

Writing is Not an Entitlement Program by D.V. Berkom *(originally written for Indies Unlimited)*

I was having a nice chat the other day with a friend who's a fellow author and the owner of an ebook publishing company. She was regaling me with stories from the trenches: namely, book submissions from diva authors.

"Then he sent me an email insisting he was expecting a six-figure advance for his fantasy tome, even after he'd read the contract and agreed to the percentage split," she said, laughing and shaking her head.

My mouth dropped open in surprise. (Note to readers: this is an unattractive expression and I don't recommend it. The flies are annoying.)

The writer in question had never published a word, either by himself or traditionally, and his manuscript was going to need some serious editing to make it salable. The sad part is it wasn't the first time my friend had encountered this particular spasm of ego. She'd told me of several newbies and not-so-newbies who had insisted they expected her company to do everything without them, including copy and content editing, rewriting, marketing, etc. so that they could just sit back and let the bank roll right on in.

First of all, those days are pretty much over unless you're Stephen King or Nora Roberts. Second of all, who the hell do they think they are, not taking responsibility for their *business*, their creative output, their livelihood?

Let's be clear: writing is very much a business. It's hard damn work and takes time to hone the craft. Then there's all that marketing stuff. If you think it's anything different, then you need to take a cold, hard reality shower (nicely mashed metaphors, don't you think?) If you're a new writer, yes, you need to have an ego. If nothing else, the delusion that you're as good a writer as say, Dickens or Tolstoy or Hemingway or even Dan Brown will stand you in good stead when someone tells you to go and work at the local fast food joint rather than visit your sophomoric attempts at writing on the unsuspecting public.

But that should be as far as it goes.

Humility is a good quality for a writer to cultivate. People will be more inclined to help you, for one thing. For another, isn't the country filled enough with folks who think the world owes them something? I can't tell you how many times I've encountered writers who are mad at Amazon or Barnes and Noble or Kobo or iTunes et al because they're somehow keeping them from becoming a bestselling author. Really? Could it possibly be because it's a hard freaking racket and it takes a lot of work (or money, if you have it) to sell books?

Figure it out. If you're encountering pushback of some kind regarding your sales/writing, take a step back and analyze what might be wrong. Could it be that your characters/story/whatever isn't connecting with the right people? If so, find another way to reach readers. Be open to changing your marketing plan, cover, description, etc. Maybe your grammar and/or spelling isn't up to

snuff. That one's easy. Hire an editor or barter with someone to edit your work if you can't afford to pay one. Bad cover? Either change it yourself, or hire it out. I know of at least one good graphic designer who charges less than \$50 for a cover. If you're with a traditional publisher, don't expect them to do everything for you. Take the initiative. *Take responsibility*. Don't go around complaining about how you're an effing genius and no one notices. Make them notice. If you are, things will eventually work out.

Or not.

That's the beauty of it all. The world owes you nothing. It's all about your belief in yourself and persistence. And picking yourself up and trying again.

And again.

Who knows? You might be right. If you do it without complaint and without feeling like you're entitled the victory will be sweeter, and people might actually be happy for you.

And that's the sweetest enticement yet.