

Get your First 1,000 Readers

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Step 2: Planning Your Reader Magnet

Since we cannot meet on March 17, I thought I would continue our Reader Magnet momentum by providing the next step in the form of a document. So... here it is!

We've already talked extensively about *what* a Reader Magnet is and *why* it's a good idea to have one (see the previous handout for that information—it is posted in the WoW private Facebook group). Now it's time to *plan* and *outline* your Reader Magnet. Let's review a few things first.

What is a Reader Magnet?

A Reader Magnet is a short (5,000 to 20,000 words, scaled accordingly to your genre), polished piece of writing that introduces readers to what you have (or will have) to offer.

What can you produce that would serve as a Reader Magnet?

- Why it should be *relevant* to a work you sell (or plan to sell).
- Two approaches:
 - 1) Something readers want to read *after* they have read something of yours
 - 2) Something you give readers *before* they read something else of yours
- *It's best if you can accomplish both 1 and 2.*
- Ideas: Short story, Prequel, First chapter(s), Short memoir or memoir collection, Minor character story, Short poetry collection, and more.

How long does it need to be?

- Fiction or non-fiction: 5,000 to 20,000 words
- Other types of writing: length depends on what it is
- Keep in mind, the goal is to produce something that will *make readers want more* (first chapters can work, but a complete short story may be more satisfying).

Okay, Let's Get Started!

Decide what you are going to create for your Reader Magnet

In order to make this decision, you need to decide *what you want your Reader Magnet to accomplish*.

Here are the two most common purposes of a Reader Magnet (and it's best if you can do *both!*)

Purpose #1:

You offer the Reader Magnet to *new* readers in return for their email address. In other words, they get your Reader Magnet in return for subscribing to your email newsletter (every author should have an email newsletter... it is your main marketing strategy, and we will go through that process in a later session). One terrific way to trade your Reader Magnet for email addresses is to participate in multi-author giveaways (again, we'll do this in a later session). There is an added benefit to this strategy—some of those readers will like your Reader Magnet enough to go ahead and buy your published book(s), or read the pages in Kindle Unlimited (KU).

Purpose #2:

You offer your Reader Magnet in the *back matter* of your published book(s). After readers finish reading your published book, they see a page that says something like, “Subscribe to my email newsletter and receive a FREE novella!” The subscribers you get this way are *high quality* subscribers because they have already finished your book and like it enough to want more.

There are others ways to use your Reader Magnet, but the two purposes above are most common.

So... what are you going to create? Here are some important factors to consider:

1. The goal is to produce something that will *make readers want more*. A **prequel** is probably the best idea. A prequel will work well for both purposes described above. A **side story** (from the POV of one of your characters) can work well also, as long as it makes people want to read your larger, published book. A side story may work better for purpose #2 above (because people will already be interested in the character because they have already read your book). An **alternate ending** could work too, but only for purpose #2 above (because an alternate ending is meaningless to someone who hasn't read the book). And there are plenty of other ideas.
2. Be sure your Reader Magnet *supports your book(s)*. It should be closely related to the book(s) you are trying to (or planning to) sell. For example, *Infinity* is a prequel to the *Bridgers* series, so it makes a good Reader Magnet for that series. I have other, unrelated, short stories, but they would *not* make good Reader Magnets for the *Bridgers* series (because they are not related to the series). When people read a good story, they want more of *that* story and *those* characters.
3. Your Reader Magnet should be *written in the same overall voice and tone of the book(s) you are selling*. If readers like the style of your Reader Magnet, you do not want them to be disappointed when they start reading your book(s) for sale. You can learn from these two mistakes I have made: First, I wrote *Savage* as a Reader Magnet for the *Diffusion* series. I'm proud of the book (it may be my best book), but it is written in a completely different style from the *Diffusion* books. It is more thoughtful and literary, and it appeals to a different audience—bad idea for a Reader Magnet. Then I wrote *Blue Arrow* as another Reader Magnet for the *Diffusion* series. This one is also a good story (in my opinion), but it is a love story, told from the perspective of a woman who isn't even a character in the *Diffusion* books (although she is mentioned a few times)—another bad idea for a Reader Magnet. Please don't make the mistakes I've made. I still need a good Reader Magnet for the *Diffusion* series. So, this time maybe I'll write a retelling of the discovery of the alien entity from the perspective of one of the other characters in *Diffusion*, with the same fast-paced thrills and chills of the three main books.
4. *Your Reader Magnet should represent your best work*. You might think, but my best work should be something I sell, shouldn't it? Not necessarily, particularly if you are using your Reader Magnet to gain new readers (*Purpose #1* above). Think about it... if you're using your reader magnet to get new readers, this is the first of your work they will see. It has to really shine! You want them to finish it and say, “Oh wow, I need to get more of this!” What I'm trying to say is that you should devote just as much creative effort to your Reader Magnet as you do to your other work. If it doesn't *WOW* the reader, it will fail in its purpose.
5. *Your Reader Magnet should focus on one of the most interesting characters in your book(s)*. It needs to be about one of the characters readers are going to like when they read your book (or that they like from having already read your book). Why? Because your Reader Magnet needs to be similar to your other book(s). Readers of the *Bridgers* series want to know more about *Infinity*, so it was a good idea for me to write *Infinity's* origin story as a prequel. It would *not* be

as effective to write a prequel from the perspective of a character that isn't even in the other books, or from a character that was so minor that the readers don't remember the person.

6. *There could be exceptions to #5 above!* A character doesn't necessarily have to be a person. For example, in the Diffusion series, you could consider the alien entity to be a main character. You could also consider the tree kangaroo, Mbaiso, to be a major character. You could even consider the jungle itself to be a main character (the jungle is actually the antagonist in Diffusion). So, if your book has a nonhuman thing as a major element in the story, you might be able to write a very good Reader Magnet that focuses on that element (perhaps from the perspective of a person who wasn't even in the other book). For example, maybe I could write a Reader Magnet for the Diffusion series that is a story about Mbaiso (the tree kangaroo), from Mbaiso's point of view. This could work even if none of the familiar characters are in the Reader Magnet story. Here's another example: For the Bridgers series, the bridging device itself is a big part of the overall story. I could possibly write an effective Reader Magnet that tells the story of how the bridging device was built and tested for the first time (long before Infinity and Desmond even enter the story). These ideas would still work because they focus on aspects of these stories (instead of specific characters) that readers find fascinating.
7. *Make your Reader Magnet a complete story.* Sometimes authors try to use the first chapter or two of their book as a reader magnet, thinking that readers will read the chapter(s) and want to buy the entire book. I have come to the conclusion that this is not a good idea. Why? Because this frustrates the readers. In fact, it can *anger* some readers. Readers have given you something valuable in return for your Reader Magnet—their email address. In return, they want a full story, even if it is just a short story of 5,000 to 15,000 words. Make your readers happy by giving them a polished, complete, satisfying read. If you do that, your reader magnet will pay for itself many times over.

How long should your Reader Magnet be?

Like I said above, make your readers happy by giving them a polished, complete, satisfying read. For fiction, non-fiction, and memoir, I recommend **5,000 to 20,000 words**. Of course, other types of writing such as poetry and children's book will have fewer words and will depend on the format. Again, the goal is to produce something that will *make readers want more*.

Let's get our Reader Magnets finished by the end of April!

A challenge isn't a challenge unless it's a challenge, right? We won't let these coronavirus closings disrupt our momentum on this project. Let's break this into manageable tasks:

Develop your outline by the end of March

Using the information from above, decide on what you want to write, decide on your targeted length, then put together your outline. Keep in mind that writing a short story (or novelette, or novella, or whatever you want to call it) is not the same thing as writing a novel. Your story should be complete, with a beginning, middle, and end, but since it is short, you won't have as much character development as you would in a novel.

Here is a nice, concise article on how to outline a short story:

<https://tinyurl.com/wxq6ym7>

And here is another good article on outlining a short story:

<https://tinyurl.com/yccfd6nz>

One reason it helps to have a good outline in place is because the writing goes *MUCH* faster if you are following an outline.

Write your Reader Magnet by the end of April

Here's one scenario: Let's say you want to write a 15,000-word Reader Magnet. If you wrote every day in April (30 days) to accomplish this, you would need to write 500 words per day. How long does it take you to write 500 words? Keep in mind you can write much faster when you have a good outline to follow. If you have a good outline, can you write 500 in an hour? In 30 Minutes? In two hours? Whatever your answer is, can you set aside that much time per day in April to complete the project? Keep in mind that if you get started before the beginning of April, you will have fewer words to write every day.

Keep track of your words per day (or other daily goal that suits your Reader Magnet) in the calendar below (or use some other tracking method). Setting goals and sticking to them is the way to accomplish things, right?

2020 APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Edit your Reader Magnet by our second meeting in May (or before)

Our second May meeting is on May 19. Let's make a goal of editing and polishing our Reader Magnets by then! Bring your pages to read in our sessions. Ask others to help with editing. Possibly even pay a professional editor. As I stated before, Trish and I want to support this effort by offering line edits of each Reader Magnet created by the group. We are not professional editors by any stretch of the imagination, but we have both done a *lot* of editing, and we will do our best.

After that we will work together on putting your Reader Magnet to work for you!

*(covered in future episodes of **Get your first 1,000 readers**):*

- Create the *front matter* and *back matter* (the back matter includes a *Call to Action*... what can readers do to read more of your work?)
- Get a high-quality, inexpensive *cover* for your Reader Magnet (we'll look at pre-made covers)
- What to do with your cover once you have it.
- Format your Reader Magnet as an eBook (using free online tools).
- How to use Bookfunnel to distribute your Reader Magnet to readers.
- How to set up your email newsletter list (using MailerLite or MailChimp).
- How to keep readers engaged using your email newsletters so that they will still be around and will be eager to buy when your first (or next) book comes out.
- How to put your Reader Magnet on Amazon (if you choose to do this).
- How to set up your Amazon Author page.
- How to join multi-author giveaways (by far the fastest way to add new readers).
- How to get reviews.
- How to put your Reader Magnet into the right categories on Amazon (such as the Short Reads categories).
- And whatever else you want to try!

Let's INTERACT!

The *WoW Private Critique Group* in Facebook is a great place to ask questions, exchange pages for critique, give each other support, and post progress reports.

If you aren't in the WoW Private Group, please join the group.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/103735599968554/>

If you don't use Facebook at all, send me your ***email address***, and I will be sure to email you all the relevant documents and ongoing updates as they become available so you can keep tabs on this process. We don't want to leave anyone out who wants to participate!

Please send your email address to:
stan@stancsmith.com

Let's do this! *WoW Power!*