

Scam-Spotting: If It Looks Like A Scam, It Probably Is

By Holly Lisle

The website this article was written about is long gone, along, no doubt, with the money of any hopefuls who invested in its ridiculous product. It was here –

<http://www.HowToWriteABookIn14Days.com>

– and it isn't anymore. (March 17, 2008–It's still around. See the update below.)

It promised a lot of insane, impossible things that people desperate for publication might hope to believe, just because it would be so very cool if any of them were true.

This guy "Allen Lycka's" site is gone. But there are sites and other scammers out there just as vile, I assure you. And there will always be others, as long as people dream of writing books.

So, with that in mind, here is my dissection of one foul scamfest of a website, presented with the hopes that it will help you dissect a few scammers on your own.

(Reprinted from the Rants Board, Old Forward Motion Community, Oct. 1, 2000)

October 13, 2003 –

Received an e-mail which contained the following:

Miss Lisle, I just wanted to let you know that the scammer you mentioned, Steve Manning, has moved his fraud to [LINK DELETED BECAUSE IT FORWARDED TO A DANGEROUS PAGE] and apparently hasn't changed his content much. (Just in case you wanted to let readers in on the new scam-site.)

At the moment, this site is still active, and brings the phrase caveat emptor to mind.*

October 16, 2003

But wait ... there's more:

The new website for this guy is:

<http://www.freelance-writing.net/write-a-book.htm>

Just in case you wish to update your site.

Tony

No live links on these – live links from reputable sites would just move this garbage further up the search engine chain, where it would reach more unsuspecting would-be writers. I don't want to advertise for the enemy. –

Holly

March 17, 2008

Exciting new changes in the salesletter at writeabooknow.com. Now, having never professionally published a book in his life, he has the balls to call himself a Master Writer (instead of the earlier Master Teacher).

April 16, 2019

Now he's here. Same product. Different approach.

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1655581.Steve_Manning

As in:

Famous Master Writer Teaches You How to Write a Book in Less Than 14 Days Guaranteed! Discover How Hes Trained Thousands to Write Their Book Faster Than They Ever Thought Possible!

Now You Have A Master Writer at Your Beck and Call!!

The sales letter has changed, but the hype and the bullshit haven't. The BIG change in his website is that he's now charging \$400 for his pile of crap.

**caveat emptor – Latin for "Let the buyer beware." The more up-to-date translation is "When in public showers, keep your soap on a rope and don't bend over."*

Part I: The Promise – Be Rich and Famous Instantly, With No Talent and No Work

First, this site tells us that if we invest in his product, we'll be working with a "famous master teacher." But no actual

name is mentioned yet.

Who is this “famous master teacher”? How many books has he or she written? How much of his income does he make from writing books? Who published these books? Where have they placed on bestseller lists? How many are readily available?

It is entirely possible to write a book in 14 days. But ol’ Allen’s “truths” set off some serious warning bells for me.

Quoted from his site:

“These are truths you’ve probably suspected all along:

- 1. **Talent:** In order to write a book, the less writing talent you have, the easier it will be for you. If you’re a professional writer right now, it’s an uphill struggle as you try to perfect what’s already perfect. These techniques will free you from the bonds of perfection and you’ll discover in minutes that you already have all the talent you need to write an outstanding book ... honest!*
- 2. **Creativity:** I have one word of advice for you when it comes to creativity. DON’T. I’ll show you exactly what publishers want ... and it’s NOT creativity. Those who wish to be creative will rarely be published. The sooner you learn that, the sooner you’ll be a very successful author.*
- 3. **Time:** You’re a busy professional. You’ve probably been told it takes years to write a good book. These are lies. You can write your book in 14 days or less, even if you’ve got a full-time speaking business and other demands on your time. No tricks, no asterisks. As one of my clients, professional speaker John Watkis, said to me, “Steve, if I hadn’t used your information I’d probably STILL be writing my book. A book that’s now published and selling fast!”*
- 4. **Luck:** Forget luck. Luck has nothing to do with writing*

and publishing your book. Follow the guidelines I'll set out for you and you'll be on a direct course for publishing success.

5. **Writing ability:** *Do you know how to talk? Then you know how to write! Writing isn't like painting or sculpting or playing tennis. You don't need to spend years learning the basics and mastering the techniques. You've already done that as a child. You're already a master writer. I give you the techniques to make it happen!*
6. **Getting an agent:** *I don't want you simply to write a manuscript. I want you to SELL your book to a publisher. I'll give you the three steps to getting an agent that will have several of them lining up within 36 hours!"*

He sounds quite talented at telling people what they want to hear. But, sadly, I don't agree with a single one of his truths except the one that it is possible to write a book in fourteen days. That's possible.

The rest sounds like a pretty nifty set of ways to separate hopefuls from \$300+ dollars of their money.

My impression, FWIW.

Part II: The Decoys – or Who Are We Dealing With, Anyway?

Here's a quote given on the site as a recommendation for the course –

"Steve Manning is the world expert on writing productivity and writing quality. I've written and published 45 books. I just wish I had Steve's information when I started. I'd be

even more prolific. I'm putting his techniques into practice right away!"

*Bob Bly,
best-selling author,
New York*

I found a couple of other mentions of what a genius Steve Manning was, too.

But the person who claims to have created this system says his name is **Allen Lycka**. The one who wants your money, and who wants you to trust him to teach you how to write a book in 14 days, says his name is Allen Lycka. So why are there all these praises for Steve Manning? What do they have to do with anything?

(March 17, 2008—Allen Lycka was apparently an affiliate using ol' Stevie's plug-and-play sales page, which weirdly, made it sound as if the affiliate was the author of the course. This entire review is actually about the ***Write A Book in 14 Days*** course by **Steve Manning**—a fact that was impossible to ascertain back when it was written.)

Part III: What They Really Want, or Let's Play Follow the Money

This little final page from the guy's site is educational in what it says about this guy and how he makes his money. Boldfaced, red print is my commentary.

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100% Unconditional Publisher's-Contract-in-Your-Pocket Money-Back Guarantee If How to Write A Book On Anything in 14 Days or Less-A Guide for Professionals isn't everything I say it is, if you aren't absolutely thrilled when you open the huge

box I'm going to send you, if you are dissatisfied in any way, shape or form ever in your entire life, and if you fail to have a publisher's contract in your pocket within 12 months of purchasing it, I'll give you 100% of your investment back, including any shipping charges. Bottom line, I unconditionally guarantee your total and complete satisfaction forever!

I'm assuming that you will lose your receipt, be embarrassed that you failed to make my stunning system work and won't request a refund, or that I will have managed to move my business and change my name before you ask for your money back.

Why would I make such an outrageous offer to potentially let you take till you're old and gray to decide? Because I know that once you see what you get, you would be crazy to return it.

I guarantee you the techniques outlined in the How to Write A Book On Anything in 14 Days or Less-A Guide for Professionals success system are the most comprehensive, easiest to use, fastest, and most effective methods for writing any book ever developed or your money back!

What would you do if you could write the book you want, in just days get ready to become a book-writing machine!

*I know it sounds outrageous, but I'm not worried about refunds. I really honestly do teach thousands of people how to write their books. I've got dozens of books from my students as examples on my bookcase. **Give me titles, sweetie. Give me ISBN numbers. Give me something beside your less-than-believable word.** These proven techniques work! My students wouldn't even think of sending back these materials! (They're way too valuable!)*

Besides, I get virtually zippo returns anyway so I could care

less about how long my guarantee period is for.

\$2,519.95 In FREE Gifts You Can Keep Just For Taking A Peek! Just to “sweeten the deal,” if you order within the next ten days, I’ll include three valuable bonuses worth \$2,519.95.

Okay, guys. Here’s the really interesting part of this little manifesto – a Houdini trick worth your closest attention.

Follow the Money Section One

*Free Outstanding Amazing Bonus #1 (\$1,995 Value) **Check out this price.***

Editing of your manuscript

One of the biggest problems author’s have is getting a professional to take a look at their work and give them an honest critique. That’s just what you’ve got with this bonus. When your manuscript is finished, send it, along with your blueprint, and I’ll personally go through the entire book, page by page. That’s me! Me Personally! I don’t give it to an associate, or an underling. I’m the person looking at your book!

I’ll give you pages of suggestions, and an overall criticism of the manuscript designed to make your book the very best it can be! This is an invaluable bonus. My usual price for this kind of service is at least \$1995. It’s yours absolutely free!

“My usual price for this kind of service is at least \$1995. It’s yours absolutely free!” he says. – So he makes a significant sum of his money from “manuscript criticism,” though we have no reason to believe that he could edit a manuscript into salable condition.

Follow the Money Section TWO

Free Outstanding Amazing Bonus # 2 (\$495 Value)

Your Agent Acquisition Sales Letter If I had a nickel for every time a writer told me they can't get an agent because they're not published, and can't get published because they have no agent-I'd be rich!

He doesn't need those nickels. The SOB is charging \$500 bucks to write a single query letter.

Well you CAN get an agent. They're all out there waiting for you. Unfortunately, would-be authors always present themselves so poorly that they never get the attention from an agent they deserve BUT

This is the "You can't get there from here" lie. Notice that he says "would-be authors always present themselves so poorly that they never get the attention from an agent they deserve."

But I did. I sold my first novel to a reputable publisher on my own, and got an agent on my own. So did Sheila Kelly (SL Viehl). So has every other pro out there. We didn't use magic. We sure as shit didn't pay some weasel a fortune to write an Agent Acquisition Letter for us. We just learned how to write query letters.

You'll get it now! I'll write for you a variation of my famous Agent Acquisition Sales Letter. This letter usually gets a 10 per cent response from agents wanting to see the manuscript. For one project I had four agents calling me, wanting to represent a book. Now that's powerful.

He charges \$495 to write a query letter. Damn! Why haven't I been doing this? Better yet, he does it from a template. "A Variation of my Famous Agent Acquisition Sales Letter" means

you're getting a form letter with your name and title filled in.

If you think an agent would help you (and the answer to that is definitely yes) then you owe it to yourself to get this sales letter written for you. This bonus alone is worth at least twice the value of the entire course. Some of my students buy the whole course just to get me to write this agent acquisition letter!

(Some of his students are even bigger suckers than he expects you to be.) Now it's yours FREE as a bonus! And STILL MORE!!!

Follow the Money Section THREE

Free Outstanding Amazing Bonus #3 (\$29.95 Value)

Agent list

Want to know where all the hot agents are? Their names, addresses, e-mail and telephone numbers? Hey, I've got it all right here in this special report. 120 of the continent's hottest agents who are looking for new manuscripts right now.

Think of a hot selling author right now-Grisham, Turow, King, Follett, Jack Canfield, Danielle Steele, Stephen Covey-their agents are on this list! This is a list that is pure gold, and is the result of two years of researching and digging!

Mmmm-hmmm. Or twenty minutes at the AAR web site. Still no sign that he makes, or has ever made, a single dime from writing.

And now for The Main Bait ::drumroll, please:: -

Follow the Money Section FOUR

The How to Write A Book On Anything in 14 Days or Less-A

Guide for Professionals success system costs just \$697. However, as part of a continent wide marketing test, and for a limited time, I'm taking \$100 off the price, so you pay only \$597 plus \$19.95 for shipping. (It's a huge box!)

And at that price, professionals line up to buy it because they know the results they're going to get. But you're a professional. And I'm a professional. So you now have an unbelievable professional discount.

We have something unbelievable, all right – but it isn't the discount.

Your price for the entire package is just \$297. Only if you order within the next 10 days!!

Such a deal. Here's where another chunk of his money comes from. Oh ... and neat little aside – his site is set up so that the date shown is always ten days from whenever you are reading it. No matter when you go there, you'll always have "JUST TEN DAYS!" to get this exciting pile of crap.

If you want to write a book, if you think a book would improve your career or improve your credibility, notoriety, fame, wealth or standing, go to your telephone and call me, Allen Lycka, toll-free at (phone number). I'll answer any additional questions you might have.

Remember, this number rings right on my desk. If I'm in my home office, the next voice you hear will be mine. If you call me at 2:00 in the morning, I'll probably sound a little groggy. And if you get my wife, Donna, or my answering robot, just leave a message and I'll call you right back.

You can use your VISA card if you'd like. You can give me your number over the telephone, or you can fax it to me. (It's a secure fax positioned in my office. I'm the only one with access to it.)

And for your convenience, you can make two easy payments of \$150 spread 30 days apart. Or drop a check in the mail with your name and address.

You must be satisfied or you receive 100% of your money back! When I answer the telephone, just tell me you want to order the How to Write A Book On Anything in 14 Days or Less-A Guide for Professionals success program.

Remember, you'll receive the entire system plus the \$2,519.95 in bonuses.

Sincerely,

(phone number)

P.S.

In brief, here's the deal. You get a complete 258-page manual that takes you step by step through the process of writing. This manual has been tested, retested and proven so the results you're looking for are right there. Everything you could ever want to help you write and publish your book in the shortest possible time is right there!

You also get an extensive collection of audiotapes so you can learn while your drive, or while you relax. Plus, the outstanding "QuickStart" audio tape that will have you well on your way to producing your book in just 30 minutes! It simply doesn't get any better than this!

AND a complete three-hour video library. This is the actual seminar I've given all over North America.

Plus, I'm also including my Hotline number. On any business day, you can dial this special Hotline number and the phone rings right on my desk. If I'm in my office, you've got me at your beck and call.

AND ALL THE BONUSES! Free Outstanding Amazing Bonus #1

(\$1,995 Value) Editing of your manuscript Free Outstanding Amazing Bonus # 2 (\$495 Value) Your Agent Acquisition Sales Letter Free Outstanding Amazing Bonus #3 (\$29.95 Value) Your List of Agents

Deadline: You must place your order by 5:00p.m. Thursday, October 12, 2000

PPS. If you are not planning to invest in my package, then please ask yourself this question: "How will I learn to write a marketable book quickly enough so it fits into my busy profession." If you can't answer that, you MUST call (phone number)

If you are planning to invest in this package, ask yourself *this* question – who IS this guy and why is what he says worth a dime? He gives no credible (i.e. track-downable) references, lists no titles of his own, no books that I was able to find on Amazon (useful simply because its backlist is so huge) written by clients who don't "request to remain anonymous", and wants a shitload of money for something that, from the very beginning, sounds too good to be true.

Part IV: Keeping 'Em Stupid, or Let's Discredit the Enemy

Oh, and one final note on a bit I thought was especially neat.

Here's another quote from the site:

Now, those are all bold claims. And each one of them has been challenged by "professional" writers. But when they see the techniques and strategies, when they actually use them, they actually write me letters afterwards apologizing and agreeing that these strategies not only work, they work better than anything they've ever seen in their lives.

It's always a good idea to jump right in and discredit us "professional" writers (I love the quotation marks – they make anyone who questions him sound so sleazy) – and we "professional" writers are notorious for being loud and negative about things that we see as scams aimed at ripping new writers off.

Besides, what do people who actually write for a living know about what it takes to be a writer? Obviously you're better off spending a fortune getting your info from someone with no verifiable credentials but a pretty web site. **This said with tongue FIRMLY in cheek, in case anyone thought I was serious.**

Here's my rule of thumb. If it sounds too good too be true, it probably is.

My Review of How To Write A Book In 14 Days >>

NOTE: If this article resonates with you, and you want to meet other writers who share your passion and who are working in a friendly, supportive environment (*and alerting each other to current versions of the crap above*) come hang out with us and make progress on your writing in my free writing community.

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