

# Control the “Ink” In Your Industry

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“Writing a book has provided the single greatest return on investment than any other business decision I have ever made in the history of the company,” exclaims Todd Hopkins, CEO of Indianapolis-based Office Pride and author of *Five Wisdoms for Entrepreneurial Survival*.

Whoever controls the INK in an industry controls the industry. For years I’ve been encouraging CEOs to write a book. It’s the single greatest marketing tool you can create to attract customers, employees, and industry attention, besides making your children and extended family proud!!!

Best of all, you can hire people to help you ghost write, print, and distribute the book. What follows are details in terms of time, costs, and results from three CEOs that are using a pen to slay their industry competitors.

Mason Harris, founder of YouGotMeals.com, a Rockville MD-based provider of diner loyalty and email marketing services for restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, took the quick and inexpensive approach to write his book entitled *Entrée Marketing: Six Critical Principals for the Overworked Restaurateur* – [www.entreamarketing.biz](http://www.entreamarketing.biz)

Though Harris had been developing his material through industry and customer presentations and had talked about writing a book for over a year, it wasn’t until January that he decided to start. “I wanted to have copies available for the International Restaurant and Food Service Show in NYC March 5 and the Vegas National Nightclub and Bar Show March 7,” recalls Harris. “Having a significant deadline like these shows provided the impetus to get started.”

Harris had roughly six weeks to write his 170 page book. He garnered some great tips from Steve Manning, author of a process on how to write a book in 14 days ([www.writeabooknow.com](http://www.writeabooknow.com)), including the importance of not editing as you write. “If you can talk, you can write,” Harris notes, quoting a line from Manning’s material.

“It did take me 100 to 120 hours, including five days full time to wrap up the book.” Harris then spent \$3000 and had 500 copies printed using a quick print publisher, which turned his Word document into a book in two weeks.

Not only did people buy his \$25 book at the tradeshow, but he felt the book helped separate him from everyone else “because we’re the guys that wrote the book,” added Harris. And he’s already been able to contribute sales leads to the book in the first thirty

days since it was published in addition to sending the book along with proposals. “The book simply increases my credibility,” concludes Harris.

Hopkins, CEO of one of the nation’s largest franchised commercial cleaning services companies with over 70 franchised locations in nine states, had also been thinking about a book for three years. Like Harris, Hopkins material came from training seminars and stories he had been telling for eight years, though most of the stories had never been put in writing.

One simple way to organize and write a meaningful book, if you have a set of core values and a core purpose, is to take this list and make them the titles of your chapters. Then take the next year and gather stories where you and your company have “lived” these principles. These company legends are then retold within each of the corresponding core value chapters and viola! -- You have an instant and useful book.

Hopkins essentially took this approach to organizing his *Five Wisdoms* book, spending \$6000 and hiring a creative writer that helped him make the book a more enjoyable read. “The writer also provided accountability for me to stick with the project until its completion,” noted Hopkins. He then spent \$15,000 to print 4000 copies, of which he’s distributed 3000 since publishing the book a year ago. Most he’s given away.

“I expected it to help communicate and drive a cultural message throughout the organization,” shared Hopkins. “What I had not considered was the positive impact it would have on recruiting Area Developers (franchise owners for larger Metro markets). I can simply send a prospect a copy of the book, and many times after they read it, they immediately call and say they want to be a part of our company.”

Adds Hopkins, “writing a book is one of the best ways for CEO’s to help people get inside their head and to understand how they think and what drives their decisions. For those who agree, this breeds confidence in them joining the organization. And our franchisees have given the book to customers and the results have been positive,” notes Hopkins.

Equally important, Hopkins has calculated that Franchise and Area Developer fees paid by those who would say reading the book influenced their decision has exceeded \$250,000. Not a bad payback in one year.

Guy Maddalone, the self-proclaimed “Household Help Guy” and CEO of GTM, the nationwide leader in household payroll services and human resource management (think NannieGate!), took a much more methodical approach to writing his book.

“The idea for *How to Hire and Retain Your Household Help* began in February 2003 as I was preparing for a presentation to some household managers,” recalls Maddalone. “During the presentation, the audience’s preconceptions were so misconceived it left me wondering if the majority of household employers were as confused as these people.”

After conducting an employer survey, Maddalone and his team sensed the majority of household managers were also confused and so they began building “how to” content in the shape of a 29-page draft. By September, he hired someone to research, interview, and write a book with him.

“At the same time, I began offering a 6-month webinar series to small household help agencies on the 10 risky behaviors of conducting their business,” explains Maddalone. “This was really the rough outline of the book and was designed to ‘try out’ material by bouncing information -- some controversial -- off of those operating inside the industry.”

By March 2004, the book’s third draft was completed and Maddalone had it reviewed by three labor attorneys, a seasoned HR consultant and several household help clients for accuracy and to provide brutally honest feedback which really helped shape the book’s final outcome.

In April Maddalone finished the fifth draft and sent it to a copy editor for grammar and style review and then to the book’s typesetter in May. Changes were made during two “long months,” as Maddalone describes them, finally ending with a last minute name change and a final layout approved on July 15<sup>th</sup>. First bound copies arrived six weeks later.

Over the 18 months, Maddalone figures the overall cost settled around \$70,000 not counting roughly 300 hours of his own time. \$25,000 was spent on the writing and development; 1,000 hours (\$36,000) of his marketing department’s time; \$7,500 printing costs for 3,750 books and \$5,000 to pack and ship 2,500 complimentary signed copies to clients, marketing partners, select prospects, and friends.

As of first quarter 2006, Maddalone had distributed 7000 copies, mainly to CPAs, marketing partners, agencies, and new customers. “And a couple *FORTUNE 500* companies have purchased copies and then hired me as a speaker for ‘lunch and learns,’” shares Maddalone. “These have led to multiple clients.”

And the press has been tremendous, cementing Maddalone and his firm as the industry experts. From multiple appearances on various New York television shows to articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*, the coverage has not only provided impressive collateral for his marketing packets, but the book has helped GTM raise its average ticket price since customers are buying more products. The book also helped Maddalone launch a new help desk service, again, because GTM is now seen as the experts.

“A highlight was talking personally with Jack Welch about the book and knowing that Bill Gates also has a copy,” exclaims Maddalone. And he’s had a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition picked up by the leading publisher of self-help legal books to be released this coming September. “Overall, writing the book and handling the press coverage has helped me become a better communicator,” summarizes Maddalone. “And it gives me and the company more

credibility, which is critical given how many high profile careers have been ruined by mishandling nanny taxes!”

If these stories aren't convincing enough to write a book, at least consider the side benefit Harris achieved. “I named the characters in my book after all the kids of my employees, including my own. What a great thing for them to take the book home and show their kids! And on the appreciation page I named all the employees,” shared Harris.

“Even better, my daughter carries my book back and forth to school in her backpack,” beams Harris.

In summary:

Cost of a book: \$3000 to \$70,000

Payback for business: \$25,000 to \$250,000 plus

Daughter carries book in backpack: priceless

There's plenty of time in 2006 for you to make your mark and your daughter proud. Get writing!