



From Unknown to National Expert in A Year

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By Joey Garcia

When Karlee Vincent attended **Writing for Change** in 2019, she was an unpublished, unknown writer. In 2020, she was interviewed by Ms. Magazine, CNN.com, The Tamron Hall Show and joined the TODAY Parenting Team, the TODAY Show's blog for raising children. Her first essay for Red Tricycle gained 65 shares in ten minutes.

Karlee's success isn't a fluke. It's a formula. I know because I'm Karlee's book coach.

Most writers understand the value of a writing coach, someone who helps you get words on a page and shape that narrative. A book coach helps you shape your writing career. I develop a client's brand, edit their writing projects (including queries and proposals), research places where they can submit articles or essays, design media-friendly websites and prepare clients for radio, TV, print and podcast interviews. I also brainstorm marketing and publicity ideas that build platforms, social media followings and email lists. For writers of nonfiction or memoir, an established marketplace position as an expert, notable literary credentials and a devoted following can make the difference between getting a book deal, or not. It can also be a deciding factor that determines whether your book sells well once published.

If you're looking to hire a book coach, be certain they have current experience within traditional and new media. Without those skills, a book coach can't effectively position you for a 21st century literary career.

ESTABLISH YOUR EXPERTISE

You might already possess expertise that would make you a valuable contact for the media. If not, choose a topic based on valid and measurable criteria like certifications, degrees or a body of work. Life experience alone is rarely enough, unless you have a compelling life story that intrigues media outlets. That was the case with Karlee.

"My personal experience as a new mom dealing with the difficulties of traveling for work and having to breastfeed on the road started my mission to help other moms," she says.

When determining how to present your expertise, choose two words that any sixth grader could understand. Karlee is a Breastfeeding Expert. That label is clear and direct, which makes it memorable for the media. A subject matter descriptor that needs an explainer is useless.

BE A LIFELONG LEARNER

During our Writing For Change Ask A Pro session, Karlee said she wanted to learn the writing business. In my opinion, it's exactly this openness that contributed to her rapid ascent. She soaks up information, is willing to be guided beyond her comfort zone and follows through quickly on opportunities. She always checks in for advice before responding to the media or submitting an article. In other words, she's coachable. Writers and authors are often the main obstacle to their own success. If you're a writer stuck in self-sabotage, I highly recommend Steven Pressfield's book, *The War of Art: Break Through Your Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*.



DO THE WORK

“Walking out of Writing for Change I knew I had established a relationship with a mentor. It’s been huge for me,” Karlee says about our Ask A Pro session. “I was naïve and thought that what I had already written for my manuscript was good enough to get an agent and a book deal. A year later, I’m reworking my manuscript. I’m glad I waited.”

Patience is essential in building a writing career. Karlee notes that whenever her goals have felt impossible given her marriage to a first responder, a demanding full-time job, and two small children—I’ve coached her through it. And, because she’s coachable, major breakthroughs follow, like Ms. Magazine interviewing her and Senator Tammy Duckworth as the experts for a breastfeeding article.

“A national platform wasn’t even on my radar when I attended Writing for Change. It’s inspired agents to ask for my book proposal. I’m surprised, excited and can’t wait to see what’s next,” she says.

Neither can I.

Joey Garcia coaches writers and authors on effective strategies to boost their books and platforms. Her widely published essays, poetry, and short stories have received awards, including a Pushcart nomination. Joey is the author of *When Your Heart Breaks, It’s Opening to Love* and is the on-air Relationship Expert for Fox40-TV. She is also the founder of The Belize Writers Conference and the book publicity track coordinator for the San Francisco Writers Conference. www.joeygarcia.com

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About Us

The San Francisco Writers Conference (“SFWC”) enjoys a rich literary culture. Over the course of four days in mid-February, over 500 attendees and renowned keynote authors, presenters, editors, and agents, attend SFWC, combining the best of both the traditional publishing industry with the latest technology to empower authors to publish anywhere. Situated just north of Silicon Valley, the SFWC is truly a one-of-a-kind celebration of craft, commerce, and community.

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