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# Practical Tools

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## Creator Leadership Network

### Creating Margins...

When you publish something, it goes with the territory that you will get unsolicited manuscripts. Unsolicited manuscripts are one of those good news/bad news things. The good news is that people think you are publishing something worthwhile. The bad news is that one person's "worthwhile" is another person's...um...garbage. When I was a music publisher, an unsolicited manuscript from an unknown writer was always an adventure. For every Patrick Liebergen, Jim Lucas, or Rhonda Woodward that I helped early in their careers, there were the astoundingly bad things. Oh...and the phone calls, which generally went something like this..."Hi, I've just written the greatest [fill in the blank here...around the turn of the century, it seemed like every one was "rap," but there was a "country" period, and...well, you get the idea] song, and I know it will be a million-seller, and, um...how do I get it published." You may laugh, but it got to the point where my standard answer was "Move to LA (or Nashville, depending upon the genre)."

Where was I? Oh, right. So in the magazine business, I am always getting "poems" or "exposes" or "devotionals" or "articles" (the quotes are editorial, folks). Like I said, good news/bad news. I also get to meet people via the internet who have valid ministries, or businesses, that I think can really help me, and, more importantly, you, as a member of the Creator Leadership Network. [Hugh Ballou](#) is one of those people, as is [Marcia McFee](#), [Chip Stam](#), [Steve Amerson](#), Scott Revo of [Pine Lake Music](#), and a whole lot of others that I'm sorry I can't take the space to name. Just yesterday, I opened an unsolicited package from [Meggin McIntosh](#), Ph.D., who calls herself The Productivity Professor™. She enclosed a little pamphlet entitled Creating Margins in Your Professional Life, with the invitation to "include segments of the booklet in [your] publications, along with my

contact information so that your readers can access other ideas...and free downloads that I have available." I found her booklet contained some things in which you all might be interested, and I'm including a sampling below. These were/are primarily intended for business people, so substitute church language where necessary in what you are about to read.

First, though, the setup, in Meggin's words: "The first time I heard about 'margins' was in a book by Richard Swenson. **He defines margins as the spaces 'that once existed between ourselves and our limits.** It's something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations.'...Here's my belief: You can choose to create margins, i.e., some space between yourself and your limits. [Here are] ideas for how to do so."

- **Creating Time Margins**

- >When you write in a commitment of any type, add time before and after that commitment. It might be 10 minutes or an hour on either side, depending on the type of commitment.

- >Coordinate all of your responsibilities and commitments on one planner. You don't want to find yourself at a meeting while your daughter waits for you to pick her up from soccer [choir] practice.

- >Just because there is a space on your calendar does not mean you have to fill it.

- >Schedule "clearing or "recover" days after you've been out of town. It's not a day off...[but] a day [to do things] that couldn't be [done] while on the road.

- >Set the alarm on your phone, PDA, or computer to remind you to finish what you're doing so you can leave for an appointment or other responsibility.

- >Leave for all appointments at least 10 minutes before it seems prudent to leave.

- **Creating Work Margins if You are Self Employed or Work at Home**

- >Do work that only you can do. If you are doing work that someone else could do...then you are eating up your margins.

- >Determine the deadline for a project and then "back plan" from there.

- >Plan for interruptions.

- >Don't try to wear more than one "hat" at a time. If your home "office" is a card table in the living room, you won't get much work done when your family is watching TV. Even if you have to set up shop in the garage, this may be the best solution.

>Be the boss. Would you let another employee dawdle away at a two-hour lunch when he/she should be working on an important project? The apply the same guidelines to yourself.

>Create systems to let others know you are "at work."

- **Creating Work Margins if You are Not Self Employed**

>Say "no" to non-essential tasks.

>Work when you're at work. Don't be lazy and then claim that you don't have enough time (or margins) to complete your job.

>Ask (and answer), "Do I worry that, despite my best efforts, I cannot complete my current tasks (let alone plan for future tasks)?" Some jobs are really meant for two people and no matter how hard you work or how dedicated you are the job is out of hand. Set up a time to speak with your supervisor.

>Ask (and answer), "Is the stress of this job within my tolerance?" Constant stress...due to lack of margins, toxic environments, overly demanding physical expectations, and so on...creates an unproductive environment.

>Ask your family and friends if they think you love your job. Their responses may surprise you.

- **Creating Idea Margins?**

>Write down ideas on pieces of paper when you're at your desk and drop them into your inbox. You can process the ideas later.

>Have an "idea" tab in your planner (or your PDA). Write down incoming ideas in a designated spot.

>Call and leave yourself voicemail messages.

>Send yourself email.

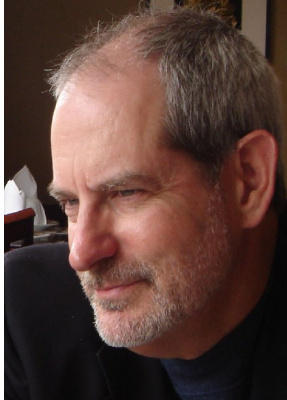
>Provide enough detail when capturing ideas--so you know what your jottings meant.

>Number a page of fresh paper from 1-30. Write a question at the top of the page. Start writing possible solutions or ideas that will address the question you started with. Don't edit...and don't worry about plausibility. Just write.

## Final Thoughts

The next issue of the print version of Creator is contains a wonderful article on Children's Choirs/Worship Ministry by Kathie Hill. If you are not a subscriber to the print version of Creator I encourage you to subscribe now by clicking on the "Subscribe" tab at the top of this page.

Blessings.



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