"This book is pure gold!" — **LEO BOTTARY,**
Founder of Peernovation and Author of *Peernovation 365*

The ME FACTOR

Your Secret Weapon For Author Visibility

LISA TOWLES

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Praise for The ME Factor

"This is not a book of shortcuts or performative marketing tactics. Towles has created a system that helps authors understand who they are, what they offer, and why that matters. The ME Factor concept is disarmingly simple and profoundly clarifying: it gives authors permission to stop chasing what everyone else is doing and start building visibility from the truth of who they are. That's what sells books. This book is pure gold!"

Leo Bottary, Founder of Peernovation and Author of *Peernovation 365*

"In The ME Factor, Lisa Towles codifies her experience as an award-winning crime novelist and corporate communications executive to establish one's own authenticity and voice as the bedrock on which authors can build their enduring brand. Her framework shows how authors can connect very intentionally with readers through an emotional promise that keeps them coming back to YOU again and again."

Craig Pinegar, *Enterprise Technology Investment Leader*

"The ME Factor is a bit of marketing magic, clearly written and easily explained with excellent examples, ideas, and help to get you on track and keep you there. The best book on marketing I've read."

Ana Manwaring, Author of *Mortal Revenge* and *Kickback*

"Thoughtful, exacting, and quietly radical; a redefinition of what it means to be visible as an author."

The Prairies Book Review

“Visibility isn’t luck. It’s positioning. The ME Factor clearly defines strategy authors can actually use so they stop blending in and start being chosen.”

Jane Ubell-Meyer, Founder, *Bedside Reading*

“I’d always been proud of hitting #1 in my categories, but I hadn’t fully internalized what it meant to rank Top 50 in Contemporary Romance and Top 15 in Romantic Suspense—without running paid Amazon ads. Seeing that in context reframed how I think about my audience, my reach, and how I talk about my work. It wasn’t just a nice moment—it was *evidence*.”

Nikki Davenport, Author of *International Incident*

“A mix of hard-nosed strategy and real empathy... Towles treats the author as the CEO of a small but serious brand. *The ME Factor* turns book marketing from a foggy mystery into a clear plan.”

Literary Titan

“Until now, no one has created an end-to-end process for creating a successful book using contemporary marketing communications. Lisa Towles, a well-known author of 14 popular thrillers, has applied her authorial expertise and business acumen to develop a comprehensive success guide for both fiction and non-fiction writers.”

Eric C. Wentworth, Author of
A Mindful Career* and *A Plan for Life

For Lee

Your courage, creativity and spirit are a constant inspiration.

True love makes everything possible.

ALSO BY LISA TOWLES

Specimen
Codex
Terror Bay
The Ridders
Switch
Salt Island
Hot House
Ninety-Five
The Unseen
Choke

And Published Under the Name Lisa Polisar

Escape: Dark Mystery Tales
The Ghost of Mary Prairie
Blackwater Tango
Knee Deep

“There is only one you. And there will never be another one. That's your power.”

— Mel Robbins, *The 5 Second Rule*

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INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT & CONFIDENCE

An estimated four million new book titles enter the global market every year.

Four million.

That number should feel impossible—and yet, it's real. Traditional publishers, hybrid presses, and self-published authors are all competing for the same readers, the same shelf space, the same fleeting moment of attention in an endless scroll.

And you're entering it—or trying to survive in it—with a book you've poured months or years into creating. Whether you're a seasoned executive writing your first book on leadership or a novelist launching your fifth thriller, the challenge is the same: how do you stand out when the market is this saturated?

The instinct, when confronted with this reality, is often paralysis or

panic. Some authors freeze, waiting for the right moment or right platform. Others throw themselves into frantic activity—posting everywhere, trying every tactic, running ads—hoping sheer volume of effort will break through.

Sometimes this works, but not consistently.

In this landscape, visibility requires three things: knowledge, positioning, and intent.

You need to understand who you are as an author, where you fit competitively, who your readers are, and how to reach them deliberately. Without this foundation, even dedicated, hardworking authors can spend years doing the right things—building websites, posting consistently, pitching bookstores—and still struggle to gain traction.

Not because the tactics are wrong, but because there's no connective tissue holding them together. Without a strategic framework, your efforts scatter. The website says one thing, your social media profiles say another, and the book positioning feels disconnected from both. The individual pieces might be good, but they're not creating a cohesive brand.

This book gives you the framework. Once you have that foundation, everything you do has a place to anchor. The wires connect.

You already think strategically.

If you've built a career in business, the frameworks in this book—Market Intelligence, SWOT Analysis, Brand Positioning—will feel familiar. They're adapted from the same strategy tools you've used in boardrooms. The difference is application: instead of positioning a product, you're positioning yourself. The thinking is the same. The context is new.

If you're a writer, you solve strategic problems every day. You

evaluate character motivations, assess whether a subplot serves the narrative, decide which scenes to cut. You make a million structural decisions about pacing and emotional impact. That's strategic thinking—you just might not call it that.

This book gives you frameworks to organize the strategic tools and instincts you already have. You're not starting from zero.

What you've been missing isn't capability. It's a system.

You've been handed conflicting advice from every direction: Build a platform. Be authentic. Post three times a day. Run ads. Grow organically. Be on TikTok. Write to market. Write what you love.

All of this advice might be valid for someone, somewhere—but without a framework, you have no way to know what's right for YOU. So you either try everything (and burn out), do nothing (and stay invisible), or pick tactics randomly and wonder why they don't work.

This book gives you the system.

A way to understand your identity, assess your market, build your brand, diagnose your position, and execute with clarity. Not because you need to do everything, but because you need to do the right things—the things that align with who you are, where you fit, and the readers you serve.

The ME Factor isn't about reinvention. It's about clarity. It's about protecting your creative work with the same strategic thinking you'd apply to any valuable asset. It's about building visibility that's grounded in truth: who you are, what you offer, and why readers who need your stories will be able to find them.

Here's something you need to hear before we go any further: **This system gives you permission to be yourself.**

Your actual personality. Your quirks. Your wry humor or intensity.

The way you talk, not the way you think an “author” should sound. These aren't obstacles to overcome in your marketing. They're not unprofessional or inappropriate or too much or not enough. Those unique aspects are your competitive advantage.

In a market where so many books compete for attention, manufactured personas don't break through. Generic “author voices” blend together. But you—the actual you, with your specific perspective and energy and way of seeing the world—are unrepeatable. When you bring your real self into your book promotion, your social media, your reader engagement, you create something no algorithm can replicate and no competitor can copy: genuine human connection.

This book will give you strategic frameworks—the ME Factor, Market Intelligence, Brand Pillars. But strategy doesn't mean performance. It means understanding yourself clearly enough to show up authentically, consistently, and in the places where your real readers are waiting for you.

You don't need to become someone else to succeed. You need to become comfortable with revealing yourself.

You can do this. Not because it's easy, but because you already have the capability. You just need the framework.

What This Book Will Give You

This book isn't a collection of marketing hacks or a 30-day launch checklist. It's a strategic framework for building long-term author visibility in a competitive literary marketplace.

Your *ME Factor* is your positioning tool—the intersection of who you are, where you fit in the market, and who you serve. It's not a logo or a tagline. It's the answer to the question every reader unconsciously asks: “Why should I care about YOUR books instead of the thousands of others like them?” This framework helps you articulate what makes you unmistakable, not just

marketable.

This book is structured around five strategic foundations that build on each other:

Identity → You'll define your ME Factor, understand your emotional promise to readers, and establish the “why” behind your work. This isn't fluffy self-discovery—it's the business case for your author career.

Intelligence → You'll learn Market Intelligence strategies to understand your competitive landscape, identify *white space* in your genre, and build accurate reader personas based on data, not assumptions.

Branding → With identity and market knowledge in place, you'll synthesize them into a cohesive author brand—complete with content pillars that make your platform strategy repeatable and maintainable.

Diagnostics → You'll conduct a professional SWOT analysis to assess your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. You'll audit your current platform and identify where you need to focus (not where everyone says you “should” be).

Execution → Only then—with strategic clarity—will you execute. You'll learn how to choose platforms strategically, create content that aligns with your brand, optimize your Amazon presence as discovery infrastructure, and conduct outreach that feels authentic rather than desperate.

Throughout the book, you'll also learn **how to calibrate**—how to know if what you're doing is working, which metrics matter for your goals, and when to pivot versus when to persist.

How to Use This Book Based on Where You Are

If you're a debut author: Start at the beginning and work through sequentially. You're building a foundation from scratch, and each section prepares you for the next. Pay special attention to Market Intelligence (Part II) and Reader Personas (Chapter 5)—understanding the landscape before you enter it gives you a strategic advantage most debut authors don't have.

If you're a returning author: Skim Part I (you likely know your identity), then dive deep into Part II (Market Intelligence) to understand what's changed since you last published. The digital landscape has shifted dramatically—Parts V and VI will catch you up on platform strategy and visibility tactics that work now.

If you're mid-career but stuck: Jump directly to Part IV (Diagnostics). Conduct your SWOT analysis to understand why you've plateaued, then work backward through Parts I-III to identify misalignments between your identity, market position, and brand expression. Often, stagnation comes from brand drift—you've evolved but your platform hasn't.

If you're a business executive writing your first book: You'll recognize the strategic frameworks immediately—they're adapted from business strategy tools you've likely used. Focus on Part II (Market Intelligence) and Part III (Branding) to translate your business thinking into publishing context. The execution chapters (Parts V-VI) will feel more tactical, but they're grounded in the strategy you've already built.

Why This Isn't Just Another Marketing Book

Most author marketing books start with tactics: set up social media, run ads, build a website. They assume you already know who you are, who your readers are, and how you fit in the market. When those tactics don't work, authors blame themselves—or worse, they assume they need to work harder, post more, spend more.

This book starts with strategy: Identity first. Market understanding

second. Brand clarity third. Only then do tactics make sense. This approach respects both the creative and business sides of your author career. You won't be asked to become someone you're not, perform authenticity you don't feel, or chase every trending platform. You'll build a system that's grounded in who you are and what your readers need.

The frameworks in this book are the same ones I use in my consulting practice—and the same ones I apply to my own author career. They're tested, practical, and designed for authors who think strategically about building careers, not just launching books.

By the end, you'll have clarity about your positioning, confidence in your decisions, and a repeatable system for visibility that doesn't require you to be everywhere or do everything.

Your creative work deserves intentional positioning.

Let's build that together.

What Inspired Me to Write This Book

I bridge two worlds that rarely intersect: high-level business strategy and the lived experience of being a working author.

Over 18 years in corporate communications, I built my career translating complex business objectives into narratives that drove market differentiation and revenue results. I've worked across communications, marketing, and customer experience—always with the same goal: aligning brand strategy to external stakeholders in ways that create measurable impact. I hold an MBA in IT Management and multiple certifications in different sub-areas of digital marketing and AI implementation. I've also served as Board President of an award-winning nonprofit, leading strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and mission-driven growth. Strategy isn't just what I teach—it's what I've practiced in boardrooms, product launches, and organizational leadership at the

highest level.

But I'm also a crime novelist with 14 published books. In 20 years of writing, I've navigated every corner of the publishing industry: small presses, academic publishers, hybrid models, traditional deals, and self-publishing. I've launched books that succeeded and books that didn't. I've built platforms from scratch, pivoted when algorithms changed, and learned—often the hard way—what moves the needle for author careers. My most recent thriller, *Switch*, published in 2025, reflects two decades of evolution as both a storyteller and a strategist.

Most consultants come from one side or the other—business experts who don't write, or writers with no corporate experience. I live in both spaces daily, understanding creative vulnerability and business discipline equally.

This dual perspective is what drives my Story Impact Consulting practice. I don't just teach frameworks—I've tested them in my own career. The Market Intelligence tools in this book – I use them to position my own releases. The SWOT analysis process - I run it as an author every six months. The brand pillars are how I turned scattered social media presence into focused community building that converts to readers and long-term fans.

I founded Story Impact Consulting because I kept watching talented authors make the same strategic mistakes—not from lack of effort but lack of business thinking applied to creative work. They were drowning in tactics (post daily, run ads, be on every platform) without the strategic foundation to make smart decisions about where to focus their limited time and resources—and losing sight of perhaps the most important ingredient: WHY they write, why their stories matter, and why readers should care.

My approach is outcomes-driven and collaboration-based. I ask authors the questions that reveal their “why,” help them see their books as long-term career assets rather than one-off projects, and ensure their voice and vision align with the readers who will

become their advocates. I've worked with debut authors finding their footing, mid-career authors navigating plateaus, and business professionals writing their first books who bring strategic thinking but need publishing fluency.

Communication is my gift. Marketing is my talent. Strategy is my superpower.

Whether you implement the frameworks in this book independently or decide you want a strategic partner to accelerate the process, my goal is the same: to support you by giving you clarity, confidence, and a repeatable system for building visibility that doesn't require you to become someone you're not.

Your story deserves strategic protection. Let's make sure it gets heard above all the noise.

PART I

THE HEART: YOUR IDENTITY

Before seeking an audience, an author must define the "emotional fingerprint" of their work. This section establishes the author as the CEO of their creative brand.

If you're writing or marketing your first book: This section establishes the foundational clarity most authors skip—defining who you are as an author, what makes you different, and what emotional experience readers can count on from your work.

If you've published but struggle to gain traction: This section reveals why generic positioning fails and shows you how to articulate what makes you distinct in a crowded market—the difference between being one of thousands and being the only one who does what you do.

If you're returning to publishing after a long break: Use this section to reassess your positioning. What's changed in your work, your

goals, and how you want to show up? This gives you permission to evolve rather than recreate what no longer fits.

CHAPTER 1

THE SOUL OF THE STRATEGIC AUTHOR

Strategy is not a four-letter word.

It sounds corporate. Calculating. Like you're supposed to engineer authenticity or manufacture connection. It feels like the opposite of why you started writing in the first place—to tell stories, to explore ideas, to create something meaningful.

But here's what most authors don't realize: strategy isn't the opposite of creativity. It protects it.

Strategy gives your book legs—enough to reach your target readers.

Strategy is what ensures your creative work reaches the readers who need it. It's what prevents you from burning out, scattering your energy, or giving up after years of effort. Strategy isn't about becoming someone you're not. It's about being intentional with

who you already are.

This chapter bridges the gap between the creative spark that drives your writing and the professional path that sustains your author career. Because you can't build a career on inspiration alone—and you shouldn't have to choose between artistic integrity and strategic thinking.

WHAT: Strategic Thinking for Authors

Strategic thinking is the practice of making intentional decisions based on understanding where you are, where you want to go, and what resources you have to get there.

For authors, this means:

Knowing your identity. Who you are as an author, what makes your work distinct, and what readers can consistently expect from you. This isn't branding in the superficial sense—it's self-knowledge applied to your creative output.

Understanding your market. Where you fit in the competitive landscape, who your readers are, and what gaps or opportunities exist. This isn't "selling out"—it's recognizing that even the most literary, artistic work exists in a context with other books competing for the same readers' attention and money.

Making informed decisions. Choosing which book to write next, which platforms to invest time in, where to allocate your limited budget, and when to pivot versus when to persist. Strategic authors don't guess. They assess, decide, and act with clarity.

Building realistic systems. Creating repeatable processes for writing, marketing, and connecting with readers that don't require constant reinvention or burnout-level effort. Strategy creates leverage—the ability to do less but accomplish more because your efforts are aligned and connecting with your purpose.

Strategic thinking doesn't mean you plan every move years in advance or that you never take creative risks. It means you make decisions consciously rather than reactively. You understand the "why" behind your choices. You can articulate your positioning. You know what success looks like for you—not according to someone else's definition—and you're building toward it intentionally.

Let's establish something critical: **Strategic thinking doesn't mean manufactured thinking.**

When business executives hear "brand strategy" or "market positioning," they sometimes assume it requires adopting a persona—a polished, professional version of themselves that fits a template. When creative authors hear the same terms, they often fear they'll have to become someone they're not: extroverted when they're introverted, salesy when they hate selling, constantly "on" when they need solitude to create.

Neither assumption is true.

Strategic thinking means understanding who you are, where you fit, and how to communicate that clearly. It means making decisions based on your real strengths, your real readers, and your real capacity—not on what you imagine you should be doing.

The authors who build real visibility aren't the ones who contort themselves into someone else's model of success. They're the ones who get clear about their own identity and build systems that honor it. Strategic doesn't mean fake. It means intentional.

Here's what strategic thinking is NOT:

It's not manipulation. You're not tricking readers or manufacturing false authenticity. You're communicating clearly about who you are and what you offer.

It's not rigid planning. Strategy adapts. Markets shift, readers evolve, and you grow as a writer. Strategic thinking includes the flexibility to pivot when data suggests a different path.

It's not “selling out.” Writing to market and writing what you love aren't mutually exclusive. Strategy helps you find the intersection—the place where your authentic creative vision meets genuine reader demand.

It's not just for business books or nonfiction. Literary fiction, poetry, experimental work—all benefit from strategic thinking about positioning, audience, and visibility. Art that no one sees doesn't fulfill its purpose.

The authors who thrive long-term aren't just the most talented writers. They're the ones who combine craft with strategic thinking. They understand that creating great work is only half the equation—the other half is ensuring that work finds its audience.

WHY: Why This Matters for Creative Professionals

You might be thinking: “I just want to write. Why do I need to think like a business strategist?”

Because the publishing landscape has fundamentally changed—and not in ways that favor passive hope or organic discovery. But here's the encouraging truth: strategic thinking levels the playing field. You don't need a massive publisher, a huge marketing budget, or insider connections. You need clarity about who you are, who you serve, and how to reach them intentionally.

The market reality:

With so many new titles entering the market annually, traditional gatekeepers (agents, publishers, reviewers) can't possibly evaluate or champion every worthy book. Algorithms determine visibility

on retail platforms. Social media platforms change their rules constantly, making organic reach nearly impossible without paid promotion. Readers are overwhelmed by choices and rely on signals—covers, reviews, recommendations, author platforms—to filter their options.

The Data: Research shows that brands prioritizing quality over quantity see engagement surge by nearly 20%, even as posting frequency decreases. The difference isn't posting more often—it's being more intentional about what you post.

In this environment, talent alone isn't enough. The world is full of brilliant writers whose books languish in obscurity—not because the work isn't good, but because no one knows it exists. Not because they didn't try to promote it, but because they promoted it without strategy, scattering effort across tactics that didn't align with their goals or their readers' behavior.

This is why strategy matters: it's advocacy for your work.

When you think strategically about your author career, you're not abandoning your creative principles. You're ensuring those principles reach the people who will be moved by them. You're respecting your work enough to give it the best possible chance of success. You're taking responsibility for your career rather than hoping someone else—an agent, a publisher, an algorithm—will do it for you.

Strategy is what separates authors who build careers from authors who write books.

Consider two authors who both write literary thrillers:

Author A writes a brilliant debut. Gets some early reviews. Posts sporadically on social media when they remember. Has a basic website that hasn't been updated in two years. Doesn't have a clear sense of who their ideal reader is or where those readers congregate. Launches their second book with the same scattered

approach. Sales plateau. They don't understand why—the second book is even better than the first.

Author B writes a brilliant debut. Before launch, they study comparable titles to understand positioning. They identify where their ideal readers spend time (book clubs, specific subreddits, certain podcasts). They build a simple email list and a focused social presence on two platforms where their readers are. They create content pillars aligned with their brand that feel natural, not performative. They approach bookstores with a clear pitch about who they serve. When they launch their second book, they have a system—repeatable, sustainable, effective. Sales grow.

Same quality of writing. Different outcomes. The difference isn't talent—it's strategy.

Author A works just as hard as Author B. They post on social media. They do book events. They spend money on ads. But they're pushing pins without a framework—their efforts don't stick because there's no connective tissue connecting them.

Author B isn't more talented. They're more intentional. They made decisions based on understanding their positioning, their audience, and their resources. They built a system that expands over time rather than starting from scratch with each book.

For business executives writing their first book:

You already understand this. You've built strategies, positioned products, and allocated resources under constraint in your professional life. You know that good products don't sell themselves—they need positioning, messaging, and go-to-market plans. Your book is no different. The strategic thinking you've honed in boardrooms applies directly here. The challenge isn't learning to think strategically—it's applying that thinking to a new context where the metrics, channels, and audience behaviors are unfamiliar.

For writers without business backgrounds:

You might feel like strategic thinking is foreign territory. But you already do this in your writing. Every time you plot a novel, you're thinking strategically about structure, pacing, and emotional payoff. Every time you revise, you're making resource allocation decisions—what to cut, what to expand, where to focus your limited time. Every time you study books you admire, you're conducting competitive analysis. The language might be different, but the thinking is the same.

The cost of not thinking strategically:

Burnout. You try everything, exhaust yourself, and see minimal return on your effort.

Invisibility. Your books exist, but readers can't find them in the noise.

Financial loss. You spend money on tactics (ads, services, tools) without understanding if they're right for your goals.

Creative stagnation. You write the next book without understanding why the last one didn't connect, so you repeat the same strategic mistakes.

Career abandonment. After years of effort without results, you stop writing altogether—not because you lack talent, and not because you don’t enjoy it, but because the demands feel too draining.

If this brief look resonated, the full book offers the complete strategy to support your next move.

GLOSSARY

A+ Content (Amazon) - Enhanced product page features with rich graphics and formatted text (Chapter 14)

Algorithm - System that determines content visibility and recommendations on platforms (Chapters 12, 13, 14)

Amazon Author Central - Author profile management platform for Amazon book pages (Chapter 14)

Amazon KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) - Amazon's self-publishing platform for ebooks and print books (Chapter 14)

Analytics - Data tracking tools that measure platform and content performance (Chapter 11)

Backlist - Previously published books in an author's catalog (Chapter 6)

Brand Consistency - Maintaining recognizable visual and verbal identity across all platforms (Chapters 9, 11)

Brand Filter - Three questions to evaluate whether opportunities align with your positioning (Chapter 7)

Brand Through-Line - The consistent emotional experience readers expect from all your work (Chapter 7)

Call to Action (CTA) - Invitation for readers to take a specific next step (Conclusion)

Comp Titles (Comparable Titles) - Books similar to yours used to understand positioning and market (Chapter 4)

Competitive Benchmarking - Identifying what differentiates you from similar authors (Chapter 4)

Content Pillars - The 3-5 core themes organizing all your public-facing content (Chapter 8)

Conversion / Conversion Rate - When someone takes a desired

action in response to your marketing. Soft conversions are email signups, social follows, link clicks. Hard conversions are purchases. Conversion rate measures the percentage of viewers who take action. (Chapters 5, 11, 14)

Discoverability - How easily readers can find your book through search and browsing (Chapters 6, 14)

Emotional Promise - The consistent feeling readers experience from your work (Chapter 3)

Engagement Rate - Measure of meaningful interaction versus passive viewing (Chapters 11, 13)

Genre - Category of literature with specific conventions and reader expectations (Chapter 2)

HEA (Happily Ever After) - Romance genre term for the guaranteed happy/satisfying romantic resolution readers expect (Chapter 6, 11)

ISBN - International Standard Book Number, unique identifier for books (Chapter 15)

Keywords - Words and phrases readers type into search engines when looking for books. Examples: "cozy mystery bookstore," "burnout prevention strategies." Match reader language, not industry jargon. (Chapters 4, 9, 14)

Market Gaps - Underserved reader needs where demand exceeds supply (Chapter 6)

Market Intelligence - Understanding competitive landscape, reader behavior, and opportunities (Chapter 4)

ME Factor - Your unique positioning formula: Goal + Audience + YOU (Chapter 2)

Metadata - Data describing your book (keywords, categories, description) that aids discovery (Chapter 14)

Metrics - Measurable data points tracking performance and engagement (Chapter 11)

Open Rate (Email) - Percentage of newsletter recipients who open your email (Chapter 11)

Persona (Reader Persona) - Detailed profile of your ideal reader based on observed patterns (Chapter 5)

Positioning - How you distinctively place yourself in the market relative to competitors (Chapters 2, 6)

Reader Personas (Primary and Secondary) - The 2-3 detailed profiles of readers most likely to love your work (Chapter 5)

ROI (Return on Investment) - Value gained relative to time, money, or energy invested (Chapter 10)

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) - Using strategic keywords in your website and content to help search engines connect your work to readers searching for books like yours. (Chapters 4, 9)

Self-Publishing - Publishing your book independently without a traditional publisher (Chapter 14)

Social Proof - Evidence that others value your work (reviews, testimonials, endorsements) (Chapter 14)

Strategic Self-Care - The 5 Pillars framework for enduring author career management (Chapter 17)

Subgenre - Specialized category within a larger genre (Chapter 6)

SWOT Analysis - Assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (Chapter 10)

Target Audience - The specific readers your work is intended to reach and serve (Chapter 5)

White Space - Market opportunity where your authentic work meets unmet reader demand (Chapter 6)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Towles bridges two worlds that rarely intersect: high-level business strategy and the lived experience of being a working author. With an MBA in IT Management and 18 years in corporate communications, she built her career translating complex business objectives into market differentiation and revenue results. She holds multiple certifications in digital marketing and AI implementation and has served as Board President of an award-winning nonprofit, leading strategic planning and mission-driven growth at the organizational level.

Lisa is also an award-winning crime novelist with 14 published books spanning 20 years. As an active member of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and International Thriller Writers, she's navigated every corner of the publishing industry—small presses, academic publishers, hybrid models, traditional deals, and self-publishing—learning what drives author visibility and

sustainable author careers. Her most recent thriller, *Switch,* was published in 2025 and won a Readers' Choice Book Award.

For 16 years, Lisa has mentored writers on author platform building, book marketing strategy, and strategic positioning in crowded markets. In 2024, she formalized this work as Story Impact Consulting, bringing her dual expertise to help authors discover their competitive advantage: authentic author branding that honors who they are rather than forcing them to be someone they're not.

Her work centers on one core belief: in author marketing, YOU are your own secret weapon.

Learn more about Lisa at lisatowles.com or connect with her on LinkedIn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book that bridges business strategy and creative practice requires standing in both worlds simultaneously—and I couldn't have done that alone.

This is my second nonfiction book and my first since the early 1990s, after which came fifteen crime thrillers. Those two decades of fiction writing taught me storytelling. My eighteen years in corporate communications and marketing taught me strategy. But it took twenty years navigating the publishing landscape—through small victories and plenty of failures—to understand what actually moves the needle for author careers. This book exists because of everyone who helped me translate that hard-won knowledge into a framework others can use.

To my publishing team: Lisa Orban, thank you for your leadership, expertise, patience, and vision. You made this book better at every stage.

To my editors: Cindy Davis and Ana Manwaring—I've learned so much from your precision, insight, and commitment to clarity. You pushed me to sharpen every framework until it was genuinely useful.

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To my family: Thank you for always making time to read my work, edit my drafts, and reassure and encourage me. Your love and support is the backbone of my creativity.

And to every author who's ever felt invisible in a crowded market, who's worked hard without seeing results, who's wondered if their voice matters—this book is for you. Your stories deserve to be heard. I hope these frameworks help you make that happen.

AUTHOR SUPPORT

The frameworks in this book have been tested with hundreds of authors across every career stage and publishing path. Some implement them independently with remarkable success. Others have found that having a strategic partner—someone who's navigated both the creative and business sides of publishing for two decades—accelerates their timeline and sharpens their positioning in ways they couldn't achieve alone.

Writing is solitary work. You spend months—sometimes years—alone with your manuscript, developing characters, refining arguments, perfecting prose. But then comes the shift: suddenly you're expected to be a strategist, a marketer, a brand manager, a content creator. You're defining your ME Factor, conducting SWOT analyses, building reader personas, optimizing metadata, creating content pillars, and showing up on platforms where you're supposed to be both authentic and strategic.

It's a lot. And you're doing it alone.

Many authors find that the hardest part isn't learning the frameworks—it's applying them to their own work with objectivity. When you're deep in your own career, it's difficult to see patterns you might be missing. You second-guess your positioning. You wonder if your emotional promise is clear enough. You struggle to articulate what makes you different when you're too close to your own work to see it.

That's where strategic partnership creates value—not because you can't do this work, but because having an experienced perspective

accelerates clarity. Someone who can spot the patterns in your reader reviews that reveal your actual audience. Someone who can help you see the competitive advantages you're too modest to claim. Someone who recognizes when your brand expression has drifted across platforms and knows how to realign it.

Strategic Self-Care becomes easier when you're not carrying the weight alone. The discipline of quarterly reviews feels less daunting when someone's there to help you interpret what you're seeing. Saying no to opportunities that don't serve your positioning becomes clearer when you have a strategic filter you trust. The vulnerability of showing up authentically in your marketing feels less risky when you have support that reminds you why your authentic voice is your competitive advantage.

Story Impact Consulting works with authors who value strategic clarity and want to build successful, differentiated author careers. The approach combines business strategy frameworks with deep understanding of the creative process—recognizing that authors aren't products to be marketed, but professionals building long-term career assets.

Strategic support takes many forms—from comprehensive career positioning to targeted guidance on specific challenges—with every engagement calibrated to deliver measurable outcomes aligned with your current reality and future vision. Whether you need accountability to conduct your SWOT analysis, directional guidance on which platforms deserve your energy, help translating your emotional promise into platform content, or encouragement when the visibility work feels overwhelming, the support is tailored to what you need—not a predetermined program.

The work might involve refining your ME Factor until it's sharp enough to guide every decision you make. Building reader personas based on actual patterns in your reviews and comp title research. Optimizing your Amazon presence so the metadata works as hard as your writing does. Creating content systems that feel comfortable instead of exhausting. Or simply having someone who

understands both the creative vulnerability and the business discipline required to build an author career—someone who can hold space for both.

If you're curious about what strategic partnership might look like for your specific situation, you can learn more at:
storyimpactconsulting.com.

Regardless of the path you choose, this book has given you the foundation. The rest is execution—and that's something you're entirely capable of doing brilliantly on your own.

If you found value in these pages, please consider posting a short review on Amazon or Goodreads.

Your feedback is a meaningful way to advocate for the ideas shared in this book and helps us reach a wider audience.

Follow Lisa Towles at https://linktr.ee/authortowles.