

Interested in Self-Publishing?

Lafayette event discusses ins and outs, ups and downs of getting there

By Lou Fancher



Grant Faulkner

Photo provided

Anyone who has ever been told, "You oughta write a book," and has actually done it, should circle Thursday, Nov. 7 on the calendar. And wanna-be writers who've considered, imagined, fantasized, or tried writing and self-publishing a book should circle it twice. In red ink.

On that day, two DIY gurus, uniquely matched like living, breathing bookends are bringing their expertise to a Commonwealth Club event, "DIY Publishing 101," at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Grant Faulkner is the author of "No Plot? No Problem!" and the executive director of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). Guy Kawasaki is a former chief evangelist of Apple, the founding partner of the angel investor matchmaking service Garage.com, co-founder of the "what's happening" online answer land, Alltop (Google it – BTW, he works for Google, too) and the author, with Shawn Welch, of "APE: Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur – How to Publish a Book."

But what makes them the perfect couple isn't the similarity of the years they've spent slogging along the literary trail; it's their yin-yang. Consider their most recent books: Kawasaki allots pages 58 to 65 (eight pages out of 377) to the subject, "How to Write Your Book." Baty explains, in 143 out of 175 pages, how to spend 720 hours writing a book (that's a 30-day month, without sleep or late night drinking episodes), but devotes just 16 pages to the aftermath, "I Wrote a Novel. Now What?" The combined punch is good physics – equal and opposite, universe-balancing forces – and great preparation for writers interested in self-publishing.

And as with all things in life, the best thing about their yin-yang is how it supports the authors' improbable symbiotic crossover. Despite their contrasting tomes, there's nary a conflicting conclusion between them. The big picture? Writing is a beast, but worth the wrestling.

Except for their sense of timing – with Baty a wild, slippery, slamfest all about momentum and Kawasaki a thickly plotted hike requiring three personas and the heft-

ing of countless nuts-and-bolts details – their overlapping philosophies and a shared OCD-style tendency to sweat the small (medium, big, and extra-large) stuff, keeps their messages aligned: Wrestling the beast as a self-publisher is an idea whose time has come.

APE breaks the self-publishing process into a tricorn attack with practical, thorough information. Early chapters cover a historical overview of the industry and tips for writers entering the ebook and self-publishing universe. Chapters 8-21 outline distribution, print-on-demand companies, pricing, publishing audio and foreign editions, and the all-important "How to Navigate Amazon." Social media guerilla warfare rules the final section (that's not "gorilla" – one can only take the APE thing so far), in which Kawasaki's entrepreneurial muscle is most evident. An explanation of how he and Welch APE'd their book and a glossary of truly useful terms add relevancy to the package. Personal notes are scattered throughout the book: on handling rejection, writers can get it in perspective by reading the list of famous author's rejections on page 20. And making revisions to correct inevitable errors is easy because ebooks are online and print-on-demand book files can be constantly updated before each printing. The notes lend a soft edge to the book's overall technical tone.

Faulkner's book, in contrast, is like an ape on steroids, or amphetamines. It's a mad marathon aimed at a reader-turned-writer busting out 50,000 words in 30 days. The only negative is that, as a guidebook, it might be so much fun to read, you never sit down to write. Baty's tone is more personal trainer than professorial: pumping a writer up with jolly anecdotes and promoting caffeine-injection as much as careful character development. But under the bouncy delivery, there's the considerable knowledge he gained while turning NaNoWriMo from a trendy, hip idea into a phenomenon.

In 1999, 21 people began writing their novels-in-a-month. Six writers finished, and Baty admits, the resulting novels "were stiff and awkward creatures, riddled with enormous plot holes," before adding, "But they were beautiful in their own ungainly way."

In 2012, there were 341,375 participants in the now-octopus-like organization that boasts camps, young writer's programs, festivals, fairs, merchandise, winners certificates and of course, the grand prize, a place on the "Published Wrimos" list. The book's step-by-step walk, through preparation, execution and weekly delivery, is clear and compelling. For writers not fond of the lonely attic, the chance to join the NaNoWriMo community offers a social alternative.

Adding to the wealth of information Baty and Kawasaki will offer, there are two more reasons to circle "7." It symbolizes "good relationships" in Chinese (which makes that yin-yang analogy slide down easily) and attendees will be half-way to a complete self-publishing library with a voucher for a free copy of Kawasaki's "APE" given to each ticket holder.

The Commonwealth Club lecture "DIY Publishing 101," with Grant Faulkner and Guy Kawasaki, will begin at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 7 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Check-in time at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$22 non-members, \$12 members, and \$7 students, and can be purchased online at <http://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/2013-11-07/diy-publishing-101>.

Town Hall Addresses Transportation Hurdles

By Laurie Snyder



Photos Andy Scheck

We represent 60 percent of the residents who commute," said Orinda Mayor Amy Worth recently of the Contra Costa County road warriors making the daily schlep from the bucolic East Bay to urban grindstones. That 'wow' moment was just one of many at the Town Hall hosted by California Senator Mark DeSaulnier in Orinda Oct. 30.

DeSaulnier explained how funding declines are jeopardizing California's transportation infrastructure, thanks to sources like the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and California's Proposition 1B ending – even though the modern workforce requires greater mobility than ever before.

Seventy-one percent of mothers are now employed, contributing to the nationwide average of two or more people in every household commuting daily. Locally, the East Bay ranks

number one for U.S. "mega commuters" – those with commutes of at least 90 minutes and 50 miles. One reason for this, said DeSaulnier, is that housing closest to job centers is the

most expensive, forcing many workers to live further away.

Randy Iwasaki of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority and Tom West from the University of California, Berkeley discussed impacts of technology on traveler behaviors, infrastructure and vehicle safety before Anthony Levandowski fired up his presentation about Google's self-driving cars.

"For me, this is personal," he said, choking up while relating his wife's car accident when pregnant with their now healthy son, Alex. Self-driving cars will not be 100 percent effective – even kids' car seats aren't – but he said many lives will be saved. Perhaps most heartening, cars will no longer be taken away from seniors when vision declines because their cars will drive for them.



Lafayette council member Don Tatzin stops by to take a look at the self-driving car on his way to the meeting.

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