

1,000 Authors Podcast Transcription: Episode Two Hundred And Five: How Gluttony Can Scupper Your Book [7 Deadly Sins]

In an industry stuffed with marketing bullshit, empty promises and shiny-suited liars, one woman's had enough. She knows what it's like to have the wrong clients, no money and no time for fun, but she also knows how to fix it, and, on the Business For Superheroes Show, she promises to tell the down and dirty truth about business, sales and running away with the circus! Here's your host: Vicky Fraser...



Vicky: Hello and welcome to the 1000 Authors show! I'm Vicky Fraser, and this is my husband, Joe.

Joe: Hello!

Vicky: Hello. It's pretty early, and it's cold.

Joe: I do not think the recording podcasts at half seven in the morning is gonna become the new thing.

Vicky: No, it's not, it's just that we ran out of other time. Had a late night last night.

Joe: Village hall meeting.

Vicky: Yes. Yes, the village hall meeting. Yes. Right, so, we're drinking tea this morning, because it is morning.

Joe: 'Cause it is half past seven in the morning.

Vicky: And we're huddling under a blanket, because my office hasn't quite warmed up yet. And, today, we are talking, we're on deadly sin number three. But we'll come to that in a moment. Because first we're just gonna do the normal what we're reading. Joe, what are you reading?

Joe: I'm reading a series of books called "The Wheel of Time", by Robert Jordan. I'm on book, like, 17, or something. It feels like it's reaching a crescendo. Something's happening. It might conclude at some point in the next seven or eight books.

Vicky: Are you actually enjoying it?

Joe: Ugh, it's kind of like an endurance sport now.

Vicky: Well stop it! There's so many books in the world to read, and you're enduring a never ending series of books, because you feel like you should, that's ridiculous.

Joe: Well, that's where we are.

Vicky: Right, okay. And I am reading "The Long Walk", by Richard Bachman. Actually, I've just finished reading "The Long Walk" by Richard Bachman, who is Stephen King. And it was, oh, it was epic.

Joe: Yeah?

Vicky: Yeah. It was fantastic. It's the story of a kind of, it's not even the future now, 'cause I think it was set in the 1970s or '80s. So maybe when he wrote it it was the future. Ish. But it's an alternate reality I guess. It's not horror. Well, it's not supernatural horror. And it's about a long walk, that young men do. And this is probably spoiler alert, so if you've never read this, you might wanna, I'm not gonna spoil the ending. But if you don't know what it is about at all, I think they choose 100, or 100 young men apply for this long walk, and they basically just walk until they die. And the last man standing is the winner.

Joe: Oh, nice.

Vicky: But they're not allowed to slow down below four miles an hour. They're not allowed to stop, they're not allowed to wander off course. They're basically followed by soldiers. I kinda started off reading the book and just being really angry at the entire idea of it, and horrified at it. And then, nothing

really happens in it, except so much happens in it. And Ruth lent me the book, hi Ruth!

Joe: Hi Ruth.

Vicky: And I absolutely loved it, and I found it really disturbing, and thought-provoking, and having walked 26 miles, do you remember, when we did that night walk? I'm just like, "No", 'cause they walk hundreds of miles, without stopping. And I just was thinking, "It's just not possible." Anyway, so that is a fantastic book. It's a really fantastic book. I will read it again in 53 years. When I've got over it. And, non-fiction, I am reading, "Do You Talk Funny?" by David Nihill. Which is all about how to talk funny, and be funny, in writing. And that was sent to me by Gordon Quigley, thank you Gordon.

Joe: Hi Gordon.

Vicky: That was a really nice surprise. And, yeah, it's great. It's by a guy who decided that he wanted to, he was terrified of public speaking. Like, properly terrified of public speaking. So, he decided to get over that, he would learn how to do stand up comedy.

Joe: Ugh.

Vicky: Which is way scarier than public speaking. And he spent a year learning to be a stand up comedian in the States. And then wrote this book about how to be funny. And it's really good, it's very good. I'm really enjoying it. So, that's what we're reading at the moment. Yes, yes.

Joe: Okay. So, seven deadly sins.

Vicky: Yeah. We are on deadly sin number three, not number two, as it says in my notes. And, this is gluttony.

Joe: Right. So how does that work? How do we get that into writing a book?

Vicky: Well. You may find that a lot of these deadly sins are actually manifestations of procrastination. And this sin of gluttony is kind of a form of procrastination, I guess. So I think there are three ways, in my humble but

correct opinion, there are three ways in which gluttony can scupper your big book writing adventure. Shall we go through them?

Joe: I think we better had.

Vicky: Yes. Way number one. Too much talk. So glutting yourself on the conversation of, "I'm gonna do this!" 'Cause we all know someone who talks a big game, but never seems to do anything about it, right?

Joe: Right, they're always talking about what they'll do, rather than doing it.

Vicky: Exactly. And, I think most of us will probably been that person, at some point or another. I know I have. So I'm not casting aspersions without including myself in that, as well. But, you know, I have written a lot of books, so I can stand here and say that about people who say they're going to write a book and then don't. I've known many many people who are going to write a book, or climb a mountain, or run a marathon, or quit their job, or learn a language. And then they just never do it.

Joe: Travel round the world, do this, do that.

Vicky: Yeah, and you just think, "Well, go on then." Stop talking about it, and start doing it. And I'm not talking about when you announce to a select few people, "I'm gonna do this thing." 'Cause that's like an accountability thing. And I did that, when I wrote my first book, I stood up in front of a room full of people and said, "I'm gonna write my book, "and I'm gonna have it in my hands "by the next meeting." And I did. What I didn't do, was spend a lot of time telling everybody who would listen that I was gonna write my book. Because the problem with that is, when you're really busy talking about something, you fool your brain into believing you've actually already done something useful. 'Cause there's quite a lot of really interesting research about this sort of thing. So this is why visualization is only good up to a point. Right? 'Cause you visualize yourself being successful at something, or winning something, and that's great, because it makes you believe that you can do it, and it spurs you on to do it.

Joe: But it might make you believe that you have done it.

Vicky: Yeah, if you do it too much, then your brain starts to be like, "Oh, I've done it, it's fine, "I can just sit back." And they've done some research, and I literally just remembered this, I have no idea where the research is, and you can go and look for it if you want to, but they did some research a while ago on shopaholic people. Who have a genuine problem with just buying stuff. Don't look at me like that, I don't have a problem with buying stuff. I just occasionally buy ridiculous things. But yeah, people who can't stop buying. And they'll run up-- They'll run up thousands of pounds on credit cards, and loans, and things like that. And destroy their lives, and their family's lives. And, so they did this thing, where they had them go window shopping instead. And they found that actually, window shopping produces the same chemical changes in your brain, the same feelings in your brain, as actually buying something. Only you don't get the buyer's remorse that often happens when you buy stuff that you know you shouldn't. And so that's a similar theory to what can go on with visualization and talking about stuff. So, yeah, by all means announce that you're gonna write a book to people, but then shut up about it, and actually do it.

Joe: Yeah, that's like step one of many steps of doing it. You can't just keep repeating that one.

Vicky: You can't. And, you know, if you're listening, you'll probably be thinking to yourself right now, "Oh yeah, I know people "who do that." Or, "Ooh yeah, I've done that before." And we all have, we've all done it. And I think that part of it is to do with fear, 'cause it's a big thing to do, "I'm gonna write a book" is a big thing to do. And part of it is to do with, well, how much do you really want to write a book? Do you want to write it enough to actually stop talking about it and sit down and do it? Because if you don't really really want to do it, then, just don't.

Joe: I mean talking about it is a lot easier, isn't it?

Vicky: Yeah. Talking about it is much easier. And, for a while, people will believe you, and they'll be like, "Oh, that's great." And then after a while, they'll be like, "Yeah, that person's never gonna do it, "'cause they've been talking "about it for six months now. "And they haven't sat down and started." So that's way number one. Is too much talking, and it is a form of greed, 'cause it's like, "I'm just gonna talk "about this thing that I'm gonna do, "all the time."

Add stabbing. 'Cause after a while, people are like, "Oh my God, you just don't wanna hear "you talking about that anymore." Just go and do it, or shut up. So that is the form of gluttony. And that's how it can scupper your book. Second way that gluttony can scupper your book is too much research. And this happens to me all the time. And this is a fear thing as well as a procrastination thing. And I remember having minor panic attacks in the library, at university, when I was writing my dissertation. Because I knew that the time for researching had passed, and the time for writing was nigh. And I was still researching frantically, and I didn't really need to be at this point. But I just did not wanna start writing. Because that's really scary.

Joe: That's like the next bit. That's the scary bit.

Vicky: Yeah. So this kind of research greed. You start off with, "Oh, I need to know "a little bit more about this particular topic." Or, "There's a bit of a gap "in my knowledge here." And that's probably true.

Joe: Totally valid. Good use of your time.

Vicky: But then, you research it, and then you disappear down a wormhole of slightly related research, that kind of might come in useful, but isn't really related to your core question, and your core topic. And before you know it, you've spent six months researching, and you've written not a single word. And that's a bad thing, particularly when you've got a dissertation that's due next week.

Joe: Yes.

Vicky: I got a First for my dissertation, in the end.

Joe: You know, you got a job to do, you're writing this book for a reason, and all the time you are not writing the book, all the time you don't have the book in your hand, you're--

Vicky: It's not doing anything for you.

Joe: It's not doing anything, yeah, it's not gaining you the benefit that you wanted.

Vicky: Yes. So, my advice for you, if you're an over-researcher like me, because I am an over-researcher, is you just have to trust in yourself that there will come a time when you know enough. You're never gonna know everything about a topic, you can't, nobody can. So, you're just gonna have to trust that you know enough to write this part of your book. And my second piece of advice about the over-researching thing is, do the vast majority of your research early on in the planning and thinking stage of your book. So that's when you should be doing this stuff, you gather your material, you make your notes on the material, you decide what's gonna be useful, what's not gonna be useful, you save the articles that you wanna read so that you can refer to them offline, when you need them, when you're writing. And then you won't disappear down a wormhole of ridiculous information.

Joe: Yes. Online information is great, but it is distracting, and it does pull you off in a different direction every five minutes.

Vicky: Yes. YouTube is a fantastic thing, and I've learnt to do many things, including my makeup, on YouTube, but that little sidebar with the, "These things "you might be interested in", they're terrible! Because I'll look at it, I'm like, "Yes, I am interested in it." Because YouTube's algorithms are really good. And they know exactly that once I finish learning how to do my makeup, I'm probably gonna watch cats being cute. So, so that's a real problem. And if you're thinking, "But what if I've done "my research, and then I'm writing, "and then I realize "that I don't know enough about this?" Fine, set aside a maximum of half an hour.

Joe: Go and do that.

Vicky: Go and do that, and then come back again. But don't disappear again into research phase again. It's like, no, you've got enough information, you might just need a couple of other bits and pieces. And you can even write yourself a big sticky note, if you're doing it on paper, or a big note, if you're doing it on your thing, and say, "I need to find out more about this." And then come back and do it in the editing stage. Just get that first draft down. So your first edit could be, "Okay, I didn't know "enough about this, I need to go "and do a little bit more research." But don't allow research to get in the way of getting your shitty first draft down on paper, because otherwise, you'll

never finish it. And you'll get very, very stressed, as well. Because over-researching, and getting too much information is really stressful. This is why I think a lot of modern courses fail. People like me, who run courses, I think they don't have a very good completion rate, because they just think that they need to throw loads of information at people, and it's just really overwhelming. And so, if you want somebody to finish something, give them, and this leads onto the third way in which gluttony can scupper your book, just give people the one thing, and teach them a skill. And don't give them too much extra information. They don't need all of that other stuff to learn this one thing. If I want to know how to take great photos on my iPhone, I don't need to know how every single filter works, I don't need all of the extra, you can buy extra lenses and things, can't you, for iPhones? I don't need all of that, I just wanna know how to set up an interesting photo. And that's something that Sean D'Souza does brilliantly, 'cause he takes beautiful photos on an iPhone.

Joe: Hi Sean.

Vicky: Hi Sean! And he's just started running this tiny little "How to Take Great Photos" course. And that's literally all he teaches you, on your iPhone. It's just iPhone.

Joe: Cool.

Vicky: So related to way number three in which gluttony can scupper you, is too much bloat. So much like when I eat spaghetti, too much spaghetti, and then I get really bloated, and have the spaghetti regret, if you get overexcited about your book, and lose the core message of it, your book will also become bloated.

Joe: It stops being lean and informative, and starts being--

Vicky: A big rambling mess.

Joe: A big rambling mess, yeah.

Vicky: Yeah, and we've all read books like that. We've all read books where we think, "Okay, the core message was great, "but they could've said that "in

half the pages." And usually, they could've done. And there's a couple of reasons why that might happen. One is over-researching. "Oh, I've done all this research, "and now I need to use it all in this book."

Joe: Need to do something.

Vicky: You don't. Some of that research might form another book, or some articles, or some blog posts. You don't need to use it all in this book. So be really really strict about what you include. And the second reason I think that bloated books happen, is people think that to write a good book, it needs to be a big, thick book. And, it doesn't. If you've got a big, complicated message, then maybe it will be a big, thick book. But, if you can say what you need to say in half the words, then--

Joe: Do that.

Vicky: Do that! Because people will enjoy it more, they will get more out of it, for sure. You'll get more positive reviews. 'Cause quite a lot of negative reviews are like, "It was okay, but it was too long."

Joe: Yeah, just repeated the same thing.

Vicky: Yeah. And I've read a lot of business books that just keep repeating themselves ad nauseum. And it's like, "Yeah, okay, you've hammered "that point home 53 times now." And it's a skill, it's difficult to stop your book bloating, because you want to make sure that people have understood it, and you want to give a couple of different examples, and you just think, "When do you stop?" And also, if you've got all these things that you want to say, but they're not directly related to your main point, then you wanna put them in in case you lose them. You've got endless storage space on your computer. Cut and paste it, stick it in a little file, give it a name, and use it somewhere else.

Joe: Use it for the next book.

Vicky: Yeah, getting rid of it doesn't mean getting rid of it forever. It just means don't use it all in your book. And this is where a really good editor will be worth their weight in gold, if you really struggle to cut out the bloat from

your book, a really good editor will be able to help you do that. Or at the very least, beta readers, who can go, this chapter was a waste of time.

Joe: Yeah, you said this bit before. You've done that.

Vicky: Yeah, yeah. So, yeah, that's the three ways of gluttony. In writing your book. You don't have to cram everything in. You can always write other books. Just be really super brutal. Yeah, what's the takeaway, Joe?

Joe: Takeaway, know when to stop.

Vicky: Yeah. Good rule for life, that.

Joe: Know when to stop your research, know when to stop your talking, and know when to stop your writing.

Vicky: Yeah. That's, yeah. That's nicely put. And that is a lot easier said than done, it really is. It's not easier said than done to stop talking about it, you can just stop talking about it. The research thing takes an act of willpower and courage. And the writing thing is a little bit more skilled, and if you struggle with that, then get other people to read it. You should get other people to read it anyway. For sure.

Joe: Definitely.

Vicky: But yeah, know when to stop. Know when to stop. So coming up next week, we're gonna be tackling another deadly sin. Which I've got written down as sloth.

Joe: Okay.

Vicky: And is gonna be accompanied by a picture of a sloth, because they're cute. Maybe a three-toed one, maybe a five-toed one. Who knows? You can choose the sloth.

Joe: I will choose the sloth.

Vicky: Yes. And we can talk to you a little bit about sloths, as well. Just because. Well they're endangered. And they're lovely. And they move really slowly. Do you remember that one we saw in Costa Rica?

Joe: Yes.

Vicky: Ugh, we could talk about that. That was great. And right, what's going on in my world? Okay, so this is very exciting. I am shortly opening up the waiting list for my live write your book course. And when I say live, I don't mean in person with me, I mean online. But we will be doing it live, over the course of 12 weeks, with a break in the middle.

Joe: Nice.

Vicky: Week off in the middle. And we will be starting right from your blank page, even if you haven't got an idea yet, we'll be starting right from there, and by the time the 12 weeks is done, if you do all of the things, you will have your, at least your shitty first draft of your book.

Joe: Nice.

Vicky: Yeah. And there'll be a group, it'll be group work, you'll be in small groups, and I will give you feedback on everything you do, pretty much every day of the week. You'll have different things to do each week and each day. It's gonna be a very intensive course. But if you can put aside an hour a day to do it--

Joe: You'll have a book.

Vicky: You'll have, not an entire book by the end of it, I'm not gonna promise that, but you will have hopefully, your shitty first draft of your book. And that is very very doable. And if you can put aside more than an hour a day, then obviously, you'll be further along. But yeah, I'm really excited about this. Really excited about it. It's gonna be really good fun. It's gonna be hard work for everybody, including me. But it's gonna be very much worth it, I think. So if you have always wanted to write a book, then yeah, I'll be putting out a waiting list invite. You can join the waiting list. I'm not making that many places available. It's gonna be a maximum of 15. And, I do expect that it will

sell out. So, yeah, if you wanna get on the waiting list, watch this space. And, if you've listened to every episode, email me with your postal address, and we'll send you a special silly gift. And, if you like this podcast, please go and subscribe on iTunes.

Joe: Do so, rate us!

Vicky: Yes!

Joe: Five stars.

Vicky: Five stars, write us a review, we do like a review.

Joe: Do like a good review, a good review.

Vicky: Joe likes a review. Yeah. If you don't like us and you want to leave us a bad review, other podcasts are available.

Joe: You could do something else with your time.

Vicky: Yeah. There's actually loads of really good podcasts that we listen to. And at some point, we should do an episode of "These are the podcasts that we listen to, "and these are why we love them." Let's do that after the seven deadly sins.

Joe: Okay. Good plan, do that.

Vicky: Good plan. Right, we'll be back same time next week. In the meantime, have a fabulous week and weekend, and we'll see you soon.

Joe: Bye!

Vicky: Bye!

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