



Real You for Authors

8 ESSENTIALS FOR WOMEN WRITERS

KAIRA ROUDA

Real You For Authors

8 Essentials for Women Writers



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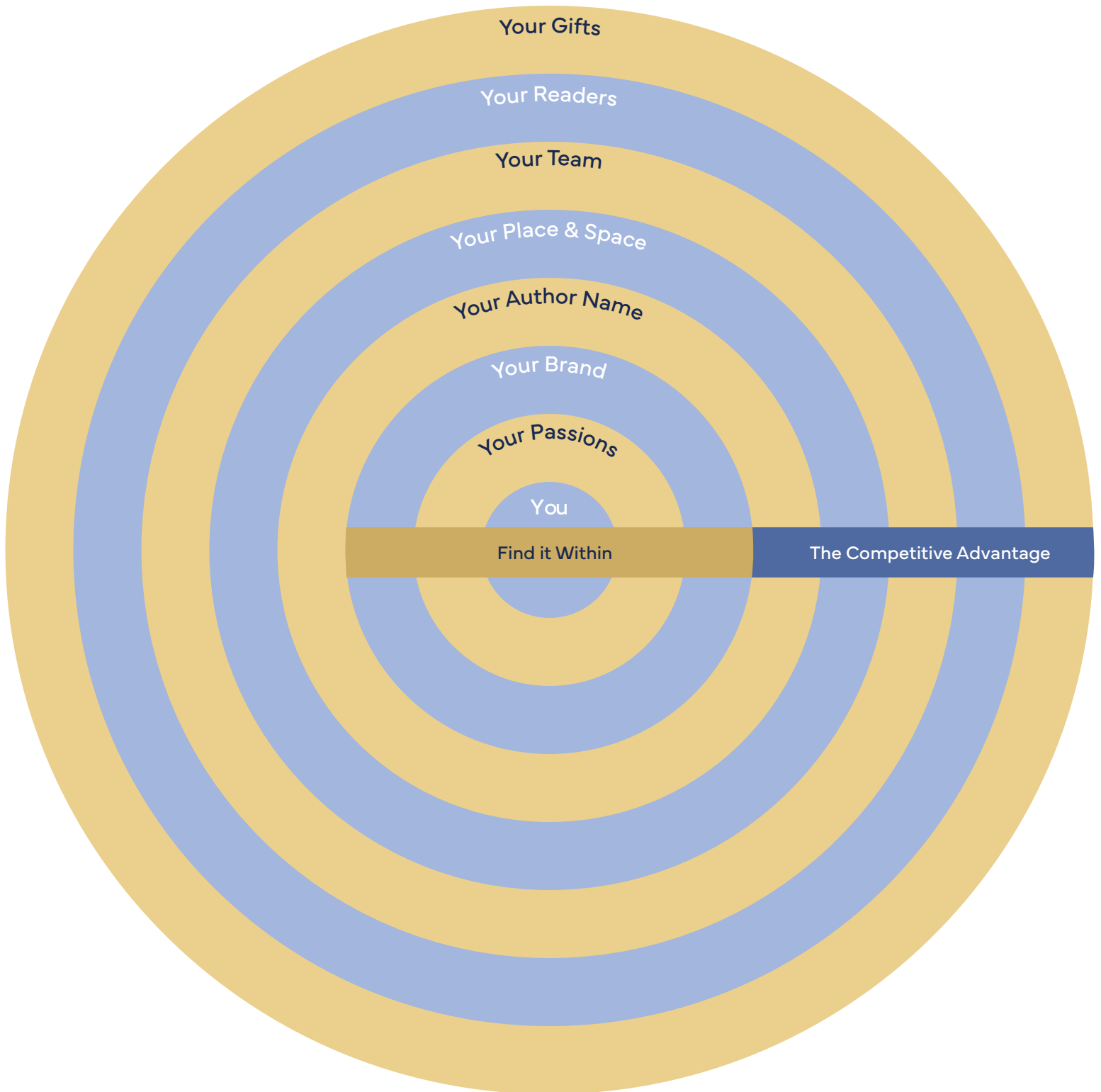
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The Real You Chart





INTRODUCTION

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."
~ Maya Angelou

Whether you are traditionally, independently or not yet published, whether you're a new author or a seasoned pro, there is a truth in publishing today you cannot ignore. In order to be successful you have to build your author brand. The good news is, for a brand to truly, deeply resonate with customers, it has to be based on something genuine – yourself. Being successful in this business, as with any other entrepreneurial pursuit, is all about being the Real You.

When I wrote *Real You Incorporated: 8 Essentials for Women Entrepreneurs* I was summarizing and encapsulating all of the insight I'd gleaned from more than 20 years in the marketing world focusing on entrepreneurial businesses, and most especially, on women defining their roles and businesses. Helping women step into their power, as I would say in speeches around the country. My dream always had been to become a novelist. In 2011, my new career became a reality with the publication of *Here, Home, Hope*, my first contemporary women's fiction title.

To promote *Here, Home, Hope*, I had a launch party in my hometown, did a twenty-two state, cross-country bookstore tour, had an extensive blog tour and the novel even appeared in *Women's Wear Daily* as a favorite summer read. Impressive for a first release, I suppose, but the problem was, I was defining myself through one title, one book, and the tactics surrounding the promotion of that book. Don't get me wrong, that's important. But to sustain a business, in this industry or any other, you have to fully define your personal brand and then use it as a competitive advantage to ensure your long-term success.

I know, it sounds daunting and you'd rather be writing. Or, if you're inclined to think about marketing, you'll execute sales promotions like booking a 99-cent site for one of your eBooks or posting a giveaway on your Facebook author page. Those are just tactics, though, and usually will do more harm than good to your overall author brand if you haven't defined yourself. That's why I've created an eightstep process and the Real You Incorporated chart that helps you capture the most essential elements of your writing business: you and your passions, brand, positioning, culture, customers/readers, and gifts. (Visit www.kairarouda.com for the free chart download.)

The premise of the Real You process is that if you can discover and love your personal brand, you can express it as a true differentiator in the ever-more cluttered publishing world. The first three steps are about finding it within you.

The last five steps are defining your competitive advantage. Once completed and defined, you'll reveal your personal author brand.

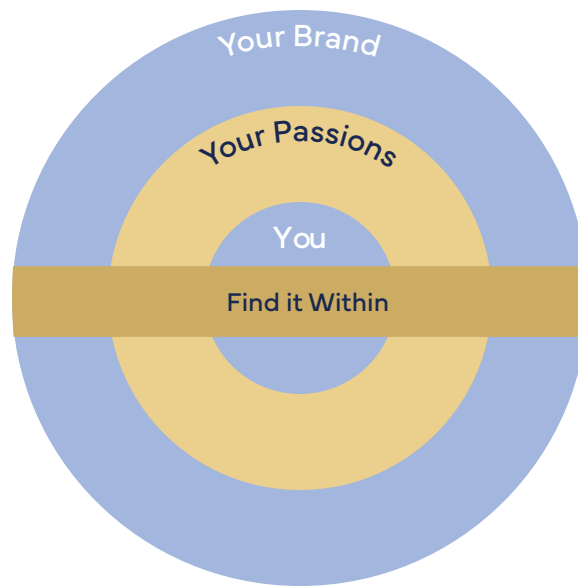
I've finally taken the time to brand myself as a novelist. It's tough to do, I know, and I even wrote a book about it. For too long, I didn't heed my own advice and focused on tactics and strategies as opposed to an overall marketing plan. I ignored my personal brand and in today's competitive world, that's just not smart. How can I reach out to my readers via my online newsletter if I don't know my author brand? How can I talk to them genuinely if I don't know the words that define myself as an author, and as a person? The culmination of your life experiences, your dreams and your body of work to date as well as what you hope to write offer the logical jumping-off point for your author brand. Use your personality, your passions and the essence of your brand to create a uniquely you enterprise, your competitive advantage. That's what you'll define in the next five layers of the Real You chart: your author name, your space, your team, your readers, your gifts.

Personal and business introspection aren't easy tasks, but if you'll take the time to put the Real You into your author brand, I guarantee your writing life will be more successful, and will feel more genuine. You'll be ahead of the curve, evaluating potential marketing tactics from a position of strength and truth. Your creativity is unstoppable.

Use some of that brilliance inside you to focus on defining yourself.

Here's why:

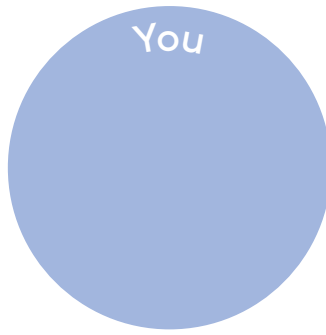
- There are somewhere between 600,000 and one million published every year in the United States alone, depending on which stats you believe. Many of those – perhaps as many as half or even more – are self-published. On average, they sell less than 250 copies each.
- Writing is a lonely profession. To be an author you must sit, for hours on end, with no one but your thoughts and your words. You need both stamina and belief in yourself to push through.
- Three-fourths of all Americans say they would like to write a book someday. Only five percent ever do it.
- If you don't make a plan for your writing life you will get stuck and lose your identity. Take it from me, I've been there.



SECTION 1

Find it within You

You are unique. But you knew that. The first three chapters of this book, and the first three layers of the Real You chart, focus on capturing your essence and expressing it through everything you do in your personal and writing life. This is a powerful tool once harnessed and I promise, well worth your time and energy. YOU are worth your attention. Understanding your personal brand – embracing it – and your personal power are the focal points of this section. Let's capture the Real You. It's time to get started.



REAL FACT #1

It all starts with You

*"Life isn't about finding yourself.
Life is about creating yourself."*

~ George Bernard Shaw

It all starts with you – and your dreams. That's what got you thinking about writing a book in the first place. Like me, you have a story that needs to be told and once that one is finished, most likely, another one. And an essential part of telling your stories authentically is about being real.

Real: (r'l) adj., being or occurring in fact or actuality; having verifiable existence. Hence the name of this book, *Real You for Authors*.

Being real means to be genuine, truthful and authentic with nothing fake or contrived in everything you do from creating your positioning statement to talking with your readers. Because once you discover and love your personal brand, you can bring a distinct product to the market. Being real is about you and your books not just about your books. Keep in mind that interconnectivity and transparency are key notions today. You are a brand. The individual books you create are an extension of that brand. When the essence of each – you and your business – are in alignment, you create an unstoppable force in the marketplace.

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- It's time to get started
- Where have you been?
- What is your word?

Life Lesson #1

It's time to get started

The key to having a rewarding writing life is having one that speaks to your inner strengths, bolsters your passions, and engages your heart. It means you will follow your instincts and your intellect, use all of your skills, and do it in a uniquely you way. All the while realizing there aren't any road maps to follow. The publishing industry is in constant change, and we're in a period of expansion not ever seen in the history of words. And do remember, this is a big business. Whether you are traditionally published, independent or a little of both, you must think of yourself as an author entrepreneur. You must consider your books as products to be marketed as well as vessels of inspiration. It takes a combination of instinct, experience, and confidence to build a real brand, and a real, meaningful life.

At the heart of it all, your life up to this point has helped you plot a course toward authorship and entrepreneurship, even if you didn't realize it until this moment. But to take advantage, true advantage of this moment, you need to carve out some time. Whether you have five or fifty novels out in the world, or are just dreaming of getting started, you need to allow yourself to focus on you. Grab a pencil and paper, or your trusty computer, and write or type your thoughts as you read. Make time for yourself because your future starts now.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What does being real mean to you? What could you do to be more genuine, true, authentic?
2. In your everyday life, at work, at home, are you real and the same person or do you put on different facades?
3. Will you give yourself the time to focus on your brand? You'll be filling out the Real You chart, so have you grabbed creative supplies?
4. Are you willing to allow yourself to think big, be ambitious? This is your life. If you don't, who will?

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Life Lesson #2

Where have you been?

Releasing a book into the world is a scary thing, whether fiction or nonfiction. I've been there, I know. Actually, as I think back on it, anything coming out with your byline is nerve-wracking. I'm remembering back to my magazine byline for Dallas magazine. I was right out of college and it was a roundup story about ski resorts. Not a lot of writing needed, but boy was my heart thumping when the issue hit the stands. And then, it swelled with pride. And then pounded with nerves.

It's the nature of the beast. Anything you put your heart into, and we authors put our hearts into what we do, is bound to create anxiety within us as we set it free. Especially if our last endeavor was met with decreased sales, negative reviews or the like. One of the best ways to overcome anxiety like this is to know yourself and what you're capable of accomplishing. Your history, with all of its highs and lows is part of your essence. And you know you learn more from the bad in life than the good.

Here's my writing life story in a nutshell. I've wanted to write since I was in third grade, a typical tale for many novelists. I also loved the television show *Bewitched*. I didn't dream of being Samantha the witch, though. I dreamed of a career like Darrin's in advertising, oddly enough. Time passed and I was an English major at Vanderbilt University, my head in the classics, my ears filled with particularly Southern Literature being read aloud by some of the best faculty in the world.

Upon graduation, I worked in many different fields: a reporter, a radio advertising salesperson, a copywriter, an advertising agency account executive, a marketing executive for a large franchise company, and finally, with my husband, launched a national real estate brand. During each and every job, I always wrote on the side. I wrote for publication and I wrote for myself. Sound familiar?

When we sold the franchise business with the help of a tweet (not kidding) to a large Canadian company that eventually sold our brand to Berkshire-Hathaway, I became a consultant to the new owners. A consultant they didn't need as they had their own marketing team. As I sat in my office and stared at the wall I realized it was time to put my dream into motion. It was time for me to re-write my Real You chart and to start living the life I'd imagined since I was a child.

And so I sat down, and I wrote my first novel.

Fortunately, because I'd released a business book through the traditional publishing venue, I had a relationship with my literary agent and she introduced me to her friend who represented women's fiction authors. And she went to work, submitting *Here, Home, Hope*. I'd always believed the traditional publishing route would be the one I would take. With *Real You Incorporated: 8 Essentials for Women Entrepreneurs*, I was lucky enough to land an agent and a publisher in a week. But it wasn't meant to be for that novel. But as I've learned in life, when the unexpected happens, don't give up. Every setback is an opportunity to open another door, discover another path. And it's never been truer than today in the publishing world.

I found a small publisher and jumped in with both feet. Along the way, I discovered I liked having input on cover art and typography – something I learned the hard way with my first book. I loved learning all aspects of the publishing business, something I was four-steps removed from during my first book. And, no matter how it comes about, I had the thrill of holding the novel in my hand.

My story isn't unique. For most authors, there are highs and lows with very few straight lines to success. There have been authors who have a hit early and then cannot match sales again and find themselves dropped from publishers. There are the independent authors who finally hit it big after thirty books. And there are the majority of us, who are slogging away, moving forward with our dreams with stealth determination. Know this. No matter your situation today, it will change. Be prepared to shift gears at any moment. And please, be kind to others who are on this writing journey, no matter their publishing house or sales numbers. You never know what's coming next.

As Socrates wrote: *The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.*

Ask yourself these questions:

1. How can you use the memory of a formative setback you've had, personally or professionally, as you help build your plan for the future?
2. What are your greatest accomplishments to date? All of these experiences, the good and the bad, have made you who you are. Can you be proud of the ups and downs?
3. What are your most positive characteristics, your most resilient attributes?
4. Is your biography up to date? Have you ever written your life story? Give it a try. This doesn't need to be a novel, it's an exercise to help you focus on yourself and, update your bio. Perhaps you'll discover pieces of yourself you'd like to include. (I know, this sounds like a selfie synopsis, two things very hard to get right. But give it a go!)

[illegible]

Life Lesson #3

What is your one word?

Building a successful author brand begins with you. You are the creator of your stories – but you are a distinct essence apart from those, too. You want to be at the heart of what you create, and you are. But it's not the same as the Real You.

One of the favorite exercises I challenge people to do is to define themselves in one word. Some people know their word immediately, while others find the exercise daunting, or have too many words. For the strength of the process, that's one of the important steps. To develop your brand, to articulate it correctly, you need to make time for yourself, because your future starts now. Make a circle, with the word you in the middle, and begin the search for the one word that defines you. Think of that word as zeroing in on your essence. Think about yourself in the past and where you are now, and blend them together. It's difficult, but it's essential. That's the first step in the Real You process. You're a writer, focus those word skills on yourself.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Have you ever had a nickname? There are truths to be found there.
2. Are you having trouble finding your essential word? Ask your partner, your friends, and your family to describe you.
3. Have you ever tried the hero exercise? And no, I'm not referring to romance heroes. Try this. Make a list of five people who are heroes in your life. They can be people you know or people you dream of meeting. People alive or from the past. Next to each name, write a list of the attributes that put each hero on your list. Do you see a common thread? Perhaps your word is there.

So far, we've established it's all about you and we've outlined the first life lessons to help get you started: start now, where have you been and what is your one word. Now it's time to move to the next layer of your Real You chart: Your passions.

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REAL FACT #2

Define your Passions

"It's your place in the world; it's your life. Go on and do all you can with it, and make it the life you want to live."

~ Mae Jemison

You recognize passion when you see it, don't you? It's that sparkle in a person's eyes, the spring in her step. Passionate people exude pure, real energy. Confidence and a sense of empowerment surge through them and we are drawn into their orbits. And, hopefully, we all want to be passionate individuals, too. The road to finding and remaining true to your passions is littered with life. No matter your age, you've faced disappointments and setbacks, big and small. You know all the stories of struggling authors, working through rejection after rejection, after finally making it. The common theme of all of the stories you've ever read or heard about struggling artists who finally arrive at a level of success is that they never gave up. No matter what.

In this section we'll learn how to spot passion-popping snarks, be reminded how to ask for help and that intuition is your guide. Do you know what it is that makes you wake up and smile in the morning? Are you doing it?

In this Real Fact, you'll learn:

- Ignore the snarks
- Ask for help
- Your intuition is your friend

If you're already writing and publishing, are you following your passion or simply trying to jump on the latest trends? Do your decisions coincide with the Real You in the first circle of your Real You chart? Our hobbies and interests represent an extension of our real self.

Life Lesson #4

Ignore the snarks

You are at the heart of the Real You, but it's hard to remember that sometimes, I know. Life is hard, and us writers tend to be a solitary, shy group. And then there's this: Women tend to be nurturers, always taking care of everyone but themselves. Put all of that together, and well, you're a sitting duck for snarks unless you're supported. You must establish a network of real people in your life.

These are the people who are there, no matter what. They are family, best friends, and team members. These are your Real You protectors. They shelter you from the constant naysayers and one-star reviewers. And what exactly are snarks? Glad you asked. I've devised what I call the Snark Scale to help you fine-tune your snark identifying scale. (See SnarkInfestedWaters.com for more.) Because once you're able to spot a snark, and the sooner you see it, the better off the Real You will be. These negative influencers drain your passion even as you're trying to become more real. Because unfortunately the truth is, as you step into your power and claim your personal brand, you'll become more polarizing. If you're making waves and pursuing your passions – no matter what – people notice. And some of those people just don't have your back.

Beware. As you may have discovered already, the publishing world is filled with snarks. I know, it's also filled with wonderfully supportive authors who bend over backwards to help each other. I know. And I love that. But seriously, snarkiness abounds and it's crucial that you finetune your radar.

There are degrees of snarks, of course. Let's discuss a few of them and put them on a scale, from snarkiest to snarky.

The Snark Scale

Ego Snarks: It's all about them. No one else's dreams, feelings, goals or opinions matter. They'll go to lunch with you, grab your ideas and run for the glory. Their relationship with you is a means to an end and they are takers, never givers. There are a number of ways they will infiltrate your life. You may have a really hard time identifying this snark before they've taken everything they can from you and moved on, leaving you with massive writer's block and self-doubt.

Sexist Snarks: Hopefully, you are well aware of the lingering inequalities in the publishing world, from book deals to reviews. It's the same in the entertainment industry as a whole. While we've come a long way, some sexist snarks have not. Just beware, and follow Jennifer Weiner's example and #staynoisy. We all deserve better and more.

User/Con-Artist Snarks: A lesser form of the ego snark, these people are completely unreal, too. Their relationship with you is for their own benefit, taking more than they give. If it's a fellow author, perhaps it's a one-way social media relationship or, more sinisterly, they may poach your social network and then exclude you from theirs. These snarks are experts and they may even seem like they want a real relationship. They don't.

Complainer Snarks: These are the people who you like, overall, but their negativity can really bring you down. They can be team players and may even populate your reader groups. The problem arises when they are mumbling under their breath, or spreading rumors if they disagree with something you write or say. These snarks are insiders, part of your tribe, until they aren't. And then, they're toxic. Don't share confidential information with these snarks.

Bubble-Bursting Snarks:

These are the folks who tap into our greatest guilt and insecurities. When you announce you have a book coming out in the spring, they're the first to ask with who and wrinkle their noses if it's a small press or even a small imprint. That's tapping into your not-good-enough guilt, no matter how successful you've become. If you're a mom, and an author, these are the snarks who say, I would write my novel too but I'm focused on my kids. These snarks are family and friends, close enough for their words to sting. Because they know us, they can tap into the myriad of guilts we carry inside and poke at them, diminishing our passion and clouding our dreams. Don't confuse these passion poppers with real friends. And be careful how much of your dreams you share.

The key is to remain true to your passions, despite snark attacks.

"The one thing that you have that nobody else has is you. Your voice, your mind, your story, your vision. So write and draw and build and play and dance and live as only you can."

~ Neil Gaiman

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Who are the real people in your life? Are you making time to stay connected to them?
2. Have you allowed snarks in your life? Can you minimize your exposure?
3. Can you remember a snark attack? What did you learn?

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Life Lesson #5

Ask for help

Writing is solitary, unless you have a partner, and even then, your contributions to the work must be crafted alone. As women, we're caretakers, looking out for everybody but ourselves. It's crucial then, that if you need help, you must ask for it. Whether you need assistance managing the world of social media, or you're lonely and you need a break, you must believe in you enough to grant yourself what you need. As you begin to think about your Real You author brand, think about what's missing in your support system. How can you free up more time for your passions and if you could manage that, would it have significance?

I know it would. Happiness is linked to success. There is a mountain of evidence to prove that happiness and productivity go hand in hand, as do generosity and a stronger immune system. Happy and healthy. And more productive. Hmm, what are you going to do to make that so?

One of my personal goals is to try to walk 10,000 steps a day. But when I'm writing, that's tough. I ask for help and my friend, the New York Times bestselling author, Melissa Foster emailed me about a treadmill desk. I'm going to give it a try. Physical activity is crucial and all of you authors out there have read the new studies that warn that sitting is the new smoking, right?

Personally, I've become a passionate Pickleball player. I say passionate because I'm not the best player, but I am the most enthusiastic. Miss Congeniality, that's what you can call me.

What's keeping you stuck, physically or mentally? Whatever it is, ask for help and get moving. Only you can make your life what you want it to be, but you can't do it all alone.

Life Lesson #6

Your Intuition is your friend

As a woman, you're uniquely capable of blending your personal passions with your professional goals. When you put the power of your instincts to work for you, you'll be unstoppable. If the book you're working on is making you uncomfortable, put it aside. (Not at that awkward halfway through phase when we all hate everything we've written. Not there. That's not this.) I'm talking about writing the book you want to write, no matter what the publisher says, no matter what your agent suggests, no matter what's hot on the market.

A friend of mine received the cover art for her next novel in an email and almost had a heart attack. The cover was all wrong, and didn't fit her story at all. She knew she would be expected to go on a book tour and promote the book, but she couldn't imagine holding it in her hand and being proud with that wrapper on it. She loved her story, but not the cover. So she took action. Intuitively, she knew the cover wasn't right, and she knew her readers and fans would agree. She launched a research survey and pushed for her fans to weigh in. Eventually, she convinced her publisher to create a cover that was in line with her vision and the story inside.

She followed her gut and took action. It worked, even though she had a lot of sleepless nights and self-doubt in the process. Which is normal. As I said before, the more you step into your power, the more real you become, the more you'll stir up the snarks. But you can handle it if you're following your instincts and going for your dreams.

I faced snark attacks when I began writing romance novels. Some of the more tame comments were along the lines of, “Really, romance? I don’t get that at all.” (Hear a snarky, I’m a literary reader/writer tone?) But you know what, it doesn’t matter because I love it, I’m beyond thankful to Jane Porter who encouraged me to give it a try. And, you know what, writing contemporary romance has made my women’s fiction novels better. I followed my heart and jumped at the chance to expand my writing world. I’ve met a whole new community of romance readers and writers and I couldn’t be happier.

So what are your passions? What are the hobbies and past-times, the projects and pursuits that make your heart sing? Those need to be part of the second ring of your Real You chart. Try to keep it to four or so, combining some if need be.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What are the activities you are most passionate about? Physical, mental, spiritual?
2. What hobbies do you enjoy?
3. What’s your favorite thing to do when you have free time? What are the activities you dream of doing?

After you take the time to consider your passions – all the while ignoring the snarks, asking for help and relying on your intuition – you are ready to move on to the final circle of the Find it Within section. Are you ready? Let’s get to it.

[illegible]



REAL FACT #3

Discover your brand

"Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there's love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong."

~ Ella Fitzgerald

No matter how far along you are in your author entrepreneur career path, you have the power to create your own individual, personal brand. And you must. Take a look at the first two layers of your Real You chart. These layers start to articulate your tempo, your ego, and your personality. Let's get to it.

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- What's your story
- The heart of the matter
- Vision boards are great

Life Lesson #7

What's your story?

You've uncovered the one word that best describes you. You've identified your passions. What's next? Easy. Your next step is to define your author brand. This isn't your positioning statement. That will come later, and that will be used for external audiences. No, your author brand is a combination of your personal story and the stories you create. This is where the two meet. Tell your own story and combine it with the words that define what you write about.

I write stories for and about women. My brand, all my life, I've focused on empowering women in the workforce and beyond. So in my third ring, for my personal brand, I'll include the words: *women-focused*. I also love history, although not in the historical novel sense. (At least not yet.) Pulling stories from my family's past is fun as genealogy is one of my passions, so that ties together nicely for me as I write and research. Place and setting are important to me. I'm a product of the suburbs and revealing what goes on in seemingly perfect suburbia is a constant theme in my work. Recently, with our move to the beach, I'm enjoying the ocean's influence as is evident in both of my contemporary romance series. My brand would be: *women-focused, setting-based, friendly*. I want my novels to feel accessible, and for readers to read the end with a smile. (Not because it's finally over, but because they enjoyed it.)

For help with your brand, if you're already published, read your POSITIVE reviews. What words are common there?

Ask yourself this question:

What are the common words constructive reviewers use to describe your books? Please ignore the onestar- snarks. I was able to hear Malcolm Gladwell speak recently and he had a name for each negative reviewer: niggers, narcissists and scolds. Niggers take issue with tiny things, tearing apart your work comma by comma, with grammar insights and the smallest of critiques. Narcissists will write a review filled with all the ways they could have written your story better. And finally, scolds will tell you everything you did wrong. One of my first reviews for *Here, Home, Hope* was a scold who wrote that since I was a successful businesswoman I should stick to that and basically, in writing, made fun of my dream. She continued her scold by pulling out pieces of the book and critiquing them, ending by saying she found the protagonist annoying. Wow, that was fun to read again. Kidding. Anyway, focus on the positive, find the good reviews and see if you can find your brand.

Life Lesson #8

The heart of the matter

Brand essence, the layer of the chart you're completing now, is your brand's personality. It is a collection of intangibles – attributes that make you and your writing unique and different from everybody else. I believe it's important to limit yourself to three words here, even though as you brainstorm, you'll come up with many more. So after you've taken stock of your best reviews and pulled words from them, after you've consolidated and crafted new words to incorporate several key themes, you're ready to go! If you haven't published yet, and don't have official reviews, ask your friends and family to describe you and your writing.

Ask yourself these questions and take these steps:

1. What are the best three words to sum up your brand's essence? Write them on layer three of the Real You chart.
2. Capture the words you didn't use on your chart in a document. These words are an important part of your marketing plan and vision work.

Life Lesson #9

Vision boards are great

Many of you use character boards to write your stories. I do, too. Magazines are decimated at my house, and it's awesome. Pinterest has made boards so easy – no tape or scissors necessary -- that there really is no excuse.

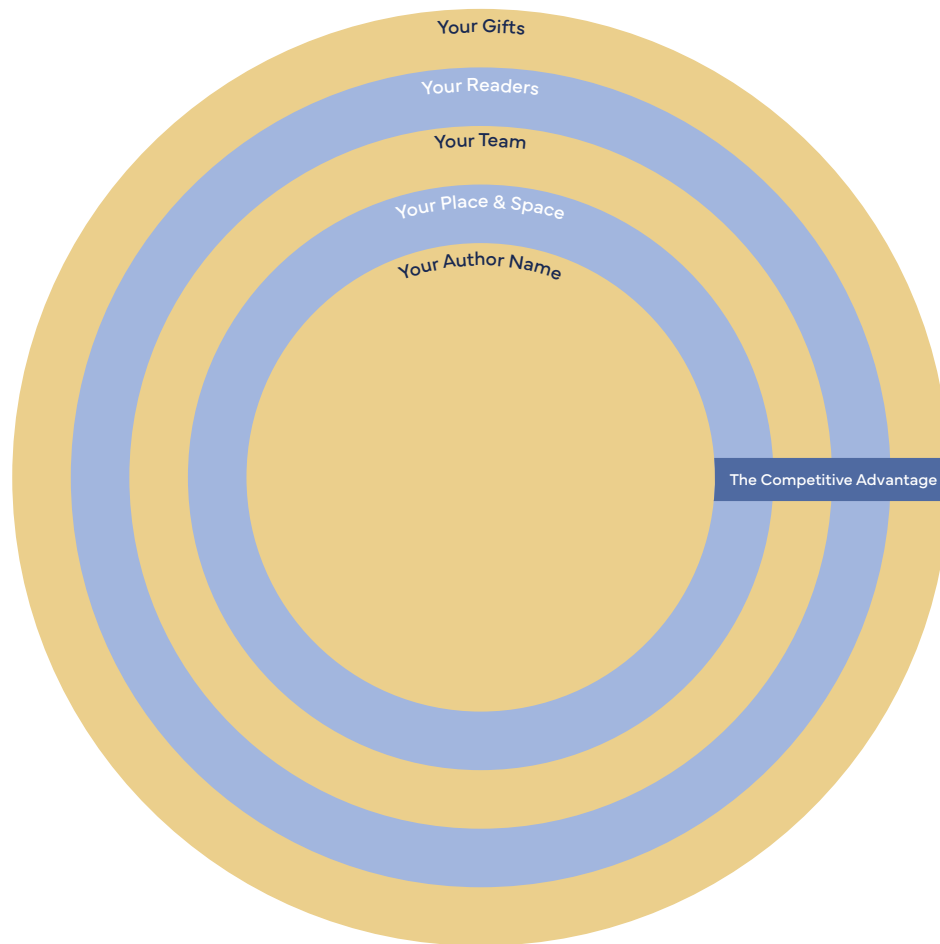
That said, when's the last time you created a board about you and your brand? Vision boards are visual representations of who you are, what you are passionate about and what you want your brand to be in the world. The exercise is incredibly helpful and grounding. Personally, I think vision board creation and fine tuning should be an annual event. And as noted, with Pinterest, it's so easy to do. (If you haven't joined Pinterest yet, you need to for your marketing plan, so you might as well do it now for your vision board. You can keep everything private until you're ready to share, so no anxiety.) My brand board is filled with women and beaches, with inspirational quotes, and suburbia, and things that make me happy.

Ask yourself these questions and take these steps:

1. When is the last time you created a vision board? (Note: people call these brand boards, too. Whatever you call it, do one.) If it's been a few years or never, get going.
2. What other adjectives are you associating with your brand in addition to your top three words? Make sure you visually represent those, too.

3. Can you write your vision statement based on your three words? What's your brand's goal? To *write popular, women-focused stories with beach and suburban settings that leave readers feeling happy and enlightened*. That's what my statement is at the moment. Trust me, I'll be constantly revising it. You should, too. (Oh, and I know, you scold, you just reminded me that my novella, *Spotlight on Love* is set in New York City. My characters are both from Midwestern suburbs, though.)

The culmination of your life experiences and your dreams offer the jumping-off point for your competitive advantage. Now that we've found it within you, and hopefully, you've filled in your Real You chart as we've progressed, you're ready to jump into Section Two: The Competitive Advantage. (Remember, you can print a PDF of the chart anytime from my website, KairaRouda.com.) The publishing business is tough. We all know it. So how do you leverage your personality, your passions, and the essence of your brand into a uniquely you enterprise? That's what the next section is all about.



SECTION 2

The Competitive Advantage

So far, you've found your inner Real You brand. Now that you've captured and embraced your personal brand, it's time to turn your attention to your competitive advantage within the publishing industry. You bring a unique offering to the world. During the next stages of the chart, we'll define a process to help you maximize your advantage.

In Real Fact 4, we'll talk about your author name. Then we'll move on to your marketing plan. We'll reinforce the importance of branding and making your brand tangible in the world. Quite simply, you cannot have a successful business without having a brand. It's either defined by you or it gets created along the way.

In Real Fact 5 we'll talk about your space, literally, and your writing routine while the lesson of Real Fact 6 centers around your team. In Real Fact 7, we'll talk about your network and your readers and about how other authors should be some of your best friends.

Finally, in Real Fact 8, we'll remind you that the ability to write is the gift of a lifetime, a gift to be nourished and celebrated. Ready to jump in? Let's get busy articulating your unique competitive advantage as you deliver your real brand author brand to the world.



REAL FACT #4

Defining Yourself in the World

"It's never too late to be what you could have been."

~ George Eliot (pen name for Mary Ann Evans)

We're at the stage of the Real You process that you must bring your passion and your brand together. You are at the stage when it is time to get real. You need to deliver on your brand's promise. That's what your readers – a hopefully ever-growing number of people – will expect. In the last real fact you discovered the intangible list of qualities and traits that make you unique and you created a vision statement.

Real brands, like great restaurants, have floor presence. Imagine a fabulous Italian bistro in town. You know the one with the owner's name in lights above the door. The owneroperator cherishes your presence the moment you walk in the door through the meal to when the check is presented. Or think about your favorite clothing boutique. The owner keeps track of your previous purchases and knows your likes and dislikes. Shopping in her store is a treat and a pleasure. In these shopping scenarios, you feel cared about, respected and, embraced. You are having real experiences with real people who have created memorable brands in the world. Their brands are well-defined and they have earned your trust. These are examples of real brands delivering on their promise. How are you going to position your brand in the world? It matters. For now, and for your future.

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- To be you or not to be you
- Your marketing plan
- Your swag

Life Lesson #10

To be you or not to be you?

It's not clear why Mary Ann Evans published *Middlemarch* and her other works of literary fiction under the pen name George Eliot. Sure, it was the Victorian Era, but still, women authors were published. She said it was to assure her work would be taken seriously. But there were also privacy issues for Evans, who was living with a married man for twenty years. But, she wasn't a very conventional woman and that probably wouldn't have bothered her. While scholars discuss it still, she chose a pen name and that's that.

As with Mary Ann Evans, your author name is up to you. Are you using your real name, or do you create a George Eliot? Some authors are themselves for some of their books, and they have pen names for others. Yikes! Personally, I think it would be really difficult to manage two different personas, but that's just me. You and I both know plenty of authors who manage it with ease.

Before you take it a step further, you need to decide your author name. If it's you, carry on to Life Lesson #11. If it's not, no worries, just write it down in the circle. If you decide you will have two or more author pen names, then my suggestion is to create a chart for each one. The first three layers remain the same for each name, of course, because they are all you. It's only the outer layers of the chart, the competitive advantage, that will change for each pen name. Hopefully that makes sense. Just as your names have been, I'm assuming, selected for different genres, so will some elements of your marketing plan and certainly, your reader demographics will as well.

Ask yourself this question:

1. Are the books I am writing cross-genre enough that they would offend my core readership or are they aligned? My vote would be to have one author name. I know you realize with today's uber transparency, authenticity is prized. On the other hand, many readers are accustomed to pen names associated with romance novel heat levels, for example, so if you are, too, go for it!

Are you ready to write your author name on the fourth layer of the Real You chart?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Life Lesson #11

Your marketing plan

I know, we could create an entire book about author marketing plans. Hey wait, there are a bunch that already exist and I encourage you to read them. While those books will discuss tactics, I won't. (Although I will point out that just as each story has keywords, the baseline of all marketing plans for novels big and small. These words are the ESSENCE of a novel. Following me? If they are so essential to pushing the sales of a book, your own keywords are the ESSENCE of your personal brand. It's what we're putting on your Real You chart and they will propel your author brand in the world. These words matter.)

Let's stick with the overall tips of marketing, though. You need to embrace the five senses of branding -- sight, sound, smell, touch, taste -- as much as possible when building your real author brand. Creative perfection happens when your brand is passionately executed and fully integrated.

Most of us are visual communicators. When we think of brand, we begin with the basics of colors, symbols and fonts. If your author brand doesn't have a color and a font, a logo and some symbolic elements, get moving. This is the fun part. Head back to your pile of magazines that you worked with to create your vision board. Log in to Pinterest again. Have fun online and print out examples of successful author brands that speak to you, that would have a similar sensibility to you. But then, and this is important, look to other brands in the world. If you've ever decorated a home, or worked with an interior decorator, this is a similar process. You're tackling a blank space -- a website, blank business cards and bookmarks -- and creating your brand in the world.

Pick your color or colors. Color choice helps guide the tone and tempo of your brand and whether you're the designer or you hire one, color helps guide the choices from here on out. Pick fonts that speak to you, shapes. Have fun.

So the sight part is fun and obvious. But how can I, as an author, have a sound? It can be the song you use on your book trailer video. The same song can appear on your story's playlists, every time. It can be the song you reference on your Facebook fan page. It can be the sound of drums, or the crash of waves. Use your imagination, and our Real You chart words to discover something unique. Touch, for those of us with physical books, is easy. Those are our products in the world. If you're an eBook only author, perhaps you're realizing how important those other senses are for your brand.

Smell, you say? Why yes, I answer. Your smell can be as simple as the perfume you wear at signings, or as complex as the candles you gift. Find something signature, that speaks to you, potpourri perhaps, and you'll have it. Same with the sense of taste. Do you have a big sweet tooth? Well, then your author brand needs to bring cookies to your appearances and your giveaways should include sweet treats. How about some recipes for some of your favorite cookies? I'm a relatively new romance author – my first book came out in August of 2014 – but I will say the romance writers have this five senses of branding notion down. Kudos. For the rest of us, it's time to get moving.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What are the creative elements of your brand? What is its color, feel, shape, smell and sound? These are your critical brand attributes and you need to define them.

2. Take a look at the advertising and marketing in the industry that speaks to you. Then look at other industries. What speaks to you? What images appeal to you? Which websites are the best, in your opinion and why? Remember, this is all subjective and that's fun.

3. What every day object can you connect to your brand? A long time ago, I chose the Gerbera daisy and it works for my brand today. Think of something you could hand to a reader, something simple that will help you make a tangible connection in addition to your bookmark.

4. Assemble a box of ideas and inspiration. Can you allow yourself the time and space to do that? Back when I was creating the real estate brand Real Living, I literally carried around a brand box of ideas – physical elements that I knew would help me bring the brand to life. You don't have to use all of your ideas today.

Life Lesson #12

Your swag

When you think about marketing yourself and your books, I encourage you to think along basic, advertising 101 levels. Advertising takes place on three tiers: image, sales promotion, and events. Consider image advertising as positioning your author brand to its target readers. The messages conveyed in your image ads should include the essence of your real brand. Anchored with your logo and your positioning statement, image advertising puts your best foot forward. This is your brand out for a walk along a fancy boulevard. The most important manifestation of image advertising is your website. Your homepage is your author brand in the world. How does she look?

Sales promotion is the second tier of advertising and this is where many authors spend all of their time and dollars. This is advertising with a price, an offer, or a “hurry, act now” type message. This is less about you as an author, and more about your latest novel or sale. Because your name is still associated with this type of advertising, it’s critical to make these promotions tie to your overall brand whenever possible. If you’re running a Facebook ad for your latest novel, for example, can you include one of your overall brand elements in the design? Your font, your words, your logo all communicate the broader brand.

The final tier of advertising is event-based marketing. Events remain essential in book sales. Connecting directly with your readers through conventions, book signings, festivals and the like are at the heart of story telling, and story selling. From your book launch with a virtual event to Skype book clubs, your events can be online or offline, but you need to participate in them. And that means you need swag. I'm amazed at the extent of goodies some authors carry around to events: pens, mugs, bags, bookmarks, water bottles, and well, anything that can be printed on just about. Please remember when you're ordering your swag to make it about your overall brand if at all possible. Book-specific items are great, but your own author-branded items are timeless.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do you have an annual advertising budget encompassing messaging for all tiers of advertising?
2. Does your website represent you well as your face to the world? How is your real brand conveyed? Is it the Real You?



REAL FACT #5

What's Your Space?

"Writers live twice."

~ Natalie Goldberg

In this chapter we'll tackle the all important notions of positioning statements, your workspace and your daily rituals, all of which makes you unique. No two artists have the same method of achieving their daily word count, but one thing is certain: putting words on the page is critical to this art we all love. So the question is: What's your space? Your head space. Your physical space. How do you go about the process of creating? Are you a full-time writer, or squeezing the word count in after a full day of another job? Are you a busy mom who can write only when the kids are asleep for the night? Oh, and when I arrive on your website, does it tell me who you are and what you write immediately?

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- Positioning
- Where do you like to hang out?
- Do you have a daily routine?

Life Lesson #13

Positioning

When it comes to your positioning statement, think of it as the rock that anchors your marketing plan, and as the necessary phrase that accompanies your author name. Your positioning statement is the external version of your internal vision statement. Take a look at all of the words you've used to create your brand essence in the previous section, and bring them to life for your readers. Just like Nationwide Insurance is "On Your Side," your words will deliver a promise too. You have defined your personality, and now you're defining your brand's, encompassing your books in the process.

What do you want to tell your readers? My positioning statement is: *Stories that sparkle with humor and heart.* Again, you can turn to reviews and fan mail to discover the words readers attribute to you and your brand. Try to be inspirational and express your unique position in the market, as much as possible. Pick action words whenever possible. Your brand is dynamic, your stories are engaging, so tell the potential readers so.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Can you take the words you used to describe your brand essence in the third layer of the Real You chart and use them to write your positioning statement in the fifth layer of the circle? What's your line? What words summarize the books you are bringing to the world? Make sure it's the truth, of course. This is a chance to relay emotion through words. You can do it.

2. What are the action words you associate with your real brand? What is the primary message you want to convey to your readers? Use inspirational, persuasive, and powerful words. This is your call to action. Your sell line. Remember to look back to your brand essence, because some of the words you identified then may be right for your external audiences.

3. Are you telling the truth? Make sure your positioning statement is based on unique benefits, words that summarize your writing style not who you want to be.

[illegible]

Life Lesson #14

Where do you like to hang out?

Love me, love my piles, I told my husband when he mentioned my proclivity to messiness when we first began dating. I'm a stacker, a piler and I am messy. But, as most of us who operate this way will tell you, I'm pretty certain I can locate what I need when I need it.

That said, my office today is perfect for me. I'm tucked out of the way from the flow of our home and for the most part, it's only the dogs and I who hang out there. I love my office, and I should, since I'll spend hours and hours there everyday. I hope you can say the same thing. It's vitally important to have a space that's your own in order to create. For some authors, that's their local Starbucks, a park, or on the train to work. For me, though, it needs to feel like home and inspiration. I need some of my Real You brand around me, my vision board elements, too.

No matter your space, whether your own desk or the front seat of your car, make sure it speaks to your heart as you bring your stories to life.

Ask yourself this question:

1. Am I carving out the appropriate space for myself as I pursue my writing dreams?

Life Lesson #15

Do you have a daily routine?

I've heard that a well-honed routine can truly assist the creative mind. Almost like putting your body on autopilot while your imagination runs free. A daily routine is a luxury some with a host of other responsibilities including jobs and kids and the like can't afford. Perhaps you're one of them. As with most things in this creative life, a daily routine is a choice you can make to enhance your creativity and word count.

One of the most fascinating parts of listening to other author's stories, for me, centers around this question of routine. And each writer's answer always is unique. Another favorite question is whether the author is a plotter or one who simply goes with the flow. There are no right answers, of course. But as you become more in tune with the Real You, and have an ever-growing readership, these questions will arise.

For me, I'll stick with Albert Einstein who wrote:

"If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?"

Ask yourself this question:

1. If a book blogger asked you to describe your daily routine, could you?



REAL FACT #6

Who's on Your Team?

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

~ Helen Keller

You are an author entrepreneur. You found the courage to complete your novel and you're now a published author. Whether you have a full team of support from your publisher, or you're a solo-preneur star, you need support. Your team matters.

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- Recognize the dark side of the creative process
- Don't forget family and friends
- Name your team

Life Lesson #16

Recognize the dark side of the creative process

Yep. That's real, too. The opposite of the creative spark, the opposite of your brilliant light can be very dark. If you, like many creative people, suffer from depression or any other common plights of writers since the beginning of time, please seek help. To write our deepest real truths in a solitary setting for hours at a time can be, let's face it, depressing. If this is happening to you, connect with your family. Go for a walk and get some exercise. Try to get at least twenty minutes of natural light a day.

The writing life is an emotional roller coaster of rejection from editors, agents, publishers, and even peers. And then there is the whole world of the wretched reviewers. Add to it the tendency of some writers to work late into the night, messing with wake/sleep schedules (*see daily routine).

And then there is the quite common, very depressing habit of Facebook, proven to cause depression as you scroll through other people's perfect lives. This can happen to authors, too, as the green-eyed monster of jealousy flares up. Avoid the black hole of comparing yourself to others and get back to your real life, your real work.

Don't allow your sense of self to become tied solely to your writing. Eat a healthy diet, spend time with your friends and family and if you do get to the place where you are feeling hopeless, seek help, and get back to the light.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Am I suffering from depression?
2. Are you finding it hard to write each day?
3. Do you find yourself comparing yourself to other authors? Are you spending too much time on Facebook looking at other people's lives instead of focusing on your own?
4. Are you reading negative reviews over and over and internalizing them as a reflection of you?
5. Is the sparkle out of your life? Can you ask for help?

[illegible]

Life Lesson #18

Name your team

Do you have a team of people supporting your dreams? I bet you do. It's time to fill in the sixth layer of your Real You chart with your team. If you're a successful author with a street team and a secret fan page and multiple books in the market, well, you're already one step ahead of most of us. You know the power of cultivating the support you need to get your books out into the world.

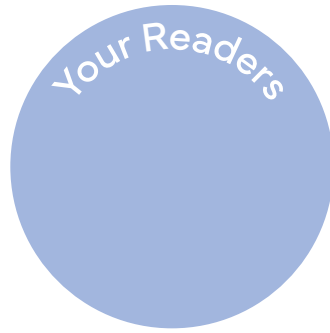
Let's start with the basics. Your team is your family and friends, whether they read your work or not, but especially, the ones who do. Your team is your beta readers, your editor(s), your art director, your agent, your accountant, your social media expert and your publicist – or any combination of these folks. Perhaps your team even includes your four-legged, unconditional love-filled friends. Come up with a name for these special and supportive folks. I picked Kaira's Crew for mine, and hopefully they all know who they are. If they don't realize how important they are to you, maybe you should tell them right now.

Ask yourself this question:

1. Who is on your team? Can you come up with a name for those people and write it on the sixth layer of your Real You chart?

In this chapter we've really pushed the notion that you need support in your life as a writer. I hope you have it and that they nourish not only your business self, but your personal self, too. You deserve to have a wonderful life. Now, let's tackle the next most important group of people in your writing world: your readers.

[illegible]



REAL FACT #7

Love Your Readers

"All readers come to fiction as willing accomplices to your lies. Such is the basic goodwill contract made the moment we pick up a work of fiction."

~ Steve Almond

You've learned that putting the Real You in your author brand is the essential ingredient for success and happiness, authenticity and personal validation. You've also embraced the notion of giving yourself the support you deserve. But there's a whole other audience that needs to feel the Real You in everything you do and that's your readers. You need to love her. Each one.

Throughout this Real Fact, we'll refer to your readers as women. This throws some off but it shouldn't. By the middle of this century, women will control two-thirds of the wealth in the United States. Comprising more than half of the population and controlling eighty-three percent of consumer purchases, women are, most likely, your customer. Women read more fiction than men. Period. And just as you are savvy, creative and intuitive, your readers are, too.

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- Your social network matters
- Other authors can be your best friends
- Know your fans

Life Lesson #19

Your social network matters

You're an author and you need to build a platform to find and connect your readers. Building a lively social network presence is more important than ever. You must have a Facebook page and you need to post on it regularly. You need to Tweet, and pretend that you like it. I love Pinterest, as I mentioned, and use it for my books and my brand. The engagement, the relationship that you can cultivate on these platforms can really help you build and maintain a direct connection with your readers.

But you still need a well-branded website and your own newsletter. Sorry, but it's true that the only network you will be able to control for the length of your career, is your own. Gather those emails whenever you can. At events and book signings, of course on the homepage of your website. Your readers want to get to know you and you want them to know your unique author brand.

As you post, as you write your newsletter, reflect on the words on your Real You chart and make sure some of them appear regularly in your communication. Show your readers that you care about them, in your own real way.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Are you relying too much on Facebook and other social networks and neglecting your own mailing list? Proceed at your own peril.
2. Are you acting desperate on social media? If your message is all about sales promotion and not about sharing socially, then you're not resonating and you're wasting your time.

Life Lesson #20

Other authors can be your best friends

I love my author friends. Not only do they read my books and provide the all-important blurbs, but they support my dreams. They understand this wacky world of writers and the vast majority of authors will bend over backwards to help other authors. It's a community unlike any other industry I've been a part of and if you're not talking to, marketing with and otherwise hob-knobbing with other authors, you are missing a big component of success. So get yourself to a writer's conference. Join an online group dedicated to your genre. Go to another author's book signing and buy her book. Start immediately.

Ask yourself this question:

1. Am I actively engaged with other authors in my community and online?

[illegible]

Life Lesson #21

Know your fans

And, while you are getting to know your fans, I hope you have realized the opposite. Not everybody will like your writing. In fact, some people will hate it. Even the most famous authors with the most beloved and bestselling books have haters. That's fine. As we noted in Real Fact #2, the more real and true to yourself and your brand you become, the more you will stir up the snarks.

Be fiercely proud of your brand and your work. Find people who love to read your books and love them. Don't think twice about those who don't. Your fans will continue to grow if you continue to write, and stay true to the Real You. Did I alienate a few fans of my women's fiction when I started writing romance? Absolutely. Did I discover more new fans who enjoy my contemporary romance and who also now read my women's fiction? Yes! Again, I don't believe in writing to fads, but I do believe in writing what speaks to your heart and your imagination, no matter what. If a story rings true to you and your real author brand, write it. Your real fans will be there for you.

When I was running the real estate company, we created customer brand boards so we could visualize different customer segments. If it's helpful to you, you might want to try the same. Another way, of course, is to get to know them through a private group or through one on one chats and email, and always, at events. Just remember, your communication needs to be genuine. Let's face it. We all know a fake when we see one. Be true to yourself, and understand enough about your readers to convey your true appreciation to her.

It's time to fill in the seventh layer of your Real You chart with a description of your readers. Who are your customers, who are your raving fans? These are the fans who will show up at your book signings, buy every book you have published, support you when you have a bad review and most importantly, they'll tell their friends to read your book. You can't have enough of these women in your life, the real true fans.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do you have a picture in your mind of what your typical reader looks like? How does she spend her time, what are her passions, hobbies, interests? Imagine a day in her life.
2. When your reader isn't reading your book, what other authors does she read? What websites does she visit?
3. Can you define your best readers on your Real You chart?



REAL FACT #8

Writing Is The Gift Of A Lifetime

"The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe."
~ Gustave Flaubert

Here we are at the last Real Fact for your chart. In this layer of the circle you will define what your gifts are to the world. You know yourself, your passions, your brand essence. You know what your brand looks like in the world and the niche – large or small – that defines your readers. And you know who is on your team. Finally, we need to document the gifts you bring to the world both through your writing and beyond. These gifts are the people and community treasures where you invest your time and money. This is about your legacy and for women, it always has been about more than having a successful writing career, although that can certainly be part of it.

Happy, real women nurture their communities and are shining examples for the next generation of women authors who follow.

In this Real Fact you'll learn:

- Don't worry about writer's block
- Give back
- It's never too late

Life Lesson #22

Don't worry about writer's block

If the dreaded block hits, don't panic. You are an author entrepreneur so there are plenty of things to keep you busy as you build your career. But things outside of your work life need your attention, too. When the block hits, reach out to your network of family and friends and connect. Go volunteer at a charity near you and spend a day outside of your own head. Variety is the spice of life. Are you in a rut? Make sure your personal and competitive advantage is being maximized by networking with different types of people, expanding outside your comfort zone.

You'll enrich your life, and in turn, more new experiences stand at the ready when the block has passed.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do you have a plan for when writer's block hits? Remember what George Orwell said: *"Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand."*

2. Are you reading? Writers need to be voracious readers and often, when I feel a block coming on, I'll pull out the next novel on my TBR list and dive in.

Life Lesson #23

Give back

You've been blessed with the ability to write. What are you doing to give back? Use the power of your purse, your brain and your pen to help change the world for the better. It doesn't need to be more than mentoring another woman author or giving of your time. You can change the world, one act at a time. As noted, we've made a point of staying true to the Real You within all of your author activities, but we've also made a point of pointing out your writing business cannot become your only passion. Don't get so caught up in your to-do list that you forget your to-be list. Are you fully engaged in a charitable pursuit? If so, write it on your Real You chart, on the last layer of Your Gifts. If you're not fully engaged or haven't made the time yet, you'll find your charitable pursuit by following your heart. Pay attention to the needs in your community and when it feels right, respond. Or, you may be inspired by someone in your family as author Brenda Novak was. Her efforts have raised \$2.4 million for diabetes research.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What problems in your community or the world are most important to you?
2. Is there a natural fit between your Real You author brand and a charity?
3. Passion with a purpose drives your writing life. Can you imagine if your charitable life overlapped with it? What an unstoppable combination.
4. Can you write down your charitable philanthropic passion on the final ring of your chart?

[illegible]

Life Lesson #24

It's never too late

"Don't try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It's the one and only thing you have to offer."

~ Barbara Kingsolver

Live the life you've always imagined. Easier said than done, you say? Of course it is. If it was easy, everyone would be living their dream. Georgia O'Keeffe said, "I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life and I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing that I wanted to do." That's the spirit. You're a writer, a novelist, an entrepreneur. If you can write a book, you can do anything. Your future starts now. This minute. Believe in yourself, and the ever-expanding world of publishing. Don't think you've missed your opportunity. There is still plenty inside of you that hasn't yet emerged. This is your one and only life, the Real You is needed in this world.

As Eudora Welty wrote: *"The writing of a novel is taking life as it already exists, not to report it but to make an object, toward the end that the finished work might contain this life inside it and offer it to the reader. The essence will not be, of course, the same thing as the raw material; it is not even of the same family of things. The novel is something that never was before and will not be again."*

Now that you've finished your Real You chart, you're poised for even more greatness. You've learned:

- It's time to get started
- Where have you been?
- What's your one word?
- Ignore the snarks
- Ask for help
- Your intuition is your friend
- What's your story?
- The heart of the matter
- Vision boards are great
- To be you or not to be you?
- What's your marketing plan?
- Your swag
- Your positioning
- Where do you like to work?
- Do you have a daily routine?
- Your team matters
- Don't forget family and friends
- Avoid the black hole of comparison
- Your network matters
- Other authors can be best friends
- Know your fans
- Don't worry about writer's block
- Give back
- It's never too late

Take a moment to applaud your accomplishment. Personal and business introspection aren't easy tasks. But now that your journey and your chart are complete, you have a guide for the rest of your life. Congratulations, author entrepreneur. Happy writing!

Other Titles by Kaira Rouda

Suspense

All The Difference

Best Day Ever

The Favorite Daughter

The Next Wife

Somebody's Home

The Widow

Beneath the Surface

Under the Palms

The Second Mrs. Strom

Only the Nanny

Reunited: A Short Story

Women's Fiction

Here, Home, Hope

A Mother's Day: A Short Story

In the Mirror

The Goodbye Year

Romance

The Indigo Island Series

Weekend with the Tycoon

Her Forbidden Love

The Trouble with Christmas

The Billionaire's Bid

The Laguna Beach Series

Laguna Nights

Laguna Heights

Laguna Lights

Laguna Sights

Laguna Dreams

Spotlight on Love

One Night in Tahoe

The Celebrity Dare

City of Love

Nonfiction

*Real You Incorporated: 8 Essentials for
Women Entrepreneurs*



Meet Kaira

Kaira Rouda is an award-winning, USA Today and Amazon Charts bestselling author of contemporary fiction that explores what goes on beneath the surface of seemingly perfect lives. Her novels of domestic suspense include *The Widow*, *Somebody's Home*, *The Next Wife*, *The Favorite Daughter*, *Best Day Ever*, *All the Difference*. Her latest, *Beneath the Surface*, has been optioned for a feature film.

Her next novel, *Under the Palms*, is out in May 2024, followed by *The Next Mrs. Strom* in August 2024, and *Only the Nanny* in November 2024. To date, Kaira's work has been translated into more than a dozen languages. Three of her novels have been named Amazon Editor's Picks for Best Mystery, Thriller & Suspense. *The Next Wife* was named a Suspense Magazine's Best Book of 2021 Award, and a 2022 Silver Falchion for Best Suspense Novel and a 2022 Silver Falchion first runner-up for Best Book of the Year.

She is a member of Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, Women's Fiction Author Association, and the International Thriller Writers Association. She served as a committee chair for the Edgar Awards 2024, and frequently appears on panels at conferences across the country. Active in the areas of homelessness, food security, and empowering women and girls, in her twenties, as a volunteer, she created the first walk-in emergency shelter for homeless families in Central Ohio. Kaira has received numerous awards for her community service, including the national Kiwanis Service to Mankind Award, the Ohio Sertoma Service to Mankind Award, and Kick Ass Woman of Orange County by *Orange Coast Magazine*. Kaira was appointed by Governor Gavin Newsome to the California Volunteers commission. Kaira lives in Southern California with her family.



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