Week Three - Worksheet Four

Cover Design

Cover design is critical to the success of your product, whether you use it as a lead magnet giveaway, or sell it. Any product needs a book cover style image, to display beside text related to it, wherever it is sold. When people look at search results, that image will be tiny, so it has to be good enough to grab them anyway.

Equally, when people look at search results, or land on a website opt in page, you have approximately 2 to 3 seconds to grab their interest, or they are gone.

Your Cover is the tool that grabs them long enough to stay and start to read the text on the page or watch the video you may have there.

A cover has the following components (for a flat front cover – a wraparound cover for print is a bit more complex)

- An allowance of space all around the edge, where text should not intrude
- An area, usually across the top of the 'page' reserved for the series title name, if you choose to do a series of products
- An area, for the main title – generally central, or higher on the page
- An area for the subtitle – generally below the main title
- An area for the author name (or business name if you choose to put that on there)
- An image – which can be behind the text, or can be set so that the text is around it.

Over all, the cover should not be too dark – light, but not quite white, backgrounds work better than dark ones. Fonts should be clean and clear, and colours striking but not overdone.

Now let's look at each of those sections in turn.

1. Space around the edge of the page

This space serves two purposes. One is to make the text on the cover more readable, by placing it with enough space around it for it to be clearly distinguishable from everything else, even at a thumbnail size picture. The other is preparation for the point where you might want to make this product into a print on demand paperback book. When books are printed, and the paper is cut, there is some variation and movement in the position of the cutters – if your text is too close to the edge, it may get chopped off!

Ideally, leave a half inch / 1 cm space around the edge, where all that is there is background or image that can be chopped off with no problems.

2. Series title area

You can create this, even if you are not doing a series yet – just putting a bar of solid colour across the top edge of the cover will look good, and leave you a space to insert text on top of, should you later want to make this part of a series.

So – two actions for you here – consider if you have enough other related material that you could do a series of products, each a one problem one solution approach, but closely enough related to make a food series.

If you think that you do, the bear that in mind as you design your cover, so that you are really creating a template for future use.

In week four we will talk more about why doing a series is a good idea, and how you might use it.

Write notes below about what series possibilities you might have, and whether there are any specific colour schemes that you would want to use.

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3. Main Title area

Go back to your notes from week one, and look at the working title that you wrote down for your topic – is that a good name ? Is it short and punchy, easy to remember, but still clearly indicative of what your product is about ? If not, do a bit of brainstorming in the space below, about how you might change the title to be better – remember, you will have the sub title to really draw people in, this is about getting their attention in the first place!

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Ideally, your title should also contain at least one keyword that someone might use to search for information on your topic. Write down the likely keywords below, then review your title ideas with those in mind.

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Visualise a book in your hand – where on the cover would feel most natural to you, to look for the title ? write notes about that here, as that will be a key clue to where you want your title to go, and also to what font size you will be able to use.

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4. Sub title Area

Your subtitle is a sentence (fairly short), that draws people in, and makes them really, really want to know the content that is in your product. It's the sort of thing that on a recipe book, might be "secrets from Grandma's kitchen" or on a book about money "what you need to know now to change your relationship with money forever" or on other things "everything you need to know to....." You get the idea.

It needs to be compelling, and about the reader, not a simple statement - "Five ways to communicate better" is not as compelling as "the five sure fire things you need today, to get better results out of every conversation"

Do some brainstorming in the space below about what compelling subtitle you can create for your product.

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Think about the space on your book cover – where do you want that subtitle to go ? Where can you visualise it fitting ? how much smaller print than the main title can you see it being, and still be readable ?

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5. Author / business name area.

This area is commonly at the bottom of the page, and not too large. If you put a coloured bar across the top for a series title space, putting and identical bar across the bottom as an author name space works very well. Generally, unless the author is rather famous, the author name text will not be all that large, as the title of the product is what we are relying on to get people's attention. When you become very famous, you can change that, and use your name as the drawcard!

If you want to use your business name, rather than your personal name on there, that is fine – its just a marketing and branding choice.

Decide whether you will use your name or your business name, and note that below. Then decide whether you want the author name at the bottom, or somewhere else on the page. Remember, the more text that you want to put in the middle, the harder it is to fit in your clear image, and have the whole thing still look clean, interesting and readable.

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6. Image area

This is both the most and least important part! Least, because a good image with a horrible title will still not get people to buy, and most, because a bad image can completely remove the positive effect of a good title.

If you were creating a cover for a fiction book, you might be able to get away with a dark and complex image. But, for non-fiction, pale backgrounds and clean dramatic and simple images work immensely better. You can even go for the 'textbook look', with no picture at all, just some decorative border lines to separate areas on the cover. That is quick, an can be effective, but it's a bit boring – if your topic is all high energy and positive, then a cover with a vibrant and relevant image will work better.

So you want something bright, with clean lines so that it is easily recognisable, and which will stand out well on an almost white background, and which can successfully have text over parts of it, if necessary.

Answer the following questions, then write some notes about what image you want to use.

Look at your topic – want is the one physical object, or activity, that first comes to mind when you see the words of your topic ?

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Is that the thing that the average person (especially your target audience) will think of / or do you think of that because you know the topic so well ? If the latter, then what would your target audience think of first ?

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Now do some image searching, on stock photo sites, and google images, and see what is out there, of that 'immediate thought' object or activity. Any of the things that you find, which you like, or almost like, capture some notes about – what makes you like, or not like them ? Test that on someone else – do they react to the same things that you do ?

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Visualise those images on the product cover – and mentally place the text – will it work ? If yes, grab those images ! (remember to do so legally!) if not, revise either your ideas about the text placement, or your image idea, and try again. Make notes each time about what needs to change, in your visualisation, and why. If it works for you, sketch the layout out on paper or a whiteboard.

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Once you have a good solid idea, then take a photo of the piece of paper or whiteboard, and put it with these worksheet notes – when we talk about getting a cover created, next week, you will need those notes!

Write any further notes here, to make sure that your idea is captured solidly.

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