



**Platform
Blueprint**

ACTION PLAN

leverage
brands

Lana Christian Target Market Research

OBJECTIVE

Lana's career has provided her with a unique background from which to tell gospel-centric stories. She has an extensive skill for finding, researching, and vetting stories that spark curiosity in the reader and point them to a larger hope they can find in Jesus Christ.

The question presented to us is how to use those unique skills to speak to a specific target customer so that Lana can have extreme clarity as she writes her book proposal, launches and edits her author website, and reaches as many people as possible with her message.

Our goal through this Target Market Research is to provide Lana with a solid foundation from which to launch her website and author career. This includes:

A deep understanding of its audience

Refined messaging that speaks to the deepest needs of the target audience

A clear picture of mission, core values, and customer guarantees

By clearly identifying these elements, we believe Lana can launch with a clear path to success.

MISSION, CORE VALUES, AND CUSTOMER GUARANTEES

Lana's mission, core values, and customer guarantees form the foundation of the stories she chooses to tell. By keeping them top-of-mind in all writing endeavors, Lana not only increases the likelihood of sticking to her values, but also its likelihood of providing the best possible stories (stories she is passionate about) to her readers.

MISSION

Helping the inquisitive seeker find the truth through captivating gospel-based stories that have come from rigorous historical research, so that they can come face to face with Jesus.

CORE VALUES

- Stories must be compelling and well-researched
- True hope exists in Jesus Christ
- Curiosity leads to discovery of the gospel
- The Bible is a practical and applicable book for today's problems
- A successful author is a voracious reader

CUSTOMER GUARANTEES

- Stories will satisfy intellectual curiosity.
- My research is rigorous and accurate
- After reading my stories, you will find hope
- After reading my stories, you will want to know more

TARGET CUSTOMER

The most important part of marketing isn't the offer, the price, or the reach. It's knowing exactly who you're talking to. Only then can you talk to that person how they need to be talked to in order to get them to purchase.

In this Target Market Research a great deal of effort goes into discovering what your target customer is like. So, we have zeroed in on your likely best "Hypothetical Reader."

In our research to find your reader, we studied Amazon reviews in these categories:

- Historical Fiction
- Christian Historical Fiction
- Religious Historical Fiction

Below, you'll see a few of the key reviews that we believe embody your target reader:

"In my opinion, most religious fiction is not very good as everyone is just too nice or the scenes just aren't realistic as it's not "Christian" to write about how people really are. Lynn Austin, on the other hand, does a really nice job of fictionalizing a brief passage of the Bible into a full-length novel, and gets you into the heads of the characters. The imagery and scenery are very realistic and, for example, I could imagine me walking the dusty streets of the Middle Ages. The thing that struck me the most was this book really got me thinking and getting more out of the story than a random section of the 28th chapter of the book of Second Chronicles and makes me want to read the next one in the series: with the volume of books I read on a monthly basis, having one stick with me and recalling various sections of the book long after I read it (about a month ago) is, to me, impressive and tells me this was really a good book."

- 5-star rating from Gods and Kings (Chronicles of the Kings #1) (Volume 1)
- **Takeaway: This audience wants to be pulled into the history, to feel it and sense it as if they were walking around in it.**

Often time reading the Old Testament it is hard to piece everything together. Lynn Austin does a fantastic job of weaving the biblical text from the account of the kings and the prophets along with Jewish traditions that brings it to life.

My only complaint would be her use of Yahweh. I understand her reasoning to differentiate the One True God from all the other gods, but for Orthodox Jews that is a sacred name of God. It was the very personal name of God given to Moses (translated as I AM in most English versions of the Bible). Jews only spoke that name 1 time a year during Yom Kippur and even then only by the high priest while praying in the Temple in the Holiest of Holies. I wish she had chosen from El ("God"), Eloah ("God"), Elohim ("Gods"), Shaddai ("God Almighty"), Ehyeh, and Tzevaot ("[of] Hosts") instead to refer to God.

- 5-star rating from Gods and Kings (Chronicles of the Kings #1) (Volume 1)
- **Takeaway: This audience is often very knowledgeable about the history around what they're reading, which is why they started reading this book in the first place. They want to increase that knowledge. This is their pet subject to learn more about. Therefore, you need to have a high standard of excellence in your research to get them into it.**

Whatever the explanation, I could not get into this story. The characters lacked depth (albeit not distinct characteristics), the language was jarringly time-period inappropriate (which didn't bother me in other books, maybe because I got so thoroughly sucked into the story?), and I found the process of reading this book to be a task, rather than a pleasure.

- 1-star rating from Gods and Kings (Chronicles of the Kings #1) (Volume 1)
- **Takeaway: A significant portion of this audience would be disappointed if everything weren't time-period appropriate.**

I think Tessa Afshar handled the story brilliantly. Not only did she weave us a beautiful and entertaining tapestry, but she also addressed the deeper journey--that of redemption from a life of sin. God took a terribly flawed heart and filled it with love. This book showed me how God meets us at whatever place on the road we've walked to. And He does it with all of us. The good, the bad, and the ugly inside.

Pearl in the Sand did this without belaboring the points. I really felt a kinship with Rahab and with her friend Miriam. I agonized with her over the difficulty of talking to those we feel have wronged us in the past--of how important it is to forgive them, so that we can also receive forgiveness.

- 5-star rating from Pearl in the Sand
- **Takeaway: Within these old stories, people are looking for new ways they can relate to the ancient characters in their modern life.**

However a few things grated on me, and I finally had to just quit reading. One thing was the heroine's thoughts about theology. They just didn't have the right feel for the time period . . . These thoughts were just too related to Christian doctrine to feel right for the earliest days of the Hebrews.

- 3-star rating from Pearl in the Sand
- **Takeaway: Getting the research right—and making sure it determines the feel of the story—is important to a significant portion of this audience.**

The novel reads like an old mythic tale, told with simple descriptive prose, and playful dialogue: the characters even refer to themselves in the third person! While reading Siddhartha, I couldn't help but picture the novel's world as being hand drawn, like the old drawings of the Buddha and the Hindu and Buddhist mythologies of old.

- 5-star rating from Siddhartha
- **Takeaway: Less religious history buffs often want to be engrossed in the wonder of old religions, and this could be their entry point into your book.**

Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha is an absolutely amazing and engrossing tale of one man's journey to find that all-elusive idea of enlightenment. The book's title may suggest that it is simply a story that would have value only for people of the Buddhist persuasion, but this simply is not true. The work is well written and thought out, and it does a terrific job of showing us as human beings that often times what we are looking for is with us all along.

- 5-star rating from Siddhartha
- **Takeaway: Searchers are looking for wisdom within religious books, regardless of the religion.**

America's First Daughter brings a turbulent era to vivid life. All the conflicts and complexities of the Early Republic are mirrored in Patsy's story. It's breathlessly exciting and heartbreaking by turns-a personal and political page-turner.

- Review of *America's First Daughter* by Donna Thorland, author of *The Turncoat*
- **Takeaway: This audience wants to be engrossed in the era in which they're reading. It looks like they often choose an era that intrigues them, and read within that era.**

I have read numerous books on Thomas Jefferson and know the history of the Revolution and the French Revolution fairly well. I was looking forward to reading about the President's daughter, although I knew a little prior to reading. I felt the undocumented romance between "Patsy" and William Short did not add anything, yet it took up almost the first half of the book, then jumped quickly to her marriage to Thomas Mann Randolph. The Randolphs and Jeffersons were related, but this didn't seem to really come through in the book. If this had been my first encounter with Thomas Jefferson I would have come away with a very disappointed view of the man. Never did I really get an idea of the "great" sacrifices he made for this country, nor any evidence of his brilliance. As for the daughter, I don't seem to have a feeling for her one way or another, certainly not one of great respect, which I thought I would have after reading the book. Disappointed in the history content and in the way the life of Patsy Jefferson Randolph was developed.

- 1-star review of *America's First Daughter*
- **Takeaway: If someone feels like the history paints an inaccurate depiction of a historical character they care about, this audience won't enjoy it.**

Here is the suggested avatar you should chase at the beginning of the Author Gateway journey:

Customer Avatar: “Historical Hannah”

Physical Demographic:

For the purpose of selling your books, Historical Hannah’s physical demographic information won’t be as crucial. Demographic information only matters if it influences the buying decision. So here, we’re showing you the 3 key elements we believe you should know about her:

- 36 years old
- Fairly high IQ
- Comfortable financial situation

Psychological Demographic:

Here’s where you’ll get to know Historical Hannah in much more useful ways. Historical Hannah is a history buff and an avid reader who has always been enamored with the wisdom held within old stories. Here are the key parts about her personality that you need to know:

Hannah’s love of history

- She’s very knowledgeable about history—especially about her “pet subjects.” One of those pet subjects is old religious history, and she is specifically looking for Biblical history at this point in time.
- Because of her vast historical knowledge, she’s going to be very sensitive to historical errors. She hates when a book gets something wrong historically, or when something feels anachronistic (out of its time period). It makes her doubt the author’s ability to provide the wisdom that was available from that time period.

Hannah's hunger for great fiction

- She's always reading a book. Her favorite genre is historical fiction.
- She loves when a well-written novel can pull her into the time period that most intrigues her, so she can walk the streets and experience the historical events with new eyes, hearing new conversations, and seeing everything from a new lens.

Hannah's openness to spirituality

- She's open to God, and she's been to church quite a few times. She would probably consider herself a Christian.
- She specifically loves Biblical historical fiction because she likes hearing Bible stories in a brand new light. She wants to learn more about what was so captivating about God to these characters, because that's what intrigues her. And her hope is that she would discover something about her own life through them.

Her Pain

Hannah doesn't just love to read for the sake of reading, or for the sake of learning more about a specific time period. Deep down, she also wonders whether the secrets of history could show her something about how to navigate the hard things in her own life. She wonders whether she'll bump into some profound epiphany that will change everything for her. Here's where she's hurting:

Hannah isn't satisfied.

- She doesn't connect with God as much as she'd like to. She's more "heady" and has often had a hard time understanding how people put their hands up during worship at church. Why hasn't she ever felt so moved within herself that she wanted to put her own hands up?
- She may not realize it consciously, but she's looking for God in the historical fiction she's reading.

Hannah looks to religion to fix the pain in her life.

- Sometimes it's her marriage. Sometimes it's her kids. Sometimes it's an argument with a friend or feeling hurt by something that happened at work. Each time, it inflames old insecurities about who she is and whether she really matters. She's got a lot of questions and is scared to ask most of them, so she turns to spiritual stories to try and find the answers.
- Being a Christian, her first choice is Biblical historical fiction. But she's also intrigued by Buddhism, Judaism, and Hinduism, and the way they came about. She's read a bit of historical fiction from other religions as well—and she's open to receiving wisdom from them.

Hannah is sick of bad historical fiction.

- When she reads a new historical fiction book, it needs to be accurate. She's tried plenty of them—liked some, hated others.
- The ones she dislikes either have inaccuracies, or they don't engross her in a captivating story. Both must be right for her to enjoy the book. She hopes this book will meet her expectations.

What She Desires to Gain

Historical Hannah is looking for a few things: first, she wants to be transported to her favorite era. Second, she wants to helplessly flip the pages, insatiably wondering what's going to happen next. And finally, she wants transformation. Here are the specifics:

Hannah wants to be taken back in time.

- She's looking for a way to experience what it was like back in Bible times. She wants to be engrossed in the era in which she's reading, so much so that she's able to walk around in it, to be a part of it.
- She's looking to be engrossed in the wonder of a moment where God's hand was on someone so mightily, that the story made it into the Bible. She wants a front

row seat to experience it.

Hannah wants to be entertained.

- When a certain Bible story bores her, she uses historical fiction to create intrigue around the story so that she'll be more interested in it. She wants a more gripping way to experience the history of Biblical times.
- She wants to read a genuinely good story, one that keeps her interest to the very end. It takes great storytelling to keep her interest, because she's well read.

Hannah wants wisdom from these stories.

- She's looking for answers. She wants to find them, and for those answers to change her in some way to where she's strong enough to make the pain in her life stop hurting.
- She sees religion as a way to find those answers, because the people in the Bible seemed to have her problems figured out because of what they experienced. What she wants is to be transformed in some way by these stories. But an important point: She doesn't want to be talked to as if she's broken. *She believes she has her life together and doesn't want to be talked down to.*

NICHE ANALYSIS

There is a lot of noise online. A lot of people are writing books. So in order to stand out, you have to take a specific position in the market or you'll risk being overlooked by the readers who need you most—and would be willing to come back over and over again, buying more and more of your books.

How can you make sure that ideal reader knows who you are and why you're the absolute best option for them? One place to start is by knowing your competition:

Here's a shortlist of a few authors you're competing with in the historical fiction genre:

- Francine Rivers
- Anita Diamant
- Lynn Austin
- Christopher Moore
- Stephanie Dray
- Kate Alcott
- Tessa Afshar

A few of these people have taken the position of secular historical fiction—often from time periods over a thousand years past Biblical times. This isn't you.

Another handful are writing to engross the author in Biblical stories, but aren't necessarily writing to change the heart of the reader. This isn't you, either.

A competitive analysis shows your positioning against most of these brands is simple. In addition to masterfully researched novels, you are here to help people find the wisdom they seek within Bible stories—and not just that, but also to come face to face with God—and be transformed. The people who are historical fiction readers, interested in religious history, and also looking for wisdom and transformation in their life will be your best readers.

Write for this person and make sure your marketing messages resonate with these internal desires. But be careful not to talk down to your reader as if they don't have life figured out. Because even if you're correct, they likely won't agree and it will turn

them off. Instead, go after them with intrigue—sell the adventure with an amazing transformative experience. Don’t say, “You’re broken and I can fix you.”

“Historical Hannah” wants to read a great book that shows a Bible story in a new light—that also promises to show her a bit more about why God is so captivating to so many people, and maybe even learn something about life herself.

To stand out, use this positioning wherever your customer avatar is first hearing about you—the top of your homepage, key blog posts (subtly), etc.

That is how your author brand will begin to flourish and gain a life of its own.

ACTION STEPS

The following action steps will help Lana begin building a stronger online presence. The best results will occur when all of these steps are performed concurrently.

Many of the techniques and strategies presented below complement each other. By combining these efforts, Lana will see more growth than by parsing them.

Ultimately, these action steps all point to one goal:

Give Lana the greatest chance of success with the least amount of wasted time.

Action Step 1: Build a functional author website

As you've heard Leverage say before, the website you have or create today doesn't have to be your permanent and only website...but you do need a website. We suggest hiring someone in your community to help you in creating a simple website. Someone from your church, or a local college or university, or anyone you feel comfortable working with on this type of project. The more experience they have in creating websites the better, but a budget-friendly option is fine at this point. The key elements you need in an author website are the ability to:

- Post new content, such as blogs and other updates
- Collect email addresses
- Offer a free download to those who give you their email address

Most everything else on your website is preferential at this point. If you have these key elements you can build on them and expand the site in the future when it makes sense.

Action Step 2: Rework the Lot Book

We suggest turning your book that has recently reverted to you into an eBook lead capture for your website. If you aren't comfortable giving the entire book away, another option is turning the first chapter or two (up until a notable cliffhanger or turn in the story) into an enhanced pdf to give away. This is exactly the type of story

that your target market loves so when you go through to revise the content, be sure to edit with this new context.

Once you have a final version of the book or chapters, make it available on your site in exchange for an email address. Also, write up social media posts pointing people to the eBook, so that they can share the post with their friends (your target customers) and so that you can maximize your online following to get an email list started.

Another alternative to using the entire book or using just a few chapters would be to create a new lead-magnet. This option requires more work and planning but could be the way to go if you aren't comfortable re-purposing the previous book right now.

Action Step 3: Rewrite your Book Proposal

Now that you know more about your target customer, use this information to redraft your book proposal for agents. Outline your specific strategy for getting these people onto your email list (through your use of the Lot book), and tell the agent exactly who you're looking for.

Then, before sending to any agents, send the proposal to Leverage so we can provide you with our thoughts before you pitch it to agents.

Action Step 4: Rewrite your Query Letter

Similar to the proposal, using everything you now know more about your target customer, write a query letter and send to Leverage for feedback and suggestions prior to circulating to agents.

Action Step 5: Look for your target market online

You need to find who your target market is listening to and where they are hanging out online. The niche research in this document is a great place to start.

Then, hang out where they are! Make friendships with the influencers in the space. Let them post on your author website, and ask to post on theirs. You need to start being seen in the space as someone whose stories are worth reading. Leveraging their platforms is a great way to start!

Remember, you only get one chance to make a first impression on these influencers, so make sure to provide them with immense value and to try to help them accomplish the goals that they are trying to accomplish. They need to be able to rely on you before they trust their audience with you. This will take time, but don't be discouraged, the reward is worth the effort.

CONCLUSION

Lana, you stand to provide incredibly valuable stories to an audience who craves them. While the Action Steps identified in this document are just the beginning of building a successful brand, if followed, they give you a good chance of accomplishing this goal.

We look forward to seeing what you can accomplish!

WHAT CAN
*L*everage
brands

DO FOR YOU?