

Writing Your First Book

By Renie McClay

Have you ever thought about getting published? People get published for many reasons. Some of those reasons might be to leave something behind, give something back to their profession, communicate a unique view or new information, gain credibility in their field. Whatever your motivation, if you are thinking about it you have a book in you.

The first thing I hear from people regarding writing their book? I don't have time. Of course not. No one has available time. You have to MAKE available time for it and that will happen as you solidify your reason for wanting to create this.

One approach is to chunk it. It is intimidating to think about writing an entire book. It gives me a headache just thinking about it. So, how to chunk it? I might do it this way:

- Mindmap the topics I want to cover (flip chart, lots of colors of ink, get a visual)
- Write the table of contents
- Start drafting the compelling publisher proposal (why? It will help me identify the audience, think about how to market it, how to distinguish it from other books out there, define the book concept)
- Refine what I want it to be (sassy or business-y, "The Complete Guide" or just key and actionable points)
- Write a sample chapter (not chapter 1! Too hard!)

You get the idea. Just one thing at a time. Now, when to do it? What about Borders every Sunday evening? A friend of mine went to the library after work two evenings a week. Every week. Find a coach or other authors that can provide some accountability for you in this area. My public library has a group of writers that meet weekly.

If this is a work related book, then it is important to prioritize it that way. It should have focus and a goal, just like your other work areas.

I recently met a prolific writer who has published dozens of books. She runs a consulting business and works way more than full time. How does she do it? She gets the concept together and goes away for two weeks and writes it. She goes grocery shopping when she arrives (same list each time, she simplifies). She stays in, she writes all day. I want to do that! I want to get a book contract and head to a cabin in the mountains or go to the beach and write it! Even focused time for a long weekend or week would give a huge head start on a manuscript. Imagine that!

Another idea. Think out of the box as you think of writing a book. There are many types of books. One author-one topic is the most common book type. But don't limit yourself. I recently wrote *"Fortify Your Sales Force: leading and training exceptional teams."* This book has multiple contributors. Thirteen people contributed to the book, all sharing information and experience on a related topic to developing a sales force or sales team. The contributors have experience with companies like Motorola, Kraft, Ricoh, Trane, United Airlines, Abbott, RR Donnelley, P & G, Avon, Benco Dental, Shell Oil, Grainger, Walgreens, Chanel and more. People are interested in what these companies are doing! It gets readers attention, and it gets publishers attention. And when you put all this talent together and create the book, you are the editor. Make that the Editor! So, instead of writing the entire book, you write a chapter or two (showcasing your specialties) and then you manage the project and deadlines of getting the other contributors onboard. Sounds easy, huh? Not always so. But it may be a good approach. For me, this approach was a good way to get my foot in the publishing door. After writing a multiple contributor book, I found myself ready to write my own book. And this time I had some experience with it and some publishing contacts.

Many people have the book in their head and they just need help getting it out and on paper. One alternative is to get outside help. There are at least two different ways that writers can help you. One is to help get your existing content into a manuscript draft. One of my clients had all the information for his book, he just didn't have time to sit down and write it. He made regular presentations to groups and they would say, "This is great stuff, when are you going to write a book?" He asked for my help. I went to a presentation and captured his topics and content for him as he spoke. He is now able to take that document and have a manageable task of taking it to the next level. Another way is to take existing content and get help refining it. You can get all the content together and hand it to a ghost writer and have them refine it, add transitions, maybe help with organization, capture the tone you are looking for, add call outs. All those things great writers can do. A writing resource can help with writing the manuscript and the compelling proposal. It is still your content and message. It is still your book, you are just getting help with moving it along.

There are several resources that may be of interest to you if you are doing this for the first time. *Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents* and *Writers Market* are both updated each year. They list publishers and more and the industries they specialize in.

And, when you decide you are serious, read Robert Mager's, *The **How to Write a Book Book***. This book helps us to overcome many of the excuses we use for why we haven't written a book.

What is your excuse?

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