

Julie Powell found fame with her blog, can you?

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This photo released by Little, Brown and Company shows author Julie Powell. Powell's blog "The julie/Julia Project," was put in book form and now a major motion picture with Meryl Streep. (AP Photo/Little, Brown and Company)

(AP) -- Julie Powell says she wasn't thinking book or movie deal when she began blogging her recipe-by-recipe adventure through Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking."

She was just looking for an escape from a series of dead end jobs that had put a damper on her dreams of becoming a writer.

But Powell found more than an outlet with her "Julie & Julia Project."

Her blog became a memoir, "Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen," which was later, "Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously," which then became a movie - "Julie & Julia" opening Aug. 7 with Meryl Streep and Amy Adams as stars. (The movie is also based on Child's "My Life in France.")

"I had no idea what it was going to do for me when I started," Powell said of her blog, which she started in 2002 at age 29. "It was really sort of a personal project to cut out a piece of my daily existence, purely for me, that gave me a creative outlet so the rest of my life didn't seem so stultifying."

Few bloggers will come close to Powell's success, say blog experts, especially considering there are 133 million blogs afloat on the Web, according to blog search engine Technorati, which has kept track since 2002.

Even Powell admits what happened to her was serendipitous - she was "at the right place at the right time." The blogosphere was a much smaller place seven years ago, making it easier for frustrated secretaries like herself and fans of Child to stumble upon it. A write-up in The New York Times helped land her the book deal.

"It's such a challenge to keep up a blog now," said Powell. She considers herself someone who blogs occasionally as opposed to a blogger. "It requires a great deal of rigor, discipline, a real stick-to-it-ness."

Most people are not starting a blog to find stardom, according to Jennifer McLean of Technorati. According to Technorati's State of the Blogosphere 2008 report, top reasons are self-expression and sharing expertise, followed by networking and gaining entry into the media

world. Other reasons include activism, book publicity, personal satisfaction and to become known as an expert.

But there has been a rise in a "professional class of bloggers," said McLean, such as Perez Hilton, Grace Bonney (interior decorating) and Zen Habits (goals and productivity).

PerezHilton.com had about 2.7 million unique visitors in June, according to marketing research company comScore, Inc. Leo Babauta, creator of Zen Habits (zenhabits.net) had considerably fewer at 113,000, but he's one of the most influential bloggers out there, said McLean. He is also the author of "The Power of Less: the fine art of limiting yourself to the essential...in business and in life."

Dooce.com, the blog for stay at home mom Heather B. Armstrong had about 76,000. Armstrong is also the author of "It Sucked and Then I Cried: How I Had a Baby, A Breakdown, and a Much Needed Margarita," published earlier this year.

People may not find Hilton or Powell fame, "but it is amazing to see how many bloggers do become quite well known within the niches that they write about," Darren Rowse, of ProBlogger.net, a blog with tips for bloggers, said in an e-mail. "Blogging certainly has the ability to help you grow your profile, but it's usually within an industry or topic."

Rowse, who started blogging seven years ago to collect his thoughts and connect with others, said success really depends on why someone started a blog.

Some bloggers who are hoping to attract advertisers measure it in the number of visitors. Others who want to increase their profile focus more on the number of comments or sites linking to their blog. Still for others, it's about personal satisfaction.

But bloggers who want to break out of the pack have to do more than post regularly, said Rowse. They have to market themselves, network, write guest posts and "do something controversial, creative or big," to gain attention.

"The adage of build it and they will come certainly doesn't apply in most cases," he said. "There's a lot of work to be done on a successful blog - writing is just one part of the mix."

Even using a blog to get a book deal is difficult. Blog posts are not chapters, said Brooke Warner, senior editor at Seal Press, which in 2008 published blogger Jennette Fulda's "Half-Assed: A Weight-Loss Memoir." Most are short and written in real-time.

There is a difference in writing four paragraphs of disconnected ideas and 80,000 words of a story that can sustain a reader's interest, she said.

Fulda, of Indianapolis, said her PastaQueen blog was good for remembering things, such as when she could fit into a medium T-shirt. But she still had to write new material.

Most blog success will come down to how passionate bloggers are about a topic and how much their stories resonate with readers.

Gretchen Rubin, author of the forthcoming memoir "The Happiness Project," said she chose to [blog](#) about her quest for happiness because it was something new and challenging and she wanted to chronicle her steps. But it was hearing back from the readers that was gratifying, she said.

"Part of it is that everyone is interested in happiness in some way," said Rubin. "A lot of people write about it in universal terms to be widely applicable. I'm always writing through the lens of my own experience."

Powell advises bloggers not to spend too much time on strategizing and branding. Start with what you want to write and then hope it resonates with people.

If you're not passionate about what you are writing, you are not going to keep the content fresh, said McLean.

"You have to kind of set aside the 'how many hits am I getting?' 'am I going to get Daily Beast linking to me?'" said Powell. "And get back to the basics of 'I'm going to do this because I love it.' Whatever 'it' is."

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