

DEDICATION

To My Parents for buying me that copy of Warlock #14 back in 1977 and starting my life-long comic book addiction.

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WHAT THE COMIC INDUSTRY IS SAYING:

Mat's advice has been invaluable in helping me self-publish and sell thousands of comics books. I've made a few mistakes along the way but far fewer than I would have without his words of wisdom. -Shawn Granger, writer of "Family Bones", "Innocent", "Gene Gardens" and currently working on a Southern Gothic mystery novel.

When it comes to comic marketing, Mat Nastos is my hero. His articles never fail to entertain. Also, I agree with him a lot. That helps. -Shaun McLaughlin, writer/director, former producer at WB Animation.

Whether you publish 100 issues a month or you're just getting started, not having a solid marketing plan for your comic is the #1 reason for series failure. Mat Nastos has compiled nearly 2 decades worth of experience on not just successfully finding readers that will love your comic, but how to keep them coming back for more! -J. Wichmann, writer/artist of "The Thief of Hearts"

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INTRODUCTION

What you're holding in your hot little hands is the result of about 14 months of my bitching and complaining about the horrendous state of marketing in the comic book industry - with a focus on the Internet marketing side of things. That "bitching and complaining" was a result of my deep-rooted love of comic books as a medium, combined with my own experiences as an Internet marketing guy.

During the writing, I had a lot of fun, met some really cool new people and, most importantly, pissed off a lot of the so-called "marketing" people at various comic book publishers. One publisher was so pissed off after I turned down work with him that he blocked me on Twitter and Facebook, and started a very impressive campaign of trash talk. At another publisher, a marketing guy was let go because of the information I was posting freely online.

It was interesting to see the anger that came out of a lot of the marketing people currently working in comics, especially from those freelancers who were trying to sell shoddy service and no results to small publishers for way too much money. Surprisingly, there are a lot of those charlatans out there!

On the flip side, there was a ton of fantastic responses to the material and the fact that I was so free at releasing it. I was given support from some of the top comic retailers in the country (shout-outs to Jimmy Jay of Jay Company Comics and Larry Doherty of Larry's Comics!), indie publishers (Chip Mosher at Boom Studios, Michael DeVito of Th3rd World, Jessie Garza of Viper, Andy Schmidt formerly of IDW, and others), and creators (way too many to list).

In spite of my ranting and raving, I believe there is still a HUGE amount of untapped potential for growth in the comic book industry, with Internet marketing in particular, and I hope that my work and research can help that growth.

Please enjoy the material here in this book - it is a compilation of 21 of my most popular articles on comic book marketing/sales/distribution. If you do like the work, feel free to follow me on Twitter (@niftymat) or on the web at www.MatNastos.net.

Take care!

-Mat Nastos, 2011

CHAPTER 1: Comic Book Market Analysis - Why the hell aren't you already doing it?

One of the single most asked questions I get in terms of selling or marketing comic books is: “*Okay, Mat, I've got my comic book done, how do I get people to buy it?*” Being the incredibly rude person I am, I generally answer that question with a question of my own. That question is one of the single most important questions for a comic book publisher (or anyone with a product or service to sell) to ask:

“What can you tell me about your market?” Or, “Tell me about the market analysis/research you've done.”

Unfortunately, instead of well-thought out answers to one of the most basic of business questions, I'm usually met with blank stares. Worse than those whose looks of confusion give me my answer are those who smile smugly and say, “*Comic book fans.*”

Those individuals in the latter group, which does include most of the mid and larger tier comic book publishers, are the ones I want to punch right in the Gooch.

One of the most important things a comic book publisher must do - heck, anyone looking to invest time and/or money into a business - is to know their product and know their market. If they have an idea for a product (be it a new comic book, new computer or new feminine hygiene product) then the following questions must be asked as early in to the product development cycle (in this case, the creation of the comic book) as possible:

- 1. Who** has a need for my product and how many potential customers are there?
- 2. How** much are they willing to spend to fill that need?
- 3. Does** my product fill that need? If so, does my product fill that need in a new or unique way? In other words, what is it about this product that appeals to a customer enough to make them open their wallets?
- 4. Where** are those potential customers found?

Answering these questions is essential for any product to succeed in business - even within the comic book industry. You should be trying to answer these questions at the very beginning of creating your comic - even as early as in the idea/concept stage. Yes, that's right, I'm telling you that business and marketing needs to come in to play as soon as you start thinking about creating a new comic book. This may sound counter-intuitive to a creative person, but it will save you money, time and frustration in the long run. I'm not saying you have to BEGIN the creation process from a marketing stand point, although it can be a successful path to development if the creative power is there, but I am saying that all ideas should be checked with those four questions from the very beginning.

Have an idea for a new comic based on basket weaving? Jump online and analyze the market a bit. Find out who buys basket-weaving paraphernalia. Figure out where they congregate. Find out the size of the industry, how much money is spent within it each

year and so on. Try talking to actual members of that niche market to get some baseline reactions to your new comic.

As you answer these questions, you will begin to put together a better understanding of the “big picture” of your market. From there you will continue to drill down in to the specific that will affect your product.

In other words, discover the market and then gain intimate knowledge of your potential customers. Find out exactly what they are thinking and feeling, and why they do so.

As you drill down in to your research on your market, you’re going to be looking to find out the following information. This information should help you determine whether or not you’ve found a market that can support your new product (your new comic book - I know some people are uncomfortable calling their comics “products,” but that is what they are). The specific information you’re going to be interested in finding out is:

Market Information:

This is everything to do with the make-up of the market itself and includes:

1. Market Size: We’re taking number of potential buyers, how much they spend per year and the total dollar value of the market itself, along with the projected future of the market.

2. Market Growth Rate: the percentage the market is growing or shrinking each year. One of the things to be wary of, especially if you’re looking at a long-term comic product, is a shrinking market. If you discover an intriguing shrinking market, you need to figure out why it is shrinking and what that shrinkage means to the future of your product.

3. Market Profitability: Will the size of your chosen market, and the dollars available in the market, be significant enough to offset your production costs and still give you a profit large enough to be attractive. This profit is affected by the spending power of the buyers, discounts to suppliers/vendors and any other barriers to marketplace entry.

4. Distribution Channels: This is going to be similar to what you’re already used to dealing with in the comic book industry. Figure out what distribution channels are in place - in other words, where is the product most often sold/bought and how does product arrive there. Finding a market with a solid distribution infrastructure in place, and one open to new product, is essential to success.

Market Segmentation:

This will include all information on the make-up of the buyers in the market itself, in terms of both business-to-business and the end-customer themselves. You’ll also be looking at any divisions of the market itself into segments or subgroups - be it by geography, demographic differences or any other.