

Marketing, money & motivation

by MV Ellis



With a twenty-year career spanning advertising, marketing, social media, and life coaching, MV brings a unique skillset to the business of being an author.

Shoulda coulda woulda

Hindsight is definitely a b#tch, but with 20/20, there are definitely a few (hundred) things I would do differently as a writer if I had my time again.

Hurry

Before I wrote my debut, *Catching London*, I started several books in the heat of the moment – normally in an “I hate my job”-related fit of pique – but sadly never finished any of them. One of them – a sprawlingly indulgent work of literary fiction – I will someday go back and put to bed, but the rest, I likely never will. Part of me can’t help but wonder where I would be now if I’d moved forward with one of them at the time.

Wait

I wrote *Catching London* – without telling a living soul until I had six publishing offers on the table – and then put it into the world without a clue what I was doing. That’s an exaggeration, but with hindsight, and having seen the way some new authors have hit the market after years of studying the lie of the land, getting to know the ropes, and building a profile, I’d definitely take a more softly-softly approach if I had a do over.

DIY

As a hybrid author now, with the knowledge and (some degree of) confidence I have behind me in self-publishing, I would probably go that route straight out the gate if given the chance. I don’t regret having worked with a publisher at the time, especially as it gave me the opportunity to hit the ground running and learn the ropes as I went along. However, as mentioned above, I could equally have done all of that in the research prior to going to market. This would likely have meant releasing later than I did, but it would also have meant being armed with knowledge that in the event, I had to learn on the job.

Back myself

Don’t get me wrong, I had a level of confidence that *Catching London* was a strong and well-written book, but part of me sought legitimacy in being traditionally published (albeit with a small, independent publisher), regardless. This was mostly as a way to counter other people’s perception that being self-published means being “less than.” But knowing what I do, I now wear my hybrid/indie badge with pride.

It doesn’t stop there, though. I also made decisions based on my perception of myself in the market, which may not have matched up with reality. For example, I delayed

starting a reader group, doubting that anyone would be interested in joining. I finally did so a little over a year ago, and now it has 700 members!

Get an agent

Of course, one doesn’t just click one’s fingers and get an agent, but with hindsight, I would have tried harder to secure one, not so much to secure a book deal, but for things like subsidiary rights, and movie/TV deals. Never say never, though. The latter is still very much on the to-do list.

I’ll leave it there with the words of the late, great Edith Piaf, and say *je ne regrette rien*. I did what I did, I said what I said, I’m happy with where I am. Life would be boring if we never put a foot wrong along the way.

** Due to a number of conflicting commitments, sadly, this will be my last regular column for Hearts Talk. However, you don’t get rid of me that easily, so keep an eye out for my guest posts throughout 2021, including one in my capacity as a member of RWA’s newly-formed Diversity Committee. Thank you so much for reading, and for your kind words of support and encouragement for the column throughout this year, it means the world.*

If you can’t be good, be kickass. If you can’t be kickass, be badass.