

Do You Want to Write and Publish a Business Book?

How to Go from Your Idea to a Book You're Proud Of

by

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Do You Want to Write and Publish a Business Book?

Greetings! I assume that you're reading this white paper because you're thinking about writing a book. Here's the most important thing you need to know right now.

If you can read a book, you can write a book. Writing a book doesn't require some mystical "inspiration," just willingness to do the work. It doesn't require any special writing talent either, you can get help with just about anything you need. But most people who think about writing a book never do it. Why?

Writing a book is hard work that will consume your life for a year or more. There will be many struggles and lots of learning. True, there are people who promise that you can write a book in a weekend or a month. Don't believe them. Unless you don't care about the quality of a book that has your name on it, what you're hearing is just sales hype.

If you want to write a book to be proud of, you will probably work very hard at it for over a year. You'll pass on opportunities for fun and income to work on your book. You'll probably shell out some of your hard-earned cash for help. When the book is published, you will have to devote time and energy and money to promoting it. This white paper is about the process of writing and publishing a business book, from the planning through promoting a book you can be proud of. Here's what I'll cover.

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You need a big “Why”

Most people who think about writing a book never start and most of the ones who start abandon the project. There’s one important thing you need if you’re going to write a book that you’re proud of, one that makes a difference in your life and the lives of other people.

You need a big, strong “Why.” The clients I’ve worked with who have completed book projects all had powerful reasons to write their books. Those reasons fall into four main groups. Are any of them a big, strong “Why” that will keep you working when it would be easier to quit?

Some People Write a Book to Boost Their Career or Business

Most of the people that I work with are people who want to write a book to demonstrate their expertise and help advance their career or business. That’s what Rod Santomassimo had in mind for all the books that we’ve worked on. Rod felt that demonstrating his expertise would help build his coaching business. The best-selling *Brokers Who DOMINATE* was the first book he wrote.

The business is thriving, in part, because of the books Rod has written. Books aren’t magic business boosters, but they can be an important part of a complete business building strategy.

Do you have a business goal that writing a book will help you achieve?

Some People Write a Book to Share What They’ve Learned

Some of the people I work with learned a lot from a single incident or over the course of their lifetime. They want to write a book to share what they’ve learned.

Bonnie Hathcock wanted to share the things she learned growing up that equipped her for success in business and life. The result was *Lilac Dreams*. Mark Deterding spent his lifetime learning about servant leadership and how it connected to his Christian faith. The result was *Leading Jesus’ Way*.

Have you learned things you want to share with others?

Some People Write a Book to Tell a Story

For years, one of my clients (who prefers to remain anonymous) has been answering questions from his children and grandchildren about his experiences in the Vietnam War. He decided to write a book to help them understand what he did and what the times were like. He hasn’t decided yet if he’s going to publish the book or if he will just produce it for family members.

Do you have a story you want to tell the public or your family?

Some People Write a Book to Check Something Off Their Bucket List

Some people want to write a book just to prove they can do it. Most of the time, the bucket list reason is paired with another reason.

Stephen Lynch always wanted to write a book and he set a goal to do it. I got the privilege of helping him achieve his goal and check that item off his list. The result was the award-winning *Business Execution for RESULTS*.

Is “writing a book” on your bucket list?

If you think your “Why” is big enough and strong enough, keep reading. Here’s what it takes to go from where you are to claiming authorship of a book that you’re proud of and that makes a difference in your life and the lives of others.

The Two Ways that Books Get Published

Today, you have lots of publishing options. A publishing company published my first book, in 1972. I wrote the book. They did everything else: editing, design, production, and marketing. They paid me for my work. Today we call that “traditional” or “legacy” publishing.

In the 1980’s, a commercial real estate broker named Jerry Anderson wrote a book called *Success Strategies for Investment Real Estate* and took his authorship one step further by publishing it himself. That was no easy task in those days, there were no role models or books about what we now call “self-publishing.” Jerry called his book, “the business card no one throws away” and used it to demonstrate his expertise and educate his clients about investment real estate.

The world of publishing has changed a lot since those days. Dan Poynter wrote and published *The Self-Publishing Manual* which taught many of us how to publish our own work. Technology lowered the cost and difficulty of the process. The development of ebooks and online bookstores, especially Amazon, made it possible for authors to sell their work without depending on physical bookstores.

Today, you have more ways to get your writing into the hands of people who might want to read it. All those ways fall into two categories. One category includes what are **called “traditional” or “legacy” publishers.**

They have names like Random House and Wiley and Berrett-Koehler and they work essentially the way they did back in 1972 when I published my first book. They pay you. You write the book. They do the rest.

If you want a legacy publisher to publish your book, the process is that you engage an agent and prepare a book proposal. The book proposal outlines what kind of book you want to write, who will read it, and why you’re the perfect person to write it. Your agent uses the proposal to sell

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your book idea to a publisher. Except for some sample chapters, you don't write a word of your book until you have a contract.

The reason the process works that way is that the publisher is the one taking the risk and so the publisher will probably have some ideas about what should be in your book. Since they are writing the checks, they get to make those choices.

The upside of going with a major publisher is that they handle all the details. The downsides are that you give up control, the process takes longer, and there's the risk that your book may not get published at all.

The rest of this paper is about the self-publishing options. You will have to either learn to do several things you may not have done before or hire competent people to do them. There are several types of companies and individuals who are willing to help.

There are writing and book coaches and ghostwriters who will help you get a solid draft done. There are freelance editors, artists, and book designers, and companies that offer the same services. There are "printers" of all types. Printers is in quotations because some "printers" only produce digital books. There are book publicity firms that can help you promote your book.

I just said that going with a traditional publisher takes longer, but "longer" is a relative term. If you start the process I outline below for a self-published book, it probably will take more than a year before you have a great book in your hands. And remember, that you're the publisher in self-publishing.

That's the major downside of self-publishing, it costs you money and it costs you effort you would not put into the project if you had a traditional publisher. The major upside is control over what goes into the book. Since you're writing the checks, you get to make the choices.

What follows is a process for writing a business book that you will publish yourself. If you want to go with a traditional publisher, the preparation and writing stages I describe will be similar to what you will do, but the timing will be different. If you seek a traditional publisher, you won't write a word (except for samples) until you have a contract. In either case, the effort you put into preparation will pay benefits later.

The Preparation Stage: Prepare to Write a Great Book

The purpose of the Preparation Stage is to make basic decisions about your book and your book writing project.

Before you start writing, you need to think about the business purpose of the book and the content. If you spend the time to do this right, the writing will be easier and more effective. This is not a step-by-step process. You'll find that your decisions in one area often affect other areas.

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Clarify your goal

Why do you want to write a book? Why do you want to write this book? How will your life be different after you publish your book? Your answers may change during the preparation and writing processes. That's normal.

One reason to clarify your goal is that a book may not be the best way to achieve it. I recently met with a woman who was a video producer. She wanted to write a book about how to do good video inexpensively. The material was great, but a book wasn't the right medium. She needed to be able to share video and audio examples. She decided that a web site was the way to go.

That's an extreme example. It's more likely that your book will be part of a system, including a web site, social media strategy, and products that will help achieve your goal. That system will include things like workbooks, videos, card packs, and other products, all based on the book.

Do market and competitive research

Amazon is part of the buying process for most business books. Even if a book winds up being purchased at a local bookstore, the odds are that the buyer checked out the reviews, ranks, and ratings on Amazon. That's because Amazon is a massive catalog and search engine, which makes it great for researching the market.

Every book on Amazon is listed in several categories and sub-categories. Figure out where your book will probably be. Then review what else is in the category. Which books and authors will compete with your book? Who are experts you might interview in your research or ask for an endorsement?

Decide what keywords your readers will use when they're searching for a book to solve the problem you're writing about. If you can survey them, that's great. Then, use Amazon's search engine and enter those keywords to learn what books and experts show up.

Google should be part of your research, too. Enter the keywords you think people will use to look for the solution your book offers. The auto-complete and suggested search phrases on Google can alert you to keywords that people commonly use, but you hadn't thought of.

You can pay someone to do this research for you, but it's usually better for you to do this work yourself. You know a lot about your topic and business that you can't put into words. That means that you will see connections and research trails to follow that no one else will see.

Define how your book will be different and distinctive

You won't publish your book in a vacuum. Other, similar books will compete with your book for attention and sales. Reviewers will compare your book to other offerings.

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Before you write a word, you should know how you intend to make your book stand out from the pack. One exercise that will help you do this is to write the marketing copy for the book you want to publish. Here are some questions to consider before you write.

- Who will buy your book?
- Why?
- What will trigger them to search for a book like yours?
- How will their life be different after they read your book?

Be as specific as you can when you answer those question. Abstractions are the enemy.

Select a person to write to

I encourage you to write to a single person. I mean a real person, not a demographic description. Real people have social security numbers. They probably have a few bad habits. When you write to a real person, you're more likely to write the way you talk to a single person, which is good. Great business books are more like conversations than they are like speeches. You will also write a very focused book, one that's more likely to fill a real need or want.

List the names of people who would be exactly the person you want to read your book.

Deepen your understanding of the reader

You'll write a better book if you understand what your reader does every day and how he or she makes the decision to buy a book. Review the list of people who you want to read your book. Then learn everything you can about them.

This is not classic market research which identifies the characteristics of a target market. That has its place. It can help you determine the size of your potential market, but first you need to understand your reader and why and how he or she buys books.

I recently purchased a book titled *Smarter, Faster, Better* about working more effectively. If you know that I'm a 70-year-old white male living in Charlotte, that I'm married with children and grandchildren, that I'm a former Marine, and that I've written more than fifty books you still won't know *why* I purchased that book.

To learn the why, you must learn about me and my life. You must learn how and when I buy books. And you must know why what you're writing about will be important to me.

Deepen your understanding of the topic

It's not enough to know that your reader has a problem that your book will help them solve. You also should know how they become aware of the problem and how they decide to choose a book (hopefully yours) to help them solve it.

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List all the books your ideal reader could buy to solve their problem. Analyze their titles and tables of contents. Check out who endorsed the book.

Do some additional research. Check articles and blog posts. Learn how people describe situations that would inspire them to buy your book. Gather facts and stories you can use.

Now list all the ways your ideal reader can solve the problem you want to write about without buying any book at all. Are there people they can talk to or courses they can take?

Tip: What happens if they decide not to solve the problem?

Evaluate your platform

Your platform is the number of people you can reach who will consider buying your book when you ask them. They're also the people who may help you publicize the book, especially when you launch it.

Your platform includes all the people you reach with your speeches, webinars, training events, media appearances, web site, blog, and social media. That's usually a pretty big number. I have more than twenty thousand Twitter followers, but not all those people will consider buying one of my books.

When you're estimating the size of your platform, try to identify the number of unique individuals who will consider buying your book when they hear about it. That can be hard.

When I toured the country speaking to businesses and associations, I usually sold books at the back of the room. I discovered that about twenty percent of the audience usually bought books. I used that as the basis for deciding how many books to ship to the place where I was speaking. Today, I use that figure as a starting point to estimate the number of people who might buy my books—the size of my platform.

I have more than 20,000 Twitter followers as I write this. Twenty percent of that is 4000 books. If I was only on Twitter that would be bad news, but my platform includes subscribers to my blogs, LinkedIn contacts, people who have bought my other books, and more. Sure, there's some overlap, but using the Twenty Percent Rule is a good starting place to estimate the size of your platform.

Develop a project plan for your book

You need to have a project plan for your book. You don't need to define the details of it at this stage, but you do need to know the basics. Here are five questions I ask clients to answer to outline the preliminary plan to help write a book that will help them accomplish their goals.

Where are we now? What do we know and not know? What's the state of our name recognition, author platform, etc.?

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Where do we want to go? What will it be like when we're done writing the book? How about a year after publication?

How will we get there? What do we have to do to make our goal a reality?

Who's important to consider? Who will help? Who's the competition?

What would be fun to try? The answers to this question capture all those good ideas you get that don't have a specific place right now.

Plan the content

You'll also have to think about the content of your book. You may have a business process that you're going to illustrate, and that will make organizing easier. But if you don't, a good place to start is by constructing a great story list or major scene draft or both.

A great story list is just what the name implies. Start making a list of all the stories and examples you'd like to have in the book. Don't worry about putting them in order, yet. Don't worry about dredging up all the details. Just get a list of those good stories and examples.

A major scene draft is a little more structured. It's a technique used by many screen writers when they need to adapt a book to a television or movie screen. Advertising and television writers often do the same work on a storyboard. Years ago, I did this with index cards that I spread out on my bed. Imagine your book as a series of scenes. Put the scenes in order.

One of the biggest challenges for business book authors is taking the cloud of interconnected thoughts that exist in their mind and translating it into the linear form of a book. Some people start writing using their story list or major scene draft as a guide. Others use an old-fashioned outline.

Whatever you choose to do, I suggest that you plan your transitions from one section (story, scene, or outline point) to another. Paying attention to the transitions make it more likely that your writing plan will work.

How do you know when it's time to start writing?

There are cookbooks which advise you to "cook until done." My advice on when to start writing is like that. At some point in your preparation, everything will jell. You may not shout "Eureka!" but you'll know it's time to start writing.

One author I worked with worked on the preparation process strenuously for a couple of months. He went around and around with questions and answers. Then he had to go on a business trip and he couldn't work on the planning. On the flight home, he realized that he "suddenly" had the plan. He sketched it out on a pad of paper. The next day he rented a condo and started to write. He finished the first draft in three days.

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I can't promise you a flash of insight like that, but I can tell you that you'll know when your plan comes together and it's time to write. As you work through writing your book and preparing for launch you will adjust your plan to the realities you discover and the opportunities you uncover. That's normal.

The Writing Stage: Write the Book

The purpose of the Writing Stage is to create the core of a great business book.

When you've got the preparation done, it's time to write. You may write by yourself, with a coach, or with a writing partner. If you've done your preparation well, writing the book will be easier than if you just start without the prep work.

Most books go through four drafts. If you've never written a book, you might be thinking, "That might be true for most folks, but it won't be true for me." If you're thinking that, you're probably wrong. Here's how the drafts usually work.

The First Draft

The objective of the first draft is to get the basic book on a page or in the file with the big pieces in the right order. After we've done that, we'll review it for what I call "red threads." Those are the key ideas that we want to bring back several times in the manuscript. We'll also review the first draft to determine what additional research and stories we need to make the book great.

Tip: You may discover that it's hard to write the book you planned. That could be a sign that you need to restructure.

Other Things You Should Start Working On

There are some other things you should begin while you're writing the book. Begin the search for a cover designer, interior designer, and editor. Work on developing your platform. You'll need to select an editor and designers in the Production Stage. If you research while you're writing, you can move forward with the production stage as soon as your manuscript is ready.

The Second Draft

The second draft is a revision of the first draft, working in those red threads and adding the additional research and stories. When the second draft is done, we should have the basic book in approximately the form it will be at the end. At this point, you should do a full read-through out loud. When you do that, your mouth will trip over things that your eyes will miss.

Tip: Often, red threads that you hadn't considered emerge when you read through the draft.

Other Things You Should Start Working On

The manuscript is the core of your book, but there are several other things you will need to prepare. Publishers call them the front matter (stuff that appears before the main book) and the back matter (stuff that appears after the main book). You don't have to finish them when you complete your second draft, but starting them early means they'll be ready before you complete your third draft. They include the following:

The Preface. You write the preface which usually tells the story of how you came to write the book. Prefaces are falling out of favor with business authors and publishers, but I think you should consider writing one. Your preface can add richness and personality to your book.

The Foreword. Ideally, the foreword will be written by someone who knows you and who is known by your potential readers. It's usually about why you're the perfect person to write your book.

The Dedication, Acknowledgements, and Author Bio. These should all be written specifically for the book.

Endorsements. Solicit endorsements from people who are like your readers and from experts your readers respect. If you solicit them early, you will be able to use them in all your promotional efforts. The catch is that many endorsers won't want to craft their endorsement until after they see the finished manuscript.

The Third Draft and Beta Readers

The third draft consists of the revisions of issues that we uncovered reading the second draft. The third draft is the one that you want to send out to beta readers.

The idea of beta readers comes from beta testers in the tech world. The first stage of software development is called alpha, after the first letter in the Greek alphabet. The development team works as hard as they can to make sure that the software is stable and does what it's supposed to do. They test as many things as they can think of. But software engineers know that they can never think of everything.

That's why, for years, software developers have taken their products from an alpha stage and moved to a beta stage where they send the program out to real users to see what happens. Sometimes beta testing is called User Acceptance Testing. The idea of beta readers works the same way. I've identified four different kinds of people who should be beta readers for business books.

There should be beta readers who are like your ideal reader. They can give you feedback on the quality of your explanations by telling you when they're puzzled. They're also likely to give you good feedback on what they would like to see in the manuscript that you haven't added yet. And they'll tell you what they really liked. You can use that information in promotion.

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Some beta readers should be experts. They should know a lot about your topic and your audience. They'll be able to add interesting insights and research and catch errors that many readers will miss.

If you mention individual people in your book, they should read the sections that pertain to them to find any inaccuracies or suggest things that should be added.

Some people will want to read your book and give you feedback. They usually include friends and loved ones. They may not have specific expertise that will help you, but they can often offer insights no one else can. This is also a way for people who care about you to support you and your book.

Beta readers can give you the kind of feedback that will turn a good book into a great one. Your book will represent you in the marketplace for a decade or more, so don't skip the important beta reader step to save a month or two getting to publication. The beta reader feedback is critical, because it gives you an idea of what the market response is likely to be. Usually, we revise based on the beta reader's comments. We don't take all of them as guidance, but there's always a lot of things to fix once we get the beta evaluations back. That fixing is the fourth draft.

The Fourth Draft (and Sometimes More)

Most of the time, the fourth draft is all we need. But sometimes, the beta readers come up with things that are harder to fix, and we need to do more drafts.

I recently had to do that with my *Become a Better Boss One Tip at a Time* e-book. There's no way to know in advance when this is going to happen. I had to revise the book and go back to beta readers two more times. That took longer than I expected and was very difficult, but the book I released was much better because of the feedback.

Whatever happens with beta readers and no matter how many drafts you write, the final draft will be one that has passed through several screens and is likely to meet the needs of both you and your readers.

The Production Stage: Produce the Book

The purpose of the Production Stage is to create a book worthy of your content.

Once you've got the manuscript written, there are some things you need to do to turn that manuscript into a book. Having a professional editor review the manuscript is the first thing.

Professional Editing

At this point, you may feel like you've got a great manuscript and you and several people have looked at it, and you've done all the spell and grammar checking that software can provide. So, you may think there's no reason for a professional edit. There is.

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When I wrote books that major publishers published, there were often three or four professional edits before the book was moved into printing. No matter how hard I had worked and how many people had helped me, a professional editor always found many things to fix. Even after the third professional edit, the fourth editor would find things to correct. Even after that and after the book was published, there were still errors. By this point they were small and unsubstantial errors, but they were still errors. Take it as proof that people are fallible.

I think it's helpful to divide editing into two levels. Developmental editing and content editing work on the structure of the manuscript. Copyediting, line editing, and proofreading work on the language in the manuscript.

Developmental editors concentrate on the structure and content of the book. This is also the kind of work book coaches like me do. We help develop a book during the writing stage.

Content editors review the content and presentation of the entire book after it's been written. I do this kind of editing mostly for major publishers. Both kinds of editing often result significant changes to the manuscript.

When you select a developmental or content editor, look for experience with business books. Ask about their thoughts on effective book and chapter structure. Ask whether they usually suggest research and examples or not, depending on what you prefer.

Copyediting, line editing, and proofreading work on the manuscript after the book is written. They're all concerned with sentence structure, grammar, syntax, and usage. **Copyeditors** may also make recommendations for some changes in presentation and sometimes do limited fact checking. **Line editors** work to streamline the writing. Proofreading is usually the last type of editing to be done. **Proofreaders** look for typos and grammatical mistakes.

One important thing copyeditors and line editors do, beyond just basic spelling, grammar and usage corrections, is harmonize the manuscript. At this point, usually several people have had their hand in the manuscript and different parts of it may read differently. A good editor will fix that so that everything is in a consistent voice and conforms to standard literary style.

You should have both levels of editing. Developmental editors and book coaches will help you create a book that makes the most important points effectively in an effective order as you develop the book. If you have a completed manuscript, a content editor can help you improve the content and order of presentation. That's as far as most self-publishing authors usually go, usually for economic reasons.

While the editing is underway, you can set to work on the cover and interior design.

Cover Design

If you are doing a self-published book, cover design is critical. One of the surest ways that a book screams "I was self-published by amateurs!" is with an odd-looking cover. You can hire a

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professional cover designer or use some of the available templates to get a professional-looking cover design that also meets professional publishing standards.

Cover design in the digital age means looking good on Amazon. There are two sizes of cover images on Amazon and your cover should represent your book well at both sizes.

Tip: Put your picture on the back of the book if you will be selling books at the back of the room during speaking engagements or if you will sell books through convention bookstores. In those situations, many people will buy your book as an extension of the experience of your excellent speech or workshop.

Interior Book Design

Book design is creating the look of the book. It includes selecting typeface, a chapter format, headings, and margins. Again, there are individual professional designers and there are workable templates, and you can choose the best route for you.

In either case, beware of novel or eccentric design. The interior design should be transparent to the reader. If the reader thinks, “what an interesting typeface,” the design is bad. Good interior design should make it easy for the reader to absorb the content.

Tip: The body copy in most books should be in what’s called a “bookface.” I could try to define the term for you, but I think an example is more effective. The body copy in this white paper is in a bookface called Times New Roman. Here are a couple of more examples.

This is in a bookface called Cambria.

This is in a bookface called Garamond.

Book Printing in the Digital Age

The book needs to be produced, and that’s something that the digital world has changed a lot since I started writing books back in the 1970s. Today, you can engage a book printer and create a book in the old-fashioned print way. Even if you do that, you will want to have an electronic version, and your book designer should be able to take care of that as well as print design.

Most of the clients that I work with now choose to do softcover books and electronic books published through Amazon. Some clients have done hardback books in the traditional format, and some considered selling their books through bookstores and other online outlets as well as Amazon. That said, the most common format is Amazon only and softcover print plus e-book. Some clients also produce an audio version.

The Promotion Stage: Release Your Book to the World

The purpose of the Promotion Stage is to do everything possible to assure that your book helps accomplish your goals.

When you've got books, it's time for a release. In the old days, the book launch lasted for a couple of months, and it was critical because it determined if your book would sell enough copies to make it to the publisher's backlist. A publisher's backlist included proven sellers that the publisher would keep available for sale. Other books would go "out of print" and not be available for sale.

In the Digital Age, everything's on the backlist because nothing goes out of print. Once you publish a book, it exists in files that may exist forever. So, the book launch needs to be a little different.

Years ago, there were no social media, but today, social media is a critical part of any book launch. You will need to do some of this as the author, and you can hire help with the other parts, but you should be thinking about a book launch period of three months, where your intense effort and any hired help concentrates on making people aware of your book.

After that, I suggest having a mini-relaunch every six months to a year to push the book up in the consciousness of people who may want to buy it. Effective promotion will help a book sell for a decade or more. One of my niche books sold consistently for more than twenty years. It was never a best seller on any list, but it gave me a revenue stream and led to many training and consulting engagements. It was a successful book. It wasn't a best seller, though, and the odds are that your book won't be either.

To some extent, that depends on what you mean by "best seller." If you mean "Will my book rise to the top of a major best seller list, like the ones published by the New York Times, then the answer is almost certainly "No." If you mean "Will my book become a top-something on one of Amazon's list of books in a specific category?" then you've got a shot, especially if you write a book that helps a self-identified group of people do better.

Yes, I know, there are people who will promise to make your book a best seller. But I haven't seen any proof that they can do it ethically and without damage to your reputation. Remember, becoming a best seller is not the reason you're writing a book. Your book will be a success if it helps you achieve your goals. That's the prize to keep your eye on.

Very few books recoup the cost of writing and publishing, but if you're writing a business book, there are other benefits. You may be able to increase your fees or become a paid speaker. Your book will help you get more business. You can also develop a line of ancillary products (audio programs, seminars, workbooks, etc.) based on your book or designed to help readers get even more value. Each of your products adds some unique value and they cross-promote each other.

What's next?

I hope this white paper has helped you understand what it takes to write and publish a book that meets your goals. Only you can answer the question: “Should I write a book?” In my experience, there are three common answers.

Nope, writing a book is not for me

Most people I talk with, both formally and informally, decide that the work and expense of writing a book are not for them. If that's you, remember that your passion for something or someone inspired you to consider writing a book. Think about other ways you can use that passion.

I want to write a book, but not now

Most of the people who decide to put off writing a book, make that decision because of the time commitment they would need to make. They want to use that time for something else. The most common “something else” is to spend time with growing children.

If you decide that you want to write a book, but not right now, I suggest that you keep working on your idea in ways that don't take a lot of time. Do some research from time to time. Capture ideas about what your book will say. Collect stories that might go in the book. If you lead training or give speeches or other presentations related to your topic, capture the questions that people ask you.

I want to get started

If you want to write that book now, get started. Here are three potential next steps.

Write the book straight through. Don't worry about details, research you need, or precise phrasing. Get the whole book out of your head and into a file. This is called a zero draft, the one before the first draft.

Peter Drucker, Clay Christensen, and others use this technique to do a “brain dump” of their book. When you're done with the zero draft. You'll know what you have and what you don't and you'll be ready to write a great book.

Gather your materials. Pull together the facts and stories and examples you want to use. List the key points you want to make.

Set up an Options Review Session with me. My free Options Review Session will give you the opportunity to ask questions that this paper hasn't answered and help you decide if you really want to write that book now. Here's a link to the description on my web site.

Additional Resources

Please visit my writing web site where you'll find blog posts, resource lists, and pointers to help you learn more about writing better and about publishing. Here are some more resources I recommend.

Books and Sites about Publishing

Here are two excellent books about self-publishing.

[*APE: Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur-How to Publish a Book*](#) by Guy Kawasaki and Shawn Welch does a great job of covering the opportunities and pitfalls. You'll get as good an overview as possible of a fast-changing area of business.

APE will give you most of what you need to know, but I also recommend the latest edition of Dan Poynter's classic [*Self-Publishing Manual*](#). Dan was the grandfather of self-publishing experts and this book is filled with a lot of helpful detail that will enrich your understanding of publishing in general and self-publishing in particular.

Dan's book is a must-read if you want to be able to do bulk sales of your book, like many of my clients. That's because there's rich material on working with a book printer that you won't find in APE

There are a gazillion web sites that claim to help you publish a book. Most of them are long on promises and short on performance. Here are three exceptions.

Jane Friedman is a twenty-year publishing industry veteran who teaches and writes about writing and publishing books. Her web site is a treasure trove of information. I'm pointing you to her excellent and [frequently-updated post: "Start Here: How to Self-Publish Your Book."](#)

Jane also created and delivers a [Teaching Company Great Course](#) titled: "[How to Publish Your Book.](#)" A large chunk of this course is aimed at fiction writers, but you can easily skip those. The course is worth the purchase price even if you only absorb the lessons on nonfiction books.

Joel Friedman is another publishing veteran who has put together a [web site teeming with good information](#). You'll find an informative free publication, "10 Things You Need to Know about Self-Publishing."

[The Alliance of Independent Authors](#) is a nonprofit, professional association for authors who self-publish. They're based in London.

Books and Sites to Help You Write Better

There are lots of good books on writing. There are many about aspects of writing, such as storytelling. But there's only one book I recommend to business people who are interested in writing a book or simply writing better. That's Chip and Dan Heath's book, [*Made to Stick*](#).

Daphne Gray-Grant is a writing coach who has a helpful web site, blog, and email newsletter. Here's [a link to her site](#).

About Me

I published my first business book in 1972. For several years I successfully operated a small publishing and training company. Since 2008, I've been concentrating on helping others write and publish books. My clients get the benefit of all my knowledge and experience.

Every writer, ghostwriter, and coach works differently. I use lots of conversations to tease the ideas out of my client's head so we can write a better book. I record many of our conversations and have them transcribed. You'll enjoy working with me if you enjoy the back and forth of a good conversation.

Some people want to hand their material to a ghostwriter and go away, leaving the ghostwriter to whip their material into shape. If that's what you're looking for, you should find someone else. I do my best work when I can share my experience and ideas to help make the book better. You'll enjoy working with me if you are seeking a writing partner who will help you create a great book.

Here are my points of strength and difference.

I am an **excellent explainer and storyteller**. Since my first book, in 1972, editors and readers have commented on that strength. Stories are the way human beings have remembered and shared information since we first crawled out of caves. I'll help make your stories more effective and structure your chapters so people want to keep reading.

I write with a practical business focus. That's what Inc Magazine said when it named one of my books "A book every CEO should own." The people who read business books are looking for ways to do something different so they get better results.

Because I've had a long career as a speaker, writer, and consultant, **I'm familiar with many different industries and audiences.** That experience gives me a wealth of knowledge to share that will make your book better.

Do You Want to Write and Publish a Business Book?

Three Kinds of Services

As a **ghostwriter/writing partner**, I will do most or all the writing of the books my clients put their names on.

As a **writing coach**, I will work with you to improve your writing and suggest structural changes to make your book better.

As a **“book doctor,”** I will review your book manuscript and make suggestions to improve the content and structure. Some people call this “developmental” editing.

There’s more on [my writing website](#) with a lot more information about the writing and publishing process. You can use the contact form on my site to reach me or

Send email to wally@writingabookwithwally.com or

Call me at 336-209-3864

I’m based on Charlotte, North Carolina, which is US Eastern Time.