciative.)

Have a great weekend, and thanks for voting!

To your success as an author,

Diane