

Your Authoring Journey

Are you ready for an adventure?

Do you long to do something very different from your usual day-to-day grind? Perhaps you're tired of working hard simply to pay your bills and dream of taking an extended vacation... joining the Peace Corp... or going on a meditation retreat.

But if you also crave adventure, seek the satisfaction of doing something important for others – and even aspire to create a legacy – you may be ready for a very different journey.

Without leaving home, you can experience a journey of the soul by writing a book ...if you've got what it takes.

Feeling Unsure?

The mere thought of taking this leap probably brings up fears such as:

- How can I take the time and energy away from my regular life?
- Do I have something important to share – and the talent to tell it right?
- Will the results be as I imagine it or will I have spent my time doing something that doesn't end up benefiting anyone?

And if you've never done it before, you probably can't even imagine how you'll make the whole thing happen.

While writing a book obviously does not come with any guarantees, virtually every author will tell you that during the process they discovered a new way to look at their life, their work and their passions. Many have been led in new directions.

The wonder of writing a book is remarkable.

If writing a book is on your lifetime list of things you want to accomplish, you will be different, more confident, happier and more certain of what's next when you write that book and get it published.

You may already have ideas or even something written that has been sitting in a file for months or even years – just waiting for you to pick it up again.

You can't even imagine how much you will learn about yourself, others and the subject you are writing about by writing and publishing your book. Yes, it is hard work and does take time and energy away from other things, so only you can determine the right time to do it.

Imagine yourself heading out on a journey of self development

As you read this ebook, I will introduce some important questions and things for you to think about. Relax and let your authoring vision ignite the energy and inspiration you will need to make your book dreams come true.

I'll dispel the Publishing Mystique.

Because it is still such a prestigious thing to have written and published a book, many mystiques and myths surround the process. In order to demystify the process and dispel the myths, I will describe clearly what is behind each aspect of this journey so that you can imagine yourself actually accomplishing each step.

Section I Bringing Your Book to Life

Make your book worth writing (and reading).

The difference between a great book and simply a good one is its ability to transform the reader, no matter the topic. Transformational books are the ones you always remember because they touch your life. Hundreds of transformational books have been written on dozens of subjects—from business to motorcycle maintenance. It isn't the subject matter but rather the author's ability to communicate universal truths that elevates a book to this level.

You can increase the value and readership of your book substantially by thinking beyond your subject to the essential life lessons that can be communicated through your words.

Readers of nonfiction books usually buy books that promise a solution to a specific problem they are experiencing. They believe that the author has the expertise and insights to lead them in a new direction that is positive and hopeful.

One of the things that often prevents a writer from making that leap to transformational is that he or she tells a personal story and assumes it will be interesting and relevant to other people. Don't make readers figure out your point. Instead, guide them to make the connection. Deliver the message and then illustrate it with your story. And even more importantly, include stories of others to give the readers a full perspective.

Always write from a place of honesty.

It is vital to write in an authentic voice. People read between the lines and can quickly sense whether the writer is justifying a point of view, angry about something or simply bored with their subject. Write when you are feeling the most passionate about your subject, and this passion will come through – and be contagious.

My guess is that you are reading this because you have been impacted by the books you've read since childhood. You know the power that great books have to change lives. Your challenge is to pass this gift along through the books you write.

If you have the passion and knowledge, but truly doubt your ability to write a transformational book, consider working with a book coach. A coach will help you to develop your message right up front and give feedback throughout the writing process. An editor can help you correct common writing problems, but a good book coach can also challenge your thinking.

Know who you are writing for.

The writing process should start long before putting pen to paper. For instance, it is essential to first identify who you are writing for.

Defining your audience (or constituency) means fully identifying everything you can about the people who most need and want the knowledge you have to share. They are the people most likely to buy your books.

To help bring them into focus, imagine you are speaking at a live event about your topic. What types of people would you expect to see in your audience?

I find that it helps to start by thinking of them as individuals each with their own problems and concerns that need your exact intuition and

expertise to solve. Identify them by age, education, gender, jobs, interests – list everything you know about them.

Then ask yourself: what do these people have in common beyond the hope that your words and wisdom will solve their problems?

Understanding your constituency individually and as a group will make it enormously easier to identify the right message, tone and content for your book – and where/how to market your book.

I much prefer the term **constituency** to **audience**. Since audience is a recognized term in publishing, I will use it at times. But, to me it seems to denote spectator – whereas constituent means participant.

Audiences simply purchase books and provide authors with income. On the other hand, a constituency is made up of readers who integrate what they learn from a book into their own lives and out into the world. This link between author and readers truly creates a symbiotic community with common goals.

The constituency for your book is made up of people who need what you are able to provide. Their needs drive your passion and expertise to use all of your resources to make their wishes and needs fulfilled.

Speak to your constituency -- marketing will follow.

I don't usually talk about marketing with an aspiring author until at least half of the individual's book is complete. Worrying about how and where you will sell your book can be a major distraction. But, I can assure you that if you focus your attention on your constituents – and write a meaningful book for them -- you will automatically be creating your strongest marketing building block.

As you create a constituency, you are also developing a community of potential buyers for your books. So dedicate yourself to your clients and serving them. Share their dreams and visions and collaborate in a way that uses the best of both of you – as well as others who are part of your team.

Consider how you can immerse yourself in the world of your constituency. You will probably find that you have a rich source of access to your target audience – possibly your clients. These are the people you help every day. But it is easy to become so busy being

experts and giving advice that we forget to listen. You have the opportunity to change that – starting now.

Spend as much time as you can around with the target audience for your book. Go to meetings, teach, take on new clients. Start to make lists of their biggest concerns. Why do they come to you? What do they hope you will give them? What is the thing that is assumed but never said? What is the elephant in the room?

Don't forget to identify your audience's emotional state. Listen for what you hear again and again, the frustration, anger, longing, fear or other emotions.

You may be wondering why we are starting this journey with a focus on who you are writing to instead of your topic. It is because so many authors come to me with books that read like journals. They have been written for the author not the reader.

Your job as a writer is to communicate something that will speak to others, solve their problems, take them on a journey to a new place, help them get out of their limited frame of reference (and their clutter) and think clearly. As you listen and take note, you will feel your book coming together.

Think beyond yourself.

Generally we write about things we are worried about or seeking ourselves. This is natural – but we need to expand our focus to incorporate the needs, ideas and emotions of our audience.

It's also easy to get caught up in the safety-net of being "experts" – far more comfortable than feeling our fear. But never forget that fear is exactly the emotion most of your readers feel when they approach the self-help section of a bookstore or Amazon looking for answers.

Your readers are afraid and angry and sad and they want you to reach right out of the page and make them feel better. They want to believe. If they've bought your book, something about the cover, table of contents or your bio or testimonials have made them think you might really have the answer they need. They must believe you can relate to their problems and emotions.

Turn frustration into a tool.

When you are feeling frustrated, stop and think, go around the problem, find another answer.

The only thing I would define as failure is not caring enough. You owe it to your constituents to do all you can to give them the best of who you are and what you know.

You will have times when you simply do not feel like giving your all – we all do. A walk or a deep breath may get you back on track. Or, you may just not have found your true meaning or purpose. Keep looking for what stimulates your energy and creativity. Give yourself a break. You have to serve yourself well before you can serve your constituency.

Whatever you are working on, eat dessert first. Go with what you love and what means something to you. Find the constituency you experience joy in serving and dedicate yourself to that service. Each mistake or fall is a challenge to be met and an opportunity to learn. That is what creates expertise. Never give up on your dreams and when you see them through the eyes of your constituency you will have found meaning in your work and in your life.

Discover and reveal your Core Message

Writers have a long-held responsibility to tell it like it is. Through the ages, we have called people to action for change in their own lives and in the world.

Your core message has two parts. First, there is your overall topic, and then there is the message you want to communicate about that topic. Your message should be on something you are passionate about – something on which you have expertise and a particular and unique viewpoint. This is “The World According to You”.

My personal biased viewpoint is that you have no right to take up space on book pages unless you are willing to go right out to the edge of a tree limb and give us a bird’s eye view of the world as you see it. Who cares whether anyone else thinks so or likes what you have to say?

I hope you have a calling, a passion you feel strongly about. I hope you are writing to end angst and suffering in your corner of the world.

To make the world a better place for your readers. They will be different and better for having read your book. “You’ve changed my life” are the four words every author wants to hear.

The core message is the heart of what the book is about. You start there and from there you have pages and pages to create a convincing argument for change.

One of the engaging tools you will use to convey the core message and make an argument for change is stories. Stories you can use to bring your book to life. They can be from your own life, from clients, about well-known people to validate your core message. They also create an emotional connection with your readers.

I have a concept I call “reading between the lines”. I think when you read a book and are really connected and paying attention, the writer’s emotions come right off the page. So if you are resentful and angry about what you’ve been through and write when you are feeling this, the reader can tell.

It is important that you mirror the reader’s emotional state – the one that caused them to pick up your book. Then you can start to challenge them a little to change their point of view. By the time you are half way or so through the book, you should have established the trust of the reader. Then you can take more risks and get to the tough stuff, ending the book with hope and inspiration.

This is your time to fully explore the subject, get curious and move beyond simply being the expert. Great authors sound engaged, curious, interested and like they are really talking to you, the reader. They want to bring you into the world of possibility that they see. This should become the goal for your writing as well.

Ask Yourself “Do I have what it takes to be an author?”

- Do I feel called to write a book?
- What topic am I passionate about?
- Do I have interesting knowledge and a unique perspective on this topic?
- Is this a topic that people need and want to know more about?
- Will writing a book make my life richer?
- Will my book make readers’ lives better?
- Am I ready to challenge my own thinking with what I learn through researching facts and listening to the stories of others?
- Do I promise myself not to give up – even when life intrudes?

- Am I willing to follow where this journey takes me and not try to control the thoughts I must explore?
- Do I believe that my words can transform the lives of my readers?

Section II

Embracing the Authoring Journey

Are you getting the urge to Commit?

One of the fun, and challenging, things about writing a book is that it is a journey of self-development. We function in the service of others.

So it isn't about us. You may start writing a book as a catharsis, to get what you have to say out – and that is just fine. But when it comes to taking what you have and turning it into a publishing-ready book, you have to focus outward as well as inward.

Writing and publishing a book is a big commitment. One of the first decisions to make is whether you want to inhabit the world of the author. I find one of the best ways to start is to go to a local bookstore and do some research – and just enjoy the experience. Do you get “book energy” just being around books? Go to the section of the bookstore where your book would be shelved if you had written and published it. What else is written on your topic? What does that feel like to imagine yourself as one of the experts represented in print?

It is also valuable to go to professional or networking meetings and talk about your topic. See what interest and what questions you get from other attendees.

Stay open to any ideas that you encounter. Buy an hour of time with a book coach to learn which ideas a professional thinks are most compelling.

What's your Motivation?

People write books for many reasons. Take some time to analyze your own motivations. For instance, do you want to:

- Change the world?
- Help others?
- Impact individual lives in a positive way?

- Develop your thinking– confront your own fears?
- Highlight your expertise and perspective?
- Increase your reach and credibility?
- Learn as you are writing/open up and grow?
- Complete your dream?
- Set the bar higher for yourself – create a big challenge?
- Leave a legacy?

See how many of these reasons ring true for you. Be sure to add others that come to mind.

Always play to your Strengths.

It's now time to brag. So let out all the stops as you make a list of your strengths, talents and knowledge base. Keep in mind that you may be so used to 'being you' that you take them for granted, but it's critical to know your strong suits as you decide what and how to write.

It's just as important to know weaknesses and/or things you don't enjoy doing.

By being candid, you can focus on your strengths and hire others for those things you don't do well – or want to do.

This knowledge will also allow you to enhance your strengths and reduce your weaknesses. For instance, you can improve your writing skills and build confidence by:

- Reading great books and good writing in general. My absolute favorite place to read outstanding writing is the New Yorker magazine. There are two authors who I highly recommend for inspired writing – Dianne Ackerman and Malcolm Gladwell.
- Reading with a critical eye. Find a favorite nonfiction book and deconstruct it. Look at how they do what they do. Reading great books, not those on your writing topic, help you see your own life more clearly, uplift you and help you stay with possibilities.

Still feeling some Uncertainty?

Just imagine: You're working on your third bestseller...just banked a \$500,000 advance... and are already being heavily promoted by your publisher. How are you feeling? Probably pretty confident.

Or, imagine being a successful writer like Stephenie Meyer, author of the highly acclaimed Twilight series. You'd be a pro at the writing process as well as at public appearances and book events. You'd know how to connect with your readers.... write well....and know your ideas are good. You'd trust yourself and your process rather than grinding to a halt by nagging doubts.

Well, you can't simply imagine your way to writing success – but you decide to take yourself and your work as seriously as pros like Stephenie Meyer do.

First, let's take a hard look at your office. Do you have a dedicated place to write? Can you easily access everything you need?

Or is your work space covered with bills, unreturned messages, scattered piles of paper, unfinished proposals and projects. Who would be inspired and creative amid all this physical clutter? But what worries me more is the mental clutter.

If you are going to think clearly and creatively, then you have to be mentally free to do just that. Clear thinking leads to clear writing. If you are going to give yourself the best possible chance to write a bestseller, then you are going to have to start taking yourself and your writing a lot more seriously.

If being an author is a calling for you, then own it. Trust yourself, trust the process and don't let fear keep you from believing. And don't forget to surround yourself with knowledgeable and supportive people who can bring energy, enthusiasm and caring to you when you need it.

What are your big fears?

- Fear of failure? Dare to face your fears and get the right support
- Fear of never starting? Is this you? "Next year when..."
- Fear of not having time and never finishing? You make time, it isn't provided to you
- Fear of not finding a publisher, or having a pile of dust-covered books in your garage?

There are no guarantees – writing is leap of faith in yourself. But you can impact the odds!

Don't succumb to Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda.

The road to starting and completing a book is different for everyone and part of your challenge will be finding the best process for you. But one thing that definitely doesn't work is to guilt yourself into doing it.

If you've had an idea for years, but just can't seem to get started, it isn't a character flaw. It doesn't mean you are lazy or don't accomplish as much as others.

There is a reason you will start and finish when you start and finish. So if you meant to write your book last year and it didn't happen, then it was meant to happen later. Accept that you did the best you could and now is a different time.

Use discretion in Telling others.

If you do decide to commit, the fears will immediately come in. One of the big fears is that it won't get done and others will ask about it all the time.

You can control this by only telling the people who are supportive and will let you talk about it when you are ready. Anyone who says, "Oh, I finished my book in 2 months" probably hasn't written the best book they could have. Many people don't have the fortitude for what is required and are looking for short cuts.

Don't judge others' books and ignore their judgments about yours.

Time to Get Real.

You're still passionate about your topic and motivated to write a book, so let's look at some basics to bring the job into perspective.

Let's say you decide, after some research, to write a 200-page book. We can use a rough gauge of 250 words per page, which means that by doing the math you would write 50,000 words to end up with a 200-page book.

As an example, let's say that you've come up with "9 steps to achieve greatness" which is the topic of the book. You might decide to write it in 10 chapters: one for each step and then an Introduction. So if you know you want 200 pages in total and that is about 50,000 words, you know you need to write approximately 5,000 words per chapter or 20 pages.

This helps answer the natural questions of how do I know how much to write and how do I know when I've written enough and how do I know when I'm done?

When you write a book, you are writing to and for your audience or constituency. But your audience isn't one uniform person with one mind. It's important to write for those who are more left-brained and want facts and proof. AND write for those who are more right-brained and want the emotional connection of stories and make decisions more intuitively.

The essence of a nonfiction book is the stories and cases, the facts and research from primary sources – along with your help in interpreting what each individual story means and what the facts tell us.

Rolling up your sleeves.

Even if you don't have something definitive like "9 strategies" or "7 steps", you need to organize your book in a way that makes sense. Each concept should build on the one before.

This may come naturally to you or you might find the organizational structure becomes more organic as you are writing.

The reason it is helpful to "chunk" your book into parts is that it seems a less daunting task to write one chapter rather than writing an entire book. Focus on one topic, or even one sub-topic at a time.

On the practical level, make a file for each section/chapter – either physical, electronic or both as places where you can jot down snippets of ideas as they come to you, even if you are working on another chapter.

Beyond Writing - Elements of a Book -

There are a number of other elements that add to the book, usually tackled in this order:

Title

Table of Contents (chapter heading)

Front Cover

Section Organization

Chapter Organization

Illustrations, checklists

Your bio-inside/back cover

Your connections (testimonials)

Final Thoughts

Ask yourself:

- Can I make time to write?
- Can I overcome the fears that have kept me from writing my book up to this point?
- Am I willing to be criticized for thoughts others don't agree with?
- Am I willing to get out and advocate for my passion after my book is written?
- Am I willing to experiment to discover what writing process and style will work best for me?

Best wishes and enjoy the journey!