

The Definitive Guide to Creating a Nonfiction Bestseller

FROM BLANK PAGE TO BESTSELLER LIST IN 7 STEPS

Introduction

It's a well-known fact in nonfiction circles that writing a book in your area of mastery can turn you into an expert virtually overnight.

Having the cachet of a published book confers an author with an aura of expertise in the eyes of prospects, peers, the media, their industry, their competitors and society at large.

The challenge is that a Google search of the best practices for self-publishing bestselling nonfiction will generate thousands of different results, many times overly simplistic, often times hard to replicate, and sometimes even contradictory.

My goal with this definitive guide is very pragmatic: to show you seven clear and very detailed steps that you need to take to chart the most direct path between your original book idea and a self-published non-fiction book that's ideally positioned to hit the bestseller lists in the largest bookstore on earth: Amazon.

Why offer you so much valuable information for free? Because when I started out as a writer there was no one to show me the way, forcing me to make many mistakes along the way. My desire and personal mission is to help you avoid those mistakes so that you can focus all of your energy on what works and none on what doesn't work.

Having said that, it's time to begin your exciting journey to create a bestselling nonfiction book that will take your business, your career and your income to the next level!

Good luck!

Ben

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STEP 1

Know Your Audience (Better than Yourself!)

There's an age-old saying in the marketing world: "*Market to everyone and sell to no one.*" Interestingly, this expression couldn't be more apt in the nonfiction genre.

If you write a nonfiction book for a general audience, unless you're already a famous author with a large built-in following, you'll find it nearly impossible to find success.

For example, if you write a book with strategies for weight loss and market it to those in the general public who want to lose weight (*tens of millions of people*), you'll encounter the following problems:

- What you're writing about has been written about before by authors with much more credibility and name recognition than you
- It's extremely expensive to market to a large and highly fragmented market with multiple and differing needs
- You'll be out-competed by deep-pocketed behemoths in a \$212 billion global market. For example, Weight Watchers alone spent nearly \$200 million in advertising worldwide in 2018.

For new nonfiction books to find success, they must be written exclusively to help a specific "*niche*" audience. The more specific this audience and the more targeted your solution, the higher your chances for finding success in the market.

Step 1.1: Thoroughly Research Your Target Audience

Once you find the right audience that could benefit from your expertise, your job is to get to know them intimately.

Before you can define what your book will be about, you need to figure out what's the most painful problem for your target audience which is aligned with your area of expertise.

Your goal then is to create a unique solution for this problem. But this isn't enough to find success.

After you nail down your target audience, their pressing problem and your unique solution, you need to build a bond so they can trust you. And the only way you can gain their trust is by getting to know them at a deep level.

It's only after you learn what keeps them up at night, what they worry about, and what they fear the most, that you'll be able to craft a message that truly resonates with them.

If you don't take the time to do this preliminary research, you'll have at best a 50/50 chance of connecting with your audience.

WHERE TO FIND THIS INFORMATION

Your Current and Past Clients

Start by interviewing your own clients. Tell them that you're writing a book and what your subject is, and also tell them that their answers will remain anonymous and only used for statistical purposes.

You'll need to find the answer to the following questions:

- What keeps them up at night?
- What do they fear the most?
- What are their aspirations?
- What are their daily challenges?
- What are their hopes and dreams?
- What issues do they have to contend with?

Sit down with them to have a discussion and make sure that you lead it with open questions. Tell them that all their responses will be anonymized and that you'll only need to associate age and gender with their answers with no other identifying characteristics.

Online Searches

Next, look online for forums that cater to your target audience and the problem that you're seeking to help them solve. Read through the threads and see if you can use that information to enhance your profile.

Often times, forums will have an introductory thread where people who joined will tell other members about themselves (this information is typically anonymized).

Depending on the subject matter of the forum, members may disclose their age, gender, profession, whether they have kids or not, their main worries, what they're battling, what keeps them up at night, their aspirations, and so on.

Depending on your subject, you may find a treasure trove of highly valuable information about your target audience.

Public Facebook groups can be another valuable source of research, although they tend to be less valuable since the information isn't typically anonymous.

Step 1.2: Create an Avatar of Your Ideal Audience Member

After you've obtained as much profile information as possible about your target audience from all available sources, it's time to create your target audience "avatar."

This is a simple text document that shows detailed information about an "ideal" member of your target audience.

To create your avatar, do the following:

- First, make up a first name
- Then find a headshot with the right age and gender from a free stock photo site and paste it into your document
- Add the avatar's age and marital status
- Add their profession and annual family income
- Add their children if any, their occupation and living arrangements (*single, married, working, studying, living at home, living away*)
- Is your avatar a homeowner? In that case, what's the value of their home?
- Any pets? Hobbies?
- Any health or other issues they suffer from?
- Finally, list their hopes, dreams, fears, challenges, plus what keeps them up at night

Why do you need so much detail? Because when you write your nonfiction book, you'll be addressing it to this individual exclusively. You'll be writing your book for an audience of one: your avatar.

This avatar will be the composite of your entire target audience into a single individual. Whenever you write your book you'll be addressing this person directly in the second person, you'll be empathizing with them and you'll be helping them solve their problem.

Now, what do you do if your audience is composed partly of women 35-50 but also partly of men in the same age group? Then you have to create two distinct avatars, one for each gender.

However, when you write your book you'll still address it to an "*audience of one.*" You just have to be thinking about these two avatars at the same time, so your book will no longer be gender-specific (which shouldn't be a problem since you'll be writing it in the second person).

In other words, whenever your avatar "*Jim*" reads the book, he'll have to believe that you're having a conversation just with him, and whenever your avatar "*Susan*" reads it she has to think exactly the same thing.

Step 1.3: Identify the Main Problem for Your Target Audience

The key to your book's success is to identify the right problem to solve for your audience.

This problem must meet the following two criteria:

1. It must be a problem that keeps your audience up at night.
2. It must cause them a high level of pain.

Let's go over the above criteria in detail:

1. The Problem Must Keep Your Audience Up at Night

The problem that your nonfiction book tackles must be something that's constantly interfering with their quality of life.

Little problems are never big motivators and few people will seek solutions for them that they're willing to pay for. Big hairy problems, on the other hand, are a different story altogether.

Consider this: while it'll take you approximately the same amount of effort to write a book for either kind of problem, only one will result in sales while the other one will be ignored.

2. Your Audience's Problem Must Cause Them a High Level of Pain

Now, what if your audience has a number of problems that they want to solve? Which one will they take the most action for? The answer is: the one that causes them the most pain.

While humans are wired to go away from pain and toward pleasure, pain is a much more powerful motivator.

So here's what you have to do. Sort the problems you want to solve for your audience from a scale of 1-10 (10 representing the highest level of pain) and then pick a level 9 or 10 problem to solve.

Step 1.4: Identify Your Solution

Once you find what your audience's most pressing problem is, you'll have to formulate a solution that takes advantage of your knowledge and experience.

Make Your Solution Unique

For your solution to get traction and rise above the noise of the competition in your niche, you'll have to come up with a fresh approach that's different from your competitors.

This doesn't mean that you'll have to make a new scientific discovery in order to be successful; it means that you may have to combine two or more known strategies to create a new one.

For example, one known approach for weight loss is to follow a balanced diet (a mix of protein, carbs and good fats), another one is portion control (naturally shrinking the size of the stomach), and another one is meditation (using the mind to control the body's hunger signals).

Your new approach could be to incorporate all three into one. Now you'll have something that's not out there yet (assuming this is the case) and thus you'll enjoy a first mover advantage.

Show Evidence to Prove that You Can Solve the Problem

Now, it's time to gather proof that you're well-qualified to solve this problem, so that you're credible in your niche.

The best way to show evidence that your solution works is through social proof from existing and past clients.

You'll need to pepper your book with testimonials, case studies, and anecdotes from clients who've overcome the audience's problem using your unique solution.

Finally, Turn Your Solution into a Compelling Idea

Great, you're almost there!

You've clearly identified who your target audience is, you've clearly identified their most painful problem that you're qualified to solve, and you've come up with a solution that introduces a fresh new approach.

Now it's time to turn your solution into a compelling idea that will become the thesis for your nonfiction book.

STEP 2

Turn Your Book Idea into a Table of Contents

You now need to clearly establish your book's central idea – an idea that will create a strong connection between you and your audience. This section will walk through all the steps that are necessary to first identify your book's central idea and then to turn it into your book's table of contents.

Step 2.1: Define Your Book's Central Idea

As we said earlier in Step 1, for your book to be judged as a great idea in the eyes of your readers, you can't just solve a problem you know they have, you have to solve a problem that is deeply painful to them.

The deeper the pain they feel, the greater your idea will be perceived. If you're solving a problem that is a little painful (say, a 2 or 3 in a scale from 1-10), your idea will be perceived as just okay. If their pain is only at level 1, then your idea won't resonate and it'll be judged to be mediocre at best.

However, if their pain is at level 9 or 10 and your solution addresses that pain head on, then you have a winner.

WHAT TECHNIQUES DO YOU FOLLOW IN GENERATING BOOK IDEAS?

If you're like most nonfiction authors, you're likely writing your book because you want to take your business or career to the next level.

This is typically motivated by a revenue ceiling or plateau you want to break through, and you know instinctively that keeping doing what you've been doing for years isn't going to achieve that goal.

You want to scale your client outreach beyond your current level, and want to use your book to open new markets and new doors. So the question now is, how do you grow beyond your current clientele?

The answer: By niching down.

If you're providing a business service that's broadly available in the marketplace, then it could be that your target market is too large and too competitive to expand with your current resources – hence the ceiling or plateau.

For your book to successfully scale into new markets, you'll need to niche down and find a sub-niche that's underserved by other nonfiction authors.

If you're publishing a book in a sub-niche and your competitors aren't, then you'll be the one perceived as an expert in the eyes of your target sub-niche market.

Now the million-dollar question is: How do you find a sub-niche where you can shine? Simple. By looking for a cohort within your current niche that has a problem that registers at a pain level of 10 which you can solve.

The challenge with going after your full niche with your book, is that once you find what the #1 most painful problem is, it'll be shared so broadly that the competition will be fierce – as an example, look at the overcrowded psychology and nutrition industries. Trying to stand out will be very difficult. You'll likely be outgunned, outspent, and outmaneuvered by authors with much deeper pockets than yours.

Why try to be a small fish in a big pond when there are so many under-served small ponds where you'll instantly become the big fish?

LEVERAGING YOUR GREAT BOOK IDEA

Even better yet, and this goes to the heart of scaling your business with the help of a book, if you identify an under-served sub-niche and then find their most painful problem and address it with your solution, you can then identify a different sub-niche later on and address their most painful problem with yet another book – this is what I call growing your audience “horizontally.”

In addition, you can grow your audience “vertically” by writing additional books within the same sub-niche (where you now have a following!) and solve another high-pain problem they suffer from, or even address the same problem, but from a different angle.

What may happen over time if you follow these strategies, is that you'll begin to be recognized in a number of sub-niches and all of a sudden you'll be able to start competing “up niche” with the giants in your space.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE OF A GREAT BOOK IDEA

Tim Ferriss is the author of “*The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9–5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich*,” a book based on how he was able to quit the proverbial rat race and generate sufficient income to cover his lifestyle while enjoying a lot more free time.

Notice how his unique solution isn't mentioned in his title. In fact, all he wanted to achieve at this stage was to reflect the aspirations of his target audience, which he managed to do exceedingly well given his sales.

How did he do it? By using an aspirational title (who wouldn't want to work only 4 hours a week while getting all their bills paid?) plus adding imagery in the background showing the outline of a person lying on a hammock between two palm trees with the sun setting in the background.

His book cover clearly reflects the aspirations of people who are fed up with the stress and the intensity of the rat race and who are desperate to find a way out.

This is your goal. You want your book cover and title to connect with the emotional needs of your readers, to compel them to pick up a copy and find out how your book (i.e. your solution) is different from anything else they've tried before.

Since the initial publication of this book, Tim Ferriss has spun off his "The 4-Hour..." titles into other areas.

Step 2.2: Dump Your Knowledge onto a Mind Map

Once you've settled on your book's central idea, it's time to begin the process of information gathering for your nonfiction book.

Although this might feel overwhelming at the beginning, keep in mind that the content of your still-unwritten book actually already exists. It exists in your years spent developing and fine-tuning your skills. In your many years of interacting with clients and getting to know their concerns, challenges, pain points, desires and goals. In your many years of developing and delivering products or services to the marketplace.

So, how do you begin?

By dumping your knowledge on the written page in a way that's structured for a book – I'll show you next a simple technique to do so – and in a way that's enjoyable to read – you'll be enlisting the help of a professional editor to do so.

INTRODUCING MIND MAPPING

The goal of mind mapping is to dump onto the page all those loose "*knowledge bits*" that are swirling around your head in a way that's structured and that makes sense for your book.

A mind map is a visual thinking tool that will help you capture on paper the ideas and concepts in your brain that will aid in the creation of your nonfiction book outline.

WHAT IS A MIND MAP AND WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

If someone asked us "*How are you planning to write your book?*" most of us would likely default to the most common approach for information gathering: a note pad and a pen, or any of their electronic-device counterparts.

The problem is that the act of writing ideas down linearly (*i.e. think>write down>repeat*) is not really aligned with the way our brains retrieve information.

Our brains store information visually, so using a visual tool to retrieve our knowledge and ideas is more in tune with the way our brain naturally operates.

This visual tool is called the Mind Map. Mind maps are a much more effective way to get the job done without feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data that we need to access and sort through in order to write a book.

The mind mapping technique was popularized in the mid 70s by British author *Tony Buzan* and has been broadly adopted since then for a large number of applications.

For Example:

- Creating outlines for books
- Creating business plans
- Problem solving
- Project management
- Business planning

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MIND MAPPING?

- **Speed:** Mind maps save you a lot of time compared to the frustration of sifting through pages and pages of ideas captured through linear note taking.
- **Organization:** Mind maps allow you to see the forest for the trees by helping you organize and categorize your ideas in a visual way.
- **Productivity:** Mind maps make you more productive because they easily translate into a book's outline or table of contents.
- **Creativity:** Mind maps are a great idea generator as they elegantly bring into balance the creative right side of your brain with the critical thinking left side.
- **Memory Recall:** Mind maps enhance your ability to access facts and experiences stored deeply inside your brain.

HOW DO MIND MAPS WORK?

A Mind Map is a tool that encourages *Radial Thinking*. This is triggered by using an idea (in your case, your book's central idea) and placing it at the center of the map.

You then proceed to break down this idea into its main components, branching out radially away from the center.

Next, you go a step deeper by breaking down the main idea components into sub-components also radially, and then repeating this process as many times as necessary.

In summary, when it comes to brainstorming and capturing ideas, radial thinking is much more effective than linear thinking because it better approximates the way your brain recalls information.

HOW TO MAKE A MIND MAP FOR A NONFICTION BOOK

Nonfiction books are a perfect fit for the mind mapping technique, because they tend to be very methodical in how they deliver a subject matter to readers. They begin with your central idea and then proceed to break down this idea into its main components, subcomponents, sub-sub-components, etc.

This process would go something like this:

Step 1

Write down your book's central idea in the middle of the mind map and draw a circle around it. Ideally, you want to use a whiteboard. If you don't have one, then use a large piece of unlined paper, or 4 pieces of computer paper taped together to create a large sheet. Don't use paper with lines or grids.

Step 2

Radiating out from the central idea, create the central branches listing the key concepts derived from this idea at the end of each branch (draw a circle around each concept). These key concepts are eventually going to be turned into chapters in your book.

You may begin by drawing anywhere between 7 and 15 branches. Don't worry about your book's final chapter count at this stage. Initially, it's better to have more chapters than fewer in order to give you more creative freedom – you can always combine chapters later in the process.

Refrain from using long sentences; choose instead a short keyword phrase that clearly represents a key concept (e.g. use *"Sharing Gifts"* instead of *"Sharing Your Gifts with Others"*). Also, it's important to use a different color for each of the central branches to stimulate the creative side of your brain.

Step 3

For each central branch, free-associate ideas related to its key concept. These are the ideas that you'd want to convey to your readers. They will eventually become sub-chapters in your book.

Now, using the color chosen for that branch, draw a sub-branch for each idea and write it down as a short keyword at the end of each sub-branch.

Step 4

Repeat the above process multiple times to expand on the ideas of the sub-branches, until you feel you've reached the desired depth of information.

Your book's central idea will inspire your title and sub-title, the key concepts will become your chapters, the ideas stemming from the key concepts will become your sub-chapters, and subsequent sub-sub-branches will become the headings and sub-headings within each sub-chapter.

Keep in mind that the above are just guidelines and the process can be quite fluid. Once you go through the mind mapping process, the shape your book takes will be influenced by the information on the mind map – you may end up with only one level of sub-chapters, or three, or none at all.

MIND-MAP SOFTWARE

Now, there are many mind-mapping software tools available, some free and some paid. The free ones can be quite limiting and uninspiring (the mind maps they produce tend to be on the “ugly” side of things).

The paid ones, on the other hand, produce beautiful visuals and tend to be jam-packed with features, but they are still limiting because you’re always bound by the size of your physical computer or tablet screen – in most instances you’ll find yourself having to scroll around a mind map that keeps getting bigger and bigger with time, missing out from seeing the big picture, which is key to your creative stimulation.

In my opinion, the best solution is using a whiteboard (if you have one, of course – it’s not worth buying one just to create a mind map). Whiteboards and a set of colorful dry-erase makers are ideal for creating great mind maps, because you can easily make corrections while you get to see the big picture at all times.

If you do use a whiteboard, however, I suggest you take regular pictures of the full board with your smartphone as you progress, so that you are never at a loss should you erase something that you might end up needing later on.

If you use paper, you may want to use color pencils so that you have the ability to erase and re-write. Paper may not be as neat as a whiteboard, but it’s still very effective.

A third option is to use colored post-it notes on a wall, and many people prefer this method. However, I don’t personally find this approach stimulating enough for the creative side of the brain. Even though each post-it note has unique information, the little squares all begin to look the same to me after a while.

CAN YOU MAKE A MIND MAP USING POWERPOINT, WORD, OR THEIR GOOGLE EQUIVALENTS?

Yes, you can and many people do. However, I find these alternatives still to be limiting (size of your screen) and worse yet, they can rapidly become a distraction.

What you don’t want to do when mind mapping is to spend your creative “juices” and your valuable time crafting a beautiful-looking map at the exclusion of the time spent on the actual content.

I don’t want you to fall into the temptation of the “pretty slideshow syndrome,” where we get lost in the PowerPoint features to get the right color and the right geometric shapes and the right shadows and line sizes and so on.

Sometimes our procrastinating will lead us in this direction as a “cover” for some hidden resistance to jumping head-first into the unknown of creating our first mind map.

I do promise you this: once you get started creating your mind map, you won't be able to stop! And at the end of the process you'll not only have a great table of contents, but you'll be full of ideas and eager to start writing your book.

Now it's time to turn your completed mind map into a book outline.

Step 2.3: Create Your Nonfiction Book Outline

In their simplest form, outlines are numbered lists of the same kind you can find in any word processor.

To create a book outline, you begin by grouping “chapters” from your mind map into your document and labeling them Part 1, Part 2, etc. – you don't need to name the parts yet.

Next, you begin placing the main branches or key topics into the numbered list. Hit the tab key before you go down to the next level so the word processor can begin numbering them again from the top of the count.

At this book-outlining stage, you don't need to worry about formal chapter names; that'll come later. For now, listing your topics is sufficient.

Next, for every key topic you'll tab once to get to a level deeper and begin populating the subtopics. Again, don't worry about creating formal names for the subtopics yet. Just write down enough information to identify them clearly.

Finally, tab one more time to the next level (3rd) and repeat the above process for your sub-subtopics.

LET'S BEGIN

The first step in structuring your book is to group together all the main branches from your mind map that fit thematically and turn them into a book part with a part title.

Here's an Example:

If you were writing a book about how to shape your audience's beliefs in order to achieve goals, you could assign main branches for topics such as *the belief system*, *perception vs. reality*, and *the inner workings of the mind*. These could be grouped together as a theme that deals with the mind.

Then, let's say that you also have branches related to the role of their minds in *causing procrastination*, *goal setting*, *strengths and weaknesses*, etc. These could be grouped as a theme that deals with how your minds can affect your career, and so on.

When you're done grouping branches into themes, you can begin to create the flow of your book by numbering these top sections. So, in the above example you'll have: Part 1 – How Your Mind Works; Part 2 – How Your Mind Influences Your Career; etc.

REARRANGE KEY TOPICS WITHIN A PART

Next, you're going to choose each part and rearrange all the key topics in it to create your desired flow. Each key topic will eventually be turned into a chapter number and a chapter title.

RE-ARRANGE THE SUB-TOPICS WITHIN A TOPIC

You're now going to repeat this process within each chapter. You're going to take all the sub-topics that the key topic branches into and you're going to order them in the way that best fits the flow you want that chapter to have.

If you have a third level of sub-sub-topics, you might combine two or more and turn them into a new sub-topic. Or you may want to retain it as a part of an existing sub-topic.

Your sub-topics will eventually be turned into your sub-chapters.

GENERATING THE BOOK OUTLINE

You can now begin to piece together your book outline.

Just enter the information into your favorite word processor as a numbered list, with your part numbers being the top level, then tabbing to enter each chapter in the second level, and tabbing once more to enter the sub-chapters under each chapter.

Repeat this process for each sub-chapter and sub-subchapters, if any.

WHAT IS AN OUTLINE SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE?

From the above example:

- 1. Part 1: The Mind**
 - a. The inner workings of the mind
 - i. The conscious and subconscious mind
 - ii. Where thoughts originate
 - iii. Etc.
 - b. Belief systems
 - i. Beliefs from your upbringing
 - ii. Beliefs and your emotions
 - iii. Etc.
 - c. Perception vs. Reality
 - i.
 - ii.
- 2. Part 2: Careers**
 - a. Procrastination
 - i.
 - ii.

- b. Goal Setting
 - i.
 - ii.
 - c. Strengths and weaknesses
 - i.
 - ii.
- 3. Part 3: Relationships**
- i.
 - ii.

Step 2.4: Create Your Book’s Table of Contents

Finally, it’s time to turn your book outline into a table of contents.

The first thing you need to do is to go through your book outline and create a heading for every part, topic, sub-topic and sub-sub-topic.

Although only your chapter titles will be shown in your table of contents, all headings need to be written in a clear and inviting way. Unlike a book outline, which is meant as your roadmap for writing your book, a table of contents is meant as a navigational tool for your readers and also as a sales tool for people browsing your book.

Readers will first be drawn by your book’s cover and title. They’ll then pick it up and read the marketing copy on the back cover. Next, they’ll quickly scan your table of contents and perhaps randomly browse some pages.

If your table of contents intrigues them, they’ll next turn to your introduction where you’ll close the sale (see Step 2.6). That’s why it’s so important that your section headings be engaging – readers love to discover new information in books!

Here’s the table of contents derived from the above example:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part 1: How Your Mind Works

How The Mind Works ...3

Your Belief System ...11

The Power of Perception ...23

.....

Part 2: How Your Mind Influences Your Career

The Role of Your Mind in Procrastination ...63

The Role of Your Mind in Setting Goals ...75

Dealing with Strengths and Weaknesses ...83

.....

Part 3: How Your Mind Influences Your Relationships

.....

Step 2.5: Choose Your Front-Matter Sections

Once you've turned your book outline into a table of contents, it's time to expand it to include your front and back matter.

The front matter is composed of some or all of the following sections. It's entirely up to you what to include from the list below:

- **Testimonials page or pages** (optional)
- **Title page** (mandatory)
- **Copyright page** (mandatory, placed on the back of the title page)
- **Page with a quotation or a message** (optional)
- **Dedication page** (optional)
- **Foreword** (optional) – this is written by an authority in your field
- **Preface** (optional) – this is written by you
- **Acknowledgements** (optional).

These sections need to be added ahead of the body of the book and should be numbered in roman numerals.

For example:

Foreword ...viii
Acknowledgments ...xi
.....

Step 2.6: Add Your Book's Introduction*

(*Note: The introduction appears after the front matter and right before your first chapter; however, it should be written last once your manuscript is completed with no further editing to be done.)

Next, it's time to introduce readers to your book. The introduction is not a summary of your book's content; instead, it's a sales letter to convince readers to buy your book.

Its goal is to hook readers by teasing them with the results that they can expect to achieve, but without revealing any of your secrets – those will be contained in the body of the book.

This is the most important page of text in your book since the content of your introduction will determine with a high degree of certainty whether your nonfiction book will live or die.

Yes, your introduction is *that* critical for the success of your book.

Why?

Because it's the place where you have to "hook" the reader into buying and reading your book. An attractive cover page and clever title will only get people as far along as picking up your book and opening it – in marketing parlance, this is how you get the lead. The introduction, however, is where you actually close the sale.

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THE INTRODUCTION IN A BOOK?

The purpose of the introduction is to be the “sales letter” for your book.

A successful sales letter that will close a lead needs to have a specific structure that guides your reader to your desired result. In your case, it could be one of the following five outcomes:

- You want anyone who's picked up your book in a store or clicked the *Look Inside* feature on Amazon to be moved to open their wallets and purchase your book.
- If you handed your book to a prospect as a calling card, then you want them to read your book and ultimately hire you over your competitors.
- If you handed the book to an event manager, you want to be booked for a paid speaking engagement (most event managers won't read past your introduction since they receive a large number of books and don't really have the time to read them).
- If you sent your book to a media outlet, you want to be booked for an interview – show producers don't have time to read the books they receive either, so the sales letter contained in your introduction is all you have to hook them.
- If you handed your book to a potential strategic partner, you want your calling card to develop into a strategic relationship.

HOW DO YOU WRITE A GOOD INTRODUCTION?

It's critical that your book introduction be 100% about your reader and 0% about you – we'll discuss a little later where you can introduce your personal story and tell your readers about yourself.

Your introduction must clearly show how your book will help solve your reader's problem in a unique way.

Before we get into how to craft a compelling introduction for your book, let's clarify the key differences between an introduction, a preface, and a foreword – three unique sections that have very defined roles in the marketing of your book.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN INTRODUCTION, A PREFACE AND A FOREWORD?

As stated above, the introduction is the sales letter for your book and it must always be centered on your reader and what your book will do for them (it must always answer their primary question: “What's in it for me?”).

WHAT DO YOU WRITE IN A PREFACE?

The Preface, on the other hand, is all about you. Here you can share your personal story, the journey that led you to write your book, what your book does (but not “how” it does it), why you're qualified to write this book and, if your book has been published before, that this is an updated edition and outlining what the changes are.

In short, the preface is the vehicle that you use to have an initial personal conversation with the reader to start building rapport.

A word of caution: Since you'll be telling your reader about yourself, it's imperative that you're not perceived as "bragging" or being a shameless self-promoter.

This section is the place to tell your readers who you are in order to build rapport, not to impress them or be boastful about your accomplishments or credentials (however, you can mention a specific credential if it's something you feel the reader needs to know).

Only include those pieces of personal information that are relevant to your personal journey in relation to your book and how the book came to be.

WHAT DO YOU WRITE IN A FOREWORD?

The Foreword is a comment about your book or about you or both, written by a recognized influencer with a large following in your industry. We're talking about a "celebrity" whose credibility is well-established and recognized in your field and by the media at large.

Now, to be quite honest these are very hard to get unless you have a direct connection to these individuals.

Unless you know the celebrity personally in some capacity (perhaps through family and friends, or perhaps you've done work for them in the past and they hold you in high regard), it's highly unlikely that they'll sing your praises, because they value their personal brand and will likely never put their reputation on the line for an unknown author. Unless, of course, your book is so outstanding in their eyes that you manage to "knock their socks off."

If you can secure one, however, a positive foreword by someone famous has the potential to launch your book into the stratosphere. There are many accounts of unknown nonfiction book authors that went on to achieve great success through the giant doors that were swung open by a powerful foreword from such a person.

Having said that, unless you already have a solid connection to a celebrity in your niche, don't spend too much time trying to obtain a foreword. Spend this time instead writing a killer book introduction, which I'm going to show you how to do next.

HOW TO WRITE A BOOK INTRODUCTION THAT GRABS THE INTEREST OF READERS

Since introductions are sales letters, they must be structured in a specific way to entice your "leads" to become "customers".

To create a truly compelling introduction that will entice your readers to read your book, you have to implement the following nine steps:

1) Draw Your Readers In

The first paragraph in your book introduction is the most important one, because it must “hook” your readers into reading the entire section.

One of the most powerful hooks is the power of the “story,” because our brains are wired to be highly susceptible to them. But we’re not talking about just any kind of story.

Your Story Must First Show Them the Problem Your Book Will Solve ...

- Your story must be about a problem that your readers deeply identify with. It could be based on your own experience, the experience of a client, the experience of a stranger, or even the experience of a fictional character.
- It must clearly identify the situation that your readers face right now, through the use of a “character” they can easily relate to, or through posing questions that the book will eventually answer – e.g. “*Do you find yourself _____?*,” “*Are you feeling _____?*,” “*Are you stuck in _____?*,” etc.

... And Then Show Them the Expected End Result

- Your story must then show the character’s transformation after applying your solution. You could end your story with a statement like: “*This book will show the exact steps you need to follow so you can experience what <Character’s Name> achieved.*”

2) Reveal Your Solution, But Don’t Reveal Too Much

When you describe the solution that your book provides, don’t explain “how” your readers will achieve the solution; just mention “what” it is. Use statements like: “*This book will show you how to _____*”. To learn how your solution actually works, they have to read your book!

3) Show Them Why They Should Listen to You

This is the part of the introduction where you build your credibility. The goal of this step is for readers to trust you and, once again, this isn’t achieved by listing a bunch of accomplishments. Instead, you’ll achieve this goal by showing what made you pursue the research that has led to your particular solution (perhaps at one point you were in the same boat your readers are in now).

It would also be useful to describe your observations as you pursued your solution and to also show a summary of the steps that you took in order to reach your “discovery.”

Finally, you want to convey your passion about your subject matter and what’s driving your desire to improve the lives of people (or businesses) who are afflicted with this problem.

4) Show Them a Roadmap from Problem to Solution

Now it’s time to show your readers your roadmap. For example, you can list the different parts or sections of your book and what the reader is expected to learn in each (e.g. “*In part one we discuss...*,” “*In part two the book will cover...*,” etc.).

The goal here is to “whet the reader’s appetite” with a high-level view of what they’ll achieve by reading your book, without revealing any of the specifics.

5) Show Them the Benefits They’ll Receive

This is where you translate your solution into clear and tangible benefits the reader will get by reading your book.

These benefits are the various outcomes the reader will experience with your solution. What you want to do is to paint a picture of the reader's future as vividly as you possibly can – e.g. “*Do you want to be stress free?*,” “*financially free?*,” “*healthier bones?*,” “*debt free?*,” and so on.

6) Show Them Your Guarantee (i.e. Social Proof)

Once you've helped your reader “see” what the future will look like after reading your book, you need to show them your proof.

In other words, this is where you mention testimonials, be it stories from real people or organizations (no fiction here, please!) who have already benefited from your solution.

This information must come from your own clients. You should naturally seek their permission first, and it's totally acceptable to abbreviate or even change their names or some circumstances in order to protect their privacy and identity.

7) Address Their Objections

This part is optional but can be quite effective. The goal here is to address the main objections that you know of.

What you want to do here is to bring up each objection – no more than 3-5 – and then explain how your solution will take care of it.

8) Entice Them to Take Action

Now it's time to “close the deal.” You will do this by making it clear to readers that if they follow the secrets/formulas/steps revealed in your book, they will achieve the goal revealed by your title and sub-title.

Make sure your reader is always the subject – e.g. “*if 'you' apply the secrets/formulas/steps revealed in this book, 'you' will be debt free within 5 years,*” “*...'you' will be able to lose weight and keep it off permanently,*” “*...'your' business revenue will double,*” etc.

9) Wish Them Well and Transition to the Book's Content

This is a short transitional sentence to guide your reader to the beginning chapter of your book. By extending an invitation to read your book and wishing them well, you're bringing the attention back to the reader.

To transition to your book's body you can end the introduction with a phrase like “*Let's now embark together on your journey to <desired goal of your reader (i.e. your solution)>.*”

HOW LONG SHOULD A BOOK INTRODUCTION BE?

Since the book introduction is a sales letter, you want to make sure that it always flows and that it never gets “stuck” with unnecessary language. You want to keep it tight and not overwrite it (*beware: too much writing could potentially undo the sale!*).

As a rule of thumb, you want to keep it in the range of 1.5 to 3 pages, depending on the nature of your subject matter.

Finally, make sure that the last paragraph of your introduction transitions into your first chapter.

Step 2.7: Choose Your Back-Matter Sections

The final piece in your table of contents is to add any required back matter pages after your body ends. Here are some of your choices:

- **Afterword** (optional) – this can be used as a closing statement for your book; your parting words.
- **Appendices** (optional) – these can be used for additional information that didn't fit or didn't work in the body of the book.
- **Glossary** (optional)
- **Index** (optional)
- **References** or **bibliography** (optional)
- **About the author** (highly recommended) – this is where you tell your readers how to reach out to you.

Back matter sections continue the same numbering sequence from the body of the book.

Example:

Afterword ...197

Index ...201

Now that you have a fully fleshed out book outline and the accompanying table of contents, you're ready to begin the writing process in earnest. But before you do, you need to develop the top writing strategies and habits that are necessary to create bestselling nonfiction.

STEP 3

Write Like You're Being Paid

The hallmark of a professional nonfiction author is the discipline to sit down to write every day, rain or shine. Whether they're feeling great or lousy that day, they still put in the time and make every effort to always give it their best.

As in all other creative endeavors, there's no substitute for "*rubber to the road*." There are no shortcuts here, so in order to succeed you'll have to develop professional writing habits.

Writing with frequency and discipline is the only road to the completion of a nonfiction book that you'll be proud of, and also a book that'll truly move the needle for your business and your career.

And this is the part where you need to write as if you're being paid to do so, because even though you're not being paid right now, you will be soon enough.

Once your nonfiction book is published, you'll be immediately deemed to be an expert. With this title come many financial benefits. For example, you'll be able to secure paid speaking fees for talks and keynotes, and you'll begin to attract media who will want to interview you for your expert opinion.

You'll also develop a competitive advantage when you bid for contracts, because most entrepreneurs and business owners don't publish books. You'll be deemed an expert through your book and that added credibility will often sway granting decisions in your favor.

Now, once you learn the habits professional authors use to produce great book after great book, you'll have no problem adding discipline, focus, persistence, and motivation to your writing routine because that's inherent in your training as an entrepreneur.

In this section, I'll not only show you how to develop powerful writing habits, but I'll also go into detail about the specific actions you need to take every single day in order to develop a strong writing muscle.

Step 3.1: Develop Good Writing Habits

In order to achieve this goal, you'll need to master each one of the following four pillars: Discipline, Focus, Persistence, and Motivation.

Discipline

Creating a book requires a commitment to write regularly. Writing success depends on your ability to be consistent in your commitment to your book, day in and day out.

Whenever you sit down to write, you have to develop the discipline to say no to distractions and temptations – distractions that can range anywhere from house chores to taking care of business emails outside of your business day.

Also, to be successful on your writing project you need to compartmentalize your time. For example, you should never sit down to write your book during business hours and, by the same token, you should never conduct any business (or other non-business activities) when you sit down to write your book.

Now, since you're already running a business, having the discipline to achieve a task or goal comes second nature to you. All you have to do is to consider your book-writing project with the same serious business commitment you apply to any other contractual commitment you have with your clients. Once you make this decision, you'll begin to set the foundation for developing great writing habits.

Focus

This is another area where you have the upper hand over most people, simply by being in business for yourself. Having laser-like focus and running a successful business go hand in hand.

One reason most “wannabe” entrepreneurs are unsuccessful is because they keep jumping from opportunity to opportunity, from shiny object to shiny object. Lack of focus is the top killer of new businesses. It's not having a bad idea, being in the wrong niche, or even a lack of talent.

There are plenty of people with great ideas, working in an underserved niche and with lots of talent who are unable to get their businesses off the ground, simply because they're unfocused.

This is also true when you sit down to write your book. There are thousands of websites, books, and ebooks with advice, courses, webinars, tips, lists, etc. about book writing.

But, if you decide to choose one route when you begin writing your book only to switch gears when you get stuck to follow another approach (a different shiny object), this lack of sustained focus will kill your book-writing project.

Do spend the time on research. But once you commit to one path, stick with it all the way to the end.

Persistence

Persistence is the hallmark of entrepreneurs. If you were to give up when the going gets tough you wouldn't be in business right now. So, this is another area where you have the upper hand over most people.

Being new at book writing (assuming this is your first book) you'll have to deal with the uncertainty inherent in doing something rather complex for the first time.

Even with the best advice, you'll get to a certain point in the writing process where you'll be tempted to slow down (e.g. the dreaded “*middle*” section of your book) or to put the project on

the back burner when things perhaps become much harder than you thought – after all, your main business is hard enough, and now you’ll have to handle two hard things at the same time.

It’s critical at times like these to let your persistence muscle kick in to help you grind through those obstacles so that you can stick to your writing schedule.

Make sure that you never join the ranks of people who started writing their book full of excitement and possibilities only to never finish it, simply because they lacked persistence in the face of adversity.

Motivation

The final pillar of writing success is motivation. Since the financial outcome of your book project lies way in the future, it’s sometimes difficult to be consistent in your level of motivation, especially when you have a bad day in your main business, or say you are coming down with a cold and your energy level is down, or for countless other reasons ...

So how do you keep your level of motivation up when the going gets tough in your main business? Simple. You have a number of binding contractual obligations to perform your services in order to get paid, and that alone (coupled with your professionalism) will ensure that you get the job done.

And it’s really not that different with your book project. In order to achieve the same level of motivation you afford your main business, you need to also enter into a binding agreement with a third party in order to ensure your book’s completion.

What you have to do is to set a hard publication deadline for your writing project. For example, you have to commit to a paid speaking engagement, say, a year from now, when you’ll be introducing your book to the public.

In a nutshell, you need to get yourself into a public commitment where your professionalism and reputation alone will ensure that you stay on track.

Step 3.2: Develop a Solid Writing Routine

Routine is about creating a set of behaviors that can be automatically repeated without having to think much about it.

When it comes to writing a book, as in any creative project, your routine has to be appealing to you so that you not only stick to it, but you look forward to it with anticipation.

Here are some guidelines to help you establish a routine that is both enjoyable and sustainable:

Choose a writing space that you find appealing and that you look forward to going to every day

What this space or place is depends on your personal style. Some people have a favorite spot in their house, perhaps a writing room, a home office, a small desk or table near a bay window with a nice view. These are great choices if you require a quiet environment in order to think creatively.

Some people, on the other hand, need to be out of the house surrounded by other people in order to get their creative juices flowing. So, they prefer to go to a coffee shop, a library, or other public place. Whatever works for you is perfectly fine.

What you need to keep in mind, however, is that whichever space you do choose, make sure that you can work for an extended period of time (up to two hours) without any interruptions.

Choose the Right Writing Time

Different people get their creative juices flowing at different times. You may be an early bird, or perhaps a night owl. What's important is that you sit down to write at the same time every day.

When it comes to writing a book, consistency is a key for success. If you always write at the same time, you're conditioning your writing muscle to perform and then recover for 24 hours.

If you write in the evening one day and then in the morning the next, then you skip a day and you write two mornings in a row, you're giving your mind confusing signals that aren't conducive to creating good writing habits.

This is no different from developing your muscles. An uneven physical workout routine similar to the one mentioned above would result in little if any progress – assuming you don't give up first.

Your writing muscle requires consistency and a clear cycle – it's also counter-productive to write for two hours one day and then for five hours the next, even if your starting time is the same.

So, to be productive and creative on your book-writing journey, choose a daily writing block no longer than two hours and make sure you begin and end writing at the same time.

Protect Your Writing Time

The creative writing process requires peace and quiet to sustain itself. Any type of break into this flow, from the disruption of a social media notification to someone coming into the room and starting to talk to you, will break your creative flow.

Creativity requires a certain inertia in order to achieve "*cruising speed*." If you allow external circumstances to force you into a stop-and-go situation, you'll never be able to get up to speed and your writing will suffer.

It's for this reason that you must set aside daily writing blocks that are well-protected from interruptions. You must enlist the help of those around you to support you by eliminating any type of disturbance when you're writing your book.

Set Clear Boundaries with Those Around You

Unless there's an emergency, your family, friends, or business associates must ensure that you're not bothered when you sit down to write.

This is of particular importance when it comes to your family, should you choose your writing space to be at home. It's very important that they understand that you're not to be disturbed for any reason (short of an emergency) when you're sitting down to write.

This also applies to your friends. Ask them not to call, text, or message you during your writing blocks. Make sure they understand that you'll be setting the do-not-disturb feature on your phone so you won't be able to get back to them during this time.

You must refrain from reading or sending emails during this time, going on the Internet for any reason or engaging in any other type of communications. In short, outside of your writing app, you should really go off the grid.

Writer Distractions You Need to Avoid at All Cost

- The beeps and dings of notifications: set your phone to do-not-disturb and mute the sound on your laptop.
- The ringer on your phone: turn it down so that you don't get startled if someone tries to contact you in case of emergency.
- Checking your email or your text messages: if someone must reach you right away, they can call you or simply walk in the door. Make sure people always know where to find you.
- As an extension to the above: don't reply to emails during this time! If you promised someone a reply earlier in the day, then wait until after your writing block to do so.
- Browsing the Internet when you're writing: if you need to do some research for your book, do it outside of your writing blocks. The last thing you want is to fall into a Google-search rabbit hole that ends up eating half your writing time.

When you do manage to achieve this level of peace and quiet, you'll notice how your writing, as well as your time, flies by. After your two hours pass, you'll be surprised to find that you've written upwards of 1,000 words of original text.

On the other hand, if you allow yourself to be interrupted you'll find that, at most, you'll be able to write a third of that amount and it won't even flow that well.

STEP 4

Use the Writing Strategies of Nonfiction Pros

As a first-time author, the book writing process will probably seem a bit daunting. There are so many resources out there that even doing online research can become an overwhelming task.

Yet, when you boil it down to the basics, writing a book is quite a simple process. Once you know what steps to follow, you'll realize how much sense this process makes and you'll also realize that you don't need prior experience in order to create a successful outcome.

The only difference between you and someone with your credentials who's already published a book is that they can go through the steps below faster. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they'll produce a better book.

Your solution is unique in the same way that your business is unique – nobody else will be able to duplicate what you bring to the table because you and your book are one and the same.

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE NONFICTION?

As you've learned before, the main goal of nonfiction books is two-fold:

1. To identify a core problem with your target audience
2. To provide clear, actionable strategies to solve that problem.

In order to do this effectively, your writing must be able to:

- Communicate
- Persuade
- Train
- Compel readers to take action.

Also, you want to achieve all of the above by using a personable, engaging, and clean writing style, while staying away from impersonal, academic, and complex language (the latter can work very well for textbooks and professional journals, but it's detrimental for practical nonfiction books).

The good news is, if you're an entrepreneur, small business owner, professional, practitioner, or coach, you're already naturally conditioned to communicate, persuade, train, and compel people to take action, except that you'll typically do that through direct contact with your clients.

So, all you have to learn how to do now is to transfer these abilities into your writing. The following ten professional writing strategies will help you get there without struggle.

Strategy 1: The Best Writing Style for Nonfiction Books is Conversational

Whenever a reader picks up a nonfiction book written by a specialist who can help them solve a problem, they expect to develop a close relationship with the author. In fact, they subconsciously expect the book to be written exclusively for them.

If you use language that's addressed instead to a group of people (your target audience as a whole), then your book will lose its effectiveness.

Why do readers expect problem-solving books to be written just for them? Because most problems are personal by nature and they require a personal approach to solving them. Perhaps your target audience is ashamed of their problem, or feels self-conscious about it, perhaps they haven't told anyone about it, or many other reasons.

So, what you have to do whenever you sit down to write is to always think "one-to-one." In other words, you need to frame your writing as if you were sitting down to work with a client without anyone else present in the room.

Now, how do you reconcile the fact that you're actually alone when you write? You have to represent both your own voice as well as your client's voice in your writing.

In essence, your own voice becomes the voice that communicates, persuades, trains, and compels, and your client's voice is symbolized by the use of statements of acknowledgment followed by rhetorical questions (e.g. you would first write: "*Healthy fats eaten in moderation actually condition your body to burn fat at a much faster rate,*" and posing as your client you would then write: "*This sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it?*").

Your ultimate goal is to develop a close one-to-one relationship with your audience to the point where each reader thinks that you're talking to them and no one else.

Strategy 2: Write with Clarity

Since the entire premise of your writing style is to have a personal conversation, you have to avoid obscuring this conversation with the use of writing crutches that muddy the waters.

For example, don't over-explain things. Since writing is such a solitary endeavor, without having your subject in front of you giving you visual cues that they "got" what you just said, it's common to make a point and then to keep remaking the same point again and again from different angles. When you're alone with your thoughts, there's no one there to stop you but yourself.

So, what's the strategy to improve clarity when you write? Begin by writing your sentences as they come to you (even if you over-explain things) and then reading them back to yourself but switching hats with your client. It'll become obvious pretty quickly if you're overwriting.

Here's another example. Sometimes writers confuse clarity with communicating like an instructor. The danger is that this style, though clear, can be easily perceived as condescending. This will break the one-to-one bond with your readers because no one likes to be talked down to, especially about their problems.

What's the counter strategy? Seek to write with compassion – always put yourself in the shoes of your reader whenever you're communicating your solution.

Final example. Some writers are so passionate about their solution that they unknowingly try to evangelize readers – don't fall into this trap. In order to communicate effectively in written form, you always need to position yourself at the same level as your target audience.

If you position yourself high up on the expert's mountain-top, your audience will feel that you're so much more evolved than they are that they'll never be able to get there on their own and give up reading your book.

Remember, clarity has two sides. On one hand, you have to be clear when you convey your thoughts and ideas in writing. On the other, you have to meet your reader at the level where they are because clarity is also in the eyes of the beholder.

Strategy 3: Be Concise

A more technical extension of clarity is conciseness, or the ability to communicate clearly by using an economy of words. Sentences that are too wordy can become a big turn-off to readers.

Now, you do want to convey your thoughts in a personable, conversational way which sometimes requires the use of casual expressions, but you want to stay away from:

- Using “flowery” language (e.g. *“There’s no doubt in my mind, or for that matter in the minds of most other people, that ...”* instead of *“It’s obvious to most people that ...”*).
- Making excessive use of adjectives (e.g. *“This approach is clearly and absolutely more advanced than ...”* instead of *“This approach is clearly more advanced than ...”*).
- Unnecessarily embellishing sentences (e.g. *“This is a mighty problem that is faced by the vast majority of people out there”* instead of *“This is a big problem that afflicts countless people”*).
- Making unnecessary use of metaphors. If you can state matters clearly, you don't need to use metaphors. Use them only if you have to mention a complex concept that is necessary for your thesis but which is unrelatable to the reader. You can then choose a metaphor that they can relate to.

Strategy 4: Write with Eloquence

To persuade your target audience to take action, you need to be eloquent in your message. Your book won't be very effective if your calls to action aren't compelling enough.

Here are some techniques you can use:

Paint a Clear Picture

Describe what your reader's future will feel like when your solution is in place. Focus on their feelings and not just on the surface changes they'll experience.

Teach by Telling Stories

Our brains are pre-wired to respond to storytelling – that's why the most successful authors the world has ever seen are all fiction writers (the top three alone, William Shakespeare, Agatha Christie, and Barbara Cartland, have sold a combined 7 billion books!).

Since you've been helping clients for so long, you're bound to have a lot of really good stories you can share with your readers. Just remember that unless you're re-telling a story that's in the public domain, or you have written permission from a client (rarely granted), make sure to fictionalize your client stories to disguise identities, places, and events in order to protect their privacy.

What you want to do is to communicate the spirit of the story and its lessons for your reader – you're not required to document the facts.

Strategy 5: Use Your Own Voice

Since the most effective nonfiction books are written in a personable and conversational tone, you'll need to master your ability to communicate with your own voice.

What you don't want to do is to stand on the lectern and become an orator, a professor, or a guru. These are all personas that will disguise your true voice, which is the voice your readers want to hear. Remember that all readers of nonfiction want to develop a one-to-one relationship with the author.

How do you write with your own voice? By being authentic and sincere in the way that you communicate through the printed page, which incidentally is no different than the way you already communicate with clients.

If you were unauthentic and insincere with them, you'd be struggling in your business because problem-solving relationships only work when they're built on trust.

At its core, writing fulfills the much deeper need to learn from each other, to enrich each other's lives and to be of service to others. This is what writing really is at its foundation: a vehicle to create a deep connection between human beings –and this can only be achieved by being yourself.

Your strategy is to always think deeply about your relationship with your clients as you write your thoughts down for your readers. Always write with empathy and your sincerity and authenticity will automatically come forward.

Strategy 6: Don't Hold Anything Back

Once you've decided to write a book to support and grow your business or career, you have to go all in. Don't try to protect your ideas from theft by just offering a teaser of your knowledge.

To write truly successful nonfiction, you have to be able to bare your soul on the page. Don't hold back any information that could be of help to your readers.

The more you give the more you'll get in return. Your book's word of mouth marketing will be stronger, you'll attract more readers, you'll get better reviews, and in the end, more doors will open for you.

Authenticity in your writing is a *great selling tool*. But if you combine it with generosity and selflessness, you've now created a winner.

Strategy 7: Don't Write to Exhaustion

Never exceed your two-hour writing limit. If you push yourself to write until you're creatively spent, say for 3 or 4 hours straight, you'll begin to resent the act of writing because you'll be setting an impossible expectation for the future.

It's much more effective to write for two hours and leave behind a ton of ideas to write about another time. Just capture these ideas on a notepad and use them as a seed for inspiration the next day.

Also, you don't need to worry about ever running out of ideas, because as a nonfiction author writing about your professional life experience, you're not creating an entire new premise from scratch like a fiction author. You're simply downloading information you're already familiar with from your brain onto the written page.

Strategy 8: Always Go with the Flow

Everything you write must flow because readers don't sense "*writing*" – they sense flow. Author Elmore Leonard once said: "*If it sounds like writing, rewrite it.*"

If all readers "see" is just the writing, they won't feel a connection with you. If you use words that aren't essential to the text, words that don't add anything to your message, then remove them.

How do you know if you've written a non-essential word? Here's a simple test: if the passage retains its full meaning after removing that word, then it's not needed.

Also, don't be afraid to cut out writing that took a lot of effort to create but that doesn't feel right. Usually things that are hard to write tend to go against the flow. On the other hand, things that are easy to write, where your fingers seem to be moving on their own, tend to flow.

From experience, I can tell you that trying to rewrite something that clearly doesn't fit the narrative will hardly ever make it fit. If it's proven hard to write, it'll prove hard to rewrite – you can't fit a square peg in a round hole.

Strategy 9: Don't worry about quality – at least at first

Now, what I'm going to say next is definitely going to sound counterintuitive: to produce a quality book you can't focus on quality while you're writing it!

The reason is that when you sit down to write you're working from a stream of consciousness. You may already know what you're going to be writing about – *today's section will be about the X, Y and Z lessons you learned working with one of your clients* – what you don't know is what you're going to actually write.

Your goal in this initial writing stage is to establish a direct and unfiltered connection between your brain and your fingertips so that you can capture this torrent of information on the printed page. Your goal isn't to give it shape yet.

So if you're thinking, "*I need to write something with quality,*" then that's a sure-fire way to turn off your creative tap. You're now letting your critical thinking get in the way of your creativity and your writing will become stale.

Leave the quality control for the multiple rewrites you'll be doing after you're done with the initial creative phase. When you switch hats and become your own editor, your critical thinking will step in to give your creative writing the shape and the quality it needs to pass muster with your readers.

Strategy 10: Write to Communicate, Not to Be Interpreted

Nonfiction pros always write in clear language, even if they have multiple PhDs and are Nobel laureates.

Even though many of them operate at very high levels of abstraction in their day-to-day jobs, when it comes to communicating their thoughts in a book, they bring themselves down to a level playing field with their target audiences.

They don't write in a way that forces readers to interpret what they're saying, because that would break their bond. So when you sit down to write, make sure that your thoughts are always crystal clear in the eyes of your intended audience.

Readers will simply not be able to translate complex thought patterns unless they have the level of expertise necessary to do so. Always communicate at a level your target audience is comfortable with.

Also, keep in mind that successful nonfiction writers are *bridge builders*.

They've formulated a solution to a problem in their minds and know that in order to be successful they need to transfer this knowledge into the minds of their readers.

Therefore, the actual words that they use have to almost be transparent to the reader. They have to write in such a way that their language is "*heard but not seen.*"

This is how you'll be able to truly deliver your message in a way that makes a difference in the lives of your readers. Choose language that makes your thought transfer smooth. Choose words that communicate but stay out of the way.

STEP 5

Hire a Professional Editor, a Book Layout Artist, and a Cover Designer

Now comes the most important task, second only to writing.

Your book will become your legacy and a natural extension of you, your business, and your professional reputation, so it's imperative that you get this final part done right.

In order to establish yourself as an expert in your field or industry, your book has to be a top-notch product and it must be professionally edited and designed. This is simply not an option for nonfiction authors.

You just can't afford to cut corners at this stage and have your book edited by a spouse or friend and have the book cover and interior designed by your nephew (unless, of course, they happen to be professional editors and book designers).

Why Do I Need to Hire Professionals to Work on My Book?

Your book will be your calling card, and the way your book looks and reads will become an instant reflection on who you are, including your professional reputation.

Your book will also be used to establish strategic relationships and potential partnerships with influencers in your industry and, given the kinds of doors that these people may open for you, you can't afford to present yourself in anything but the best possible light.

Your book will also be requested by event managers, whose job is to book you for paid speaking engagements, panels, and keynotes. Once again, they'll judge you by how your book presents. Most of them won't even have time to read your book; they'll just skim through it, so it must always cause a good first impression.

Finally, your book will be requested by journalists who want to interview you as an expert in your field or industry. Once again, production quality is key here.

You simply can't afford to have a book that looks or reads less than professional. This is where a seasoned editor and experienced book designers will make the biggest difference.

Step 5.1: Hire a Professional Nonfiction Editor

Professional editors are wordsmiths that will take your writing to the next level by making it clean, coherent, and engaging for readers – that’s all they do, day in and day out.

Nonfiction Editing is Multi-Faceted

There are four distinct types of editing that are required to turn your nonfiction book into a highly competitive product in the marketplace. Your aim is to level the playing field with professional publishers by taking advantage of the same editing treatment they give to their best titles.

For your self-published nonfiction book to aspire to the bestseller list, having great content isn’t enough – your content also needs to be subjected to the thorough editing afforded to top traditionally published nonfiction books.

For your nonfiction book to succeed it needs to connect deeply with your target audience, it needs to be clear, it needs to be factually accurate and it needs to be free of errors and typos.

The following four types of editors specialize in each of these areas:

Type 1: Developmental Editors

Developmental editors perform the highest level of nonfiction editing as they take a bird’s eye view of your manuscript. Their job is to assess your book structure for fit with your central idea or thesis.

Based on knowledge of your target audience, they’ll also check that your flow of ideas satisfies the audience’s needs in the best possible way.

If your nonfiction book has great content but it’s written in a way that doesn’t resonate with your audience, it simply won’t be successful.

This type of editor is the best proxy for your audience and will give you advice on what works for them as well as what doesn’t work. They’ll help you notice things that you might not be able to notice on your own.

As the author you’re just too close to your writing to have an unbiased opinion. Your developmental editor will help you gain perspective so you can make the necessary changes to better connect with your audience.

Developmental editors will give you feedback in two different passes – going from an overall view to detailed suggestions.

1) The Editor’s Letter

First, your developmental editor will read your manuscript once or twice, putting themselves in the shoes of a reader from your target audience, and then share with you their thoughts about your biggest structural issues.

For example, they may recommend that you change the order of some of your chapters, or even write a new one if they feel it's necessary to improve the overall flow.

They may also recommend that you eliminate some sections that they feel are either redundant or simply outside the scope of your thesis.

Your job then is to take this information and implement it in your manuscript before they're ready for the second editing pass.

2) Page-by-Page Commenting

Once they receive your revised manuscript, they'll re-read it while making notes on the margins of each page. These will be high-level notes related to the structure of your ideas without focusing on low-level editing tasks such as spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Their job in this second pass is to let you know paragraph by paragraph if your information appears to be out of place, or if you're covering too many ideas in a single paragraph, causing confusion to your readers.

They'll also suggest swapping sections within a chapter, or perhaps moving a section to a different chapter if it belongs there better.

Once your higher-level edits are completed, it's time to go one level deeper into the mechanics of the text.

Type 2: Content Editors

Content editors don't work on your content's structure but on the content itself. Instead of focusing on your flow of ideas, they'll focus on how those ideas are executed.

Their goal is to ensure that your author's voice, the quality and style of your content are consistent throughout your manuscript.

More specifically, they'll focus on readability, clarity, and word choice, among other things. For example, they'll be looking out for:

- Run-on sentences
- Word repetition
- Sentence length
- Misuse of words
- Poor style (amateurish writing)
- Excessive use of adjectives and adverbs
- Use of language that isn't a good fit for your audience
- Confusing text.

In addition, content editors will help you place your graphic elements, such as tables, charges, images, photographs, etc., in the optimal place in relation to the text in your manuscript to best support your ideas.

Once your content editing pass is completed, it's time to take your manuscript to the deepest level of editing: language rules.

Type 3: Copyeditors

Your copyeditor is trained to zero in on one thing and one thing only: to ensure that you follow the proper rules of grammar, syntax, punctuation, capitalization, hyphenation, and style.

They know the accepted rules of style in the English language (which are quite numerous and can be complex) like the palm of their hand.

Most copyeditors either follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *Associated Press Stylebook*, and competent copyeditors usually know both equally well. They know the differences and when to use one stylebook versus the other.

The main focus at this level of editing is language accuracy. Here are some examples of the problem areas that they'll be looking out for:

- Grammar rules
- Syntax rules
- Capitalization rules
- Punctuation rules
- Hyphenation rules
- Spelling
- Incorrect use of numerals
- Accuracy of quoted facts or data
- Accuracy of internal and external references.

Type 4: Proofreaders

Once your developmental, content, and copyediting passes are completed, there's one final editing pass to ensure the highest possible level of quality before going to print: proofreading.

This final stage is the "sieve that catches all the impurities" before your book is published – a fine-tooth-comb pass of your entire manuscript to catch any straggling typos or other errors that were missed out on all previous passes.

Professional proofreaders are trained to read manuscripts at the word level without becoming involved in the writing. To do their job right, they have to remain at arm's length from your content.

This allows them to catch things that you missed even after reading your manuscript numerous times. They'll catch the typos that spellcheck doesn't, misplaced punctuation signs, mislabeled images, mis-numbered headings, etc.

Proofreaders are the last line of defense before you publish your book, before any copies are printed, and before it's widely distributed.

Before your book is made available publicly, you want to ensure that it's free of typos, factual errors, omissions, and inaccuracies.

For example, proofreaders will be on the lookout for:

- Spelling, syntax, grammatical, punctuation, and hyphenation errors
- Formatting inconsistencies (e.g. mis-numbered images or tables)
- Caption errors
- Mis-numbered lists
- Inaccurate facts and figures
- Misplaced or incorrect graphical elements.

Once your proofreading pass is completed and all errors have been corrected, this is when your manuscript is “frozen” with no more changes allowed. At this point, your manuscript is ready to be laid out and sent to the printing house.

EDITING RATES

Below are the market rates that you should expect to pay for each of the four editing stages:

1) Developmental Editing

Developmental editors typically charge by the word or by the hour, depending on the complexity of your nonfiction book.

For example, text-based manuscripts will mainly be quoted by the word, with most rates falling between 8-12 cents per word.

Highly complex, scientific or academic books with a lot of specialized information, facts, and figures will draw a per-hour rate for research work in addition to the per-word rate quoted above, typically around \$60/hr.

2) Content Editing

Content editing rates are usually charged per 1,000 words. Typical rates for standard text-based manuscripts (non-specialized, non-scientific, and non-academic) are in the \$40-\$50 range per 1,000 words.

Rates for complex text (specialized, scientific, or academic) fall in the range of \$50-\$70 per 1,000 words.

3) Copy Editing

For books with standard text, copyeditors will charge between \$30 and \$40 per 1,000 words. For complex text this range goes up to \$40-\$60.

4) Proofreading

For books with standard text, proofreaders will charge between \$25-\$35 per 1,000 words. For complex text this range goes up to \$35-\$45.

PROFESSIONAL EDITING IS NOT AN EXPENSE – IT’S AN INVESTMENT

Even though these multiple editing passes will increase your overall publishing costs, keep in mind that you’re not just publishing a book: you’re creating a professional legacy.

Due to the ubiquity of low-cost global book distribution channels, your nonfiction book will be available for the world to see the minute it’s published.

A product that’s well put together will stand out from the crowd (*note: most self-published non-fiction books are poorly edited*) and open new markets for your business or your career.

This investment in your editing staff is an investment in your reputation, your credibility, and ultimately your future growth.

HOW TO FIND A GOOD NONFICTION EDITOR

A book written to support the growth of a business or practice is a special kind of nonfiction book, because it’s written not just with the intent to inform but also with the intent to prompt readers into action.

As such, you’ll need to find a book editor who’s quite unique, a type of editor who will not just provide creative feedback, address developmental issues and correct grammatical errors, but who also knows how to communicate strategies that persuade readers to act.

A GOOD EDITOR ISN’T THE SAME AS THE RIGHT EDITOR

For this reason, a good “*generalist*” book editor, whether working freelance or for an editing or publishing service, will likely not be adequate for your book.

Now, a good editor will still do a competent job at face value, but that may give you a false sense of security because a well-edited manuscript always reads much better than an original work (whether the author is you or Malcolm Gladwell). Chances are, you’ll always be delighted whenever you get your manuscript back from a professional editor, regardless of their specialty.

But that doesn’t mean that you know how your readers will react to your edited manuscript. What a good nonfiction-book editor knows, which most average editors may not, is the very specific psychology of readers who buy those types of problem-solving books.

For example, your book readers ...

... won’t buy your book to be entertained

They do, however, expect your writing to be engaging (better yet: captivating).

... have a clear agenda

They need your book to help them solve a specific problem in their lives or in their business. Your book must always satisfy that need.

... demand results from the actions your book is recommending

Your strategies and tactics need to be communicated in a crystal clear way.

HOW DO YOU FIND THE RIGHT EDITOR FOR YOUR BOOK?

You'll probably begin by doing a Google search. But here lies the paradox – the Internet can be the best and the worst place to find a qualified editor for your book.

When you do your search, you'll find hundreds of websites advertising book editing services. Unfortunately, editing is one of those areas where anyone who's trained as a writer can advertise their services as an "*editor*" in order to make money or pay their bills.

As such, many of these services will offer very low rates – but as the saying goes, "you get what you pay for." The thing is, when it comes to editing a nonfiction book there's just too much riding on your writing to justify going for a low-cost solution, because your professional reputation will be on the line.

So, you need not focus on cost per word and instead focus on knowledge of your space, experience and fit.

Something else to keep in mind is that many reputable editorial services or freelance editors with a good track record will list nonfiction books as a genre, but that doesn't necessarily mean they have experience with nonfiction books created for businesses. Instead, they may only have experience with creative and historical nonfiction.

To make your search for the perfect nonfiction editor for your book easier, follow the six rules below and you'll avoid a lot of disappointment:

6 RULES TO FILTER OUT BAD CANDIDATES

Rule #1

If the editor has an extensive list of genres on their website, then they are positioning themselves as a jack of all trades, which won't be a good fit for you.

Rule #2

If the editor demands payment in advance in order to analyze your manuscript (the equivalent of paid diagnostics with your car mechanic), then take a pass.

Rule #3

A professional editor will offer to provide you with a sample edit free of charge, say some paragraphs or a full page of text, so you can gain an early sense of the quality of their work. Editing is a significant investment of time and money and you cannot afford to have buyer's remorse. If the editor is unwilling to supply you with a sample edit, then take a pass.

Rule #4

If the editor is unwilling to provide you with a nonfiction author reference or two that you can talk to, then take a pass. Unfortunately, book editing is an unregulated industry that invites a lot of predatory behavior.

Rule #5

If the editor is unwilling to provide you with a list of qualifications, or if the list is too thin (i.e. they are fairly new in the industry), then take a pass. There's nothing wrong with helping out new talent, especially if you are writing a first book of fiction without much riding on it in order to develop your writing chops. However, your entire professional reputation will be riding on the quality of this edit so you can't afford to be magnanimous here.

Rule #6

Last but not least, ensure there's a good connection between you and your editor. The writer-editor relationship is very close in nature.

As such, you need to work not only with a talented editor but also with an editor you can connect with, because the most impactful writing (i.e. the writing that "moves the needle") must be true and authentic, and in order to be true and authentic when you write you have to be willing to be vulnerable. The last thing you want is for an editor to take advantage of your vulnerability because of some hidden agenda.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD YOU ASK PRIOR TO HIRING AN EDITOR?

In order to make sure you hire the right editor, there are two sets of questions you need to ask.

The first set is meant for the initial interview and the second set is for after the editor has gone through your manuscript in order to give you an estimate of the total cost.

How to Prepare for Your Initial Interview

Ask questions to assess their experience:

1. Do you specialize in nonfiction-books written by business owners or practitioners?
2. What editing training do you have?
3. What's your experience with nonfiction books for businesses or consulting practices; how many have you edited?
4. Could I see a sample of your work?
5. Could you provide me with one or two references that I can talk to?

Ask questions to assess how they work:

6. Do you provide a free or paid manuscript assessment?
7. What's your editing timeline for my project, based on your current workload?
8. What editing tools do you use?
9. What's your editorial style?

10. Do you provide written notes with explanations and recommendations in addition to textual edits?
11. Do you provide time for ad-hoc questions and discussions with the author?
12. How do you communicate with authors (email only or phone and email)?
13. How do you exchange edits with authors?

Ask questions to clarify how they'll charge you:

14. What are your fees and your terms? How will I be billed?
15. Do you provide a written contract outlining your services, fees, and terms?

Questions for Your Follow-Up Meeting (After the Manuscript Review):

16. What level of editing will my book require (developmental editing, line editing, copy editing, or proofreading)?
17. How many rounds of editing do you think my manuscript will need?
18. How long will it take to edit this book and ready it for publication?

Now you have the tools to begin your search for the perfect nonfiction editor for your book.

Step 5.2: Hire a Book Layout Artist

A good book layout is important for books in any genre, but it's essential for nonfiction books that deliver solutions to an audience.

Most readers will use these books more as reference manuals than as books they read once and then put away on a shelf. There's usually so much actionable information in them that constant reference needs to be a key part of the design.

As a matter of fact, according to statistics from Amazon Kindle, almost 70% of the most electronically-highlighted books on their platform, excluding the bible, are titles meant to inform and educate users: *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, *the 4-Hour Body*, *Steve Jobs*, and *The 4-Hour Workweek*.

It's for this reason that great care must be taken when balancing all the necessary visual aspects that appear on each page of your book.

Book layout is part science and mostly art – specifically spatial art. As a result, this is not something that you want to take care of yourself. This is something that you want to leave to the experts in consultation with you, so that you can guide them with your overall vision while they do the actual work.

There's a lot riding on the quality of your writing, as well as your book design and layout. These elements will either reflect positively or negatively on your professionalism, and by extension on your reputation.

My recommendation is for you to create the best possible manuscript you can with the help of an editor and then hire a professional book designer to take care of your book's look and feel.

Even so, it's good for you to develop a clear understanding of what makes a nonfiction book "pop" so you can provide valuable feedback to your book designer.

Here are ten book layout tips, one for each of the ten key layout areas to produce a book that will be easy on the eyes and appealing to the mind.

Tip 1: Book-Size Matters

The physical size of your book (referred to in the industry as your *trim size*) is the first decision you'll need to make in conjunction with your book designer.

Standard trim sizes are the least costly to produce by your printer because most printing machines are preset for those sizes and they generate the least amount of paper waste. Custom sizes always have a higher cost per book because they tend to produce more waste.

The vast majority of nonfiction books come in three popular standard sizes:

5" x 8"

Typically used for paperbacks only, although there are exceptions.

5.5" x 8.5"

Used for both paperbacks and hardcovers.

6" x 9"

Used for both paperbacks and hardcovers.

In general, the size you choose is determined by your total word count. The highest cost driver for printed books is the number of pages. If you have a large word count and you want to limit the number of pages in order to lower your cost per copy, then a 6" x 9" trim size is advisable. If you choose a small trim size instead (say 5" x 8") you may end up with an overly thick book, which will not only cost more to produce but also may be a turn-off for some buyers.

On average, a 5" x 8" book will fit between 250 and 350 words of text per page. A 6" x 9" book, on the other hand, will fit between 350 and 450 words per page (if you add images or graphics, then the word count per page will decrease).

For example, a 70,000-page manuscript will require approximately 200 pages in a 6" x 9" trim size – using the lower end of the range at 350 words per page to account for the inclusion of some images and graphics. The same word count in a 5" x 8" book would instead require 280 pages.

Tip 2: The Right Font Will Glue Readers to the Page (The Wrong Font Will Repel Them!)

The type of font that you choose in your book layout is the virtual "glue" that holds your reader's attention.

To the layperson, most fonts of the same type and size look similar (e.g. most serif fonts or most non-serif fonts). But in reality, the design of a font can make a huge difference in reader retention.

Even subtle differences in the construction of a font can make a big difference between a reader gliding through the page and a reader experiencing tiredness when reading a book.

This is another reason why you should hire a professional designer to select the right font for your book. There are literally thousands of font designs to choose from, and if you were to take on this task it would quickly become overwhelming.

Finally, you never want to use a font that is so different that it becomes a distraction from the content of your book, even if you feel it's appropriate.

Tip 3: Line Spacing is Much More than Just the Space Between Lines

Line spacing is critical for readability. It's also dependent on your font size. Too much line spacing and your book layout looks sparse. Too little and your readers will get a headache.

Here, again, you need to rely on the expertise of your professional book designer to find the right balance. Also, their advanced book-design software tools already have built-in algorithms to find the most efficient line spacing for a given choice of font and font-size.

Tip 4: White Space Is Not Empty Space

White space in a book layout refers to the absence of any design elements. A well laid out book has the right balance of white space and printed elements.

If you use too little white space (for instance by using very thin margins and little space between paragraphs) your book will feel visually cluttered and it'll be very uncomfortable to read, even with the most appropriate font size and line spacing.

The key for nonfiction books is to strive for the perfect balance between white spaces and textual or graphic elements, because their readers will often re-read the same page or even a specific paragraph several times.

This is again an area where professional book designers come in very handy because they are true visual artists.

Tip 5: Margins Improve Readability

Margins are used to manage the balance between white space and the printed elements in your book layout. Technically, they're also needed to make sure that printing shops have enough space to bind the books. But their primary function is to help "anchor" the reader to the page.

If margins are too wide, the text appears to float in the middle of the page. Too little margin (which can be tempting to use because it lowers your page count and the cost of each printed copy) will result in cluttered text and make for a very uncomfortable read.

Tip 6: Be Creative with Your Chapter Pages

This is an area where a good designer can make the inside of your book really shine. When you look at other nonfiction books, you'll find that the first page of each chapter looks different than the other pages. They have a "special" look.

This is an area where you can give your book layout personality by playing with different design elements.

For example, many authors take visual cues from their book covers and use them in the chapter pages to give their books a unique identity. Not all books take advantage of this feature, but some do it to great effect.

Tip 7: Use Headers and Footers as Navigational Tools for Your Readers

Aside from holding your page numbers, a well-designed header can be a great navigational tool if you have a large or detailed table of contents.

Using this valuable real estate just for the name of the book and the name of the author is redundant and not necessarily the best use of this space. Consider instead using the chapter title and section (or sub-section) title as the header content.

Tip 8: Place Images, Diagrams, and Charts Strategically to Help Readers Better Absorb and Digest Your Content

Graphic elements that are used with a lot of thought and planning can truly enhance the delivery of information in your book.

From photographs to images, illustrations, charts, diagrams, and tables, the judicious use of these graphical elements can greatly enhance your book's reading experience and help improve your reader's understanding of your content.

The key is balance. Too many graphics can become distracting to your reader. Too few graphics will make your reader wonder why the graphics are even there.

Also, make sure that every single graphic element has a clear purpose and isn't just used to provide a break to the text. Your readers are a very discriminating group and they expect all information to be in your book for a reason. Confusing graphics are a sure way to lose them fast.

Tip 9: Make use of Breakouts to Help Readers Retain Information

Breakouts are text-box elements where key takeaways from your book can be pulled out of the main text and given a much larger font and a different background to make them stand out.

They can add a lot of value to your book, provided that they're used judiciously. First and foremost, only highlight phrases that contain a key point, discovery, or takeaway from your book, but also make a plan ahead of time for these textual devices throughout the book to ensure that there is a logical flow from text-box to text-box.

Balance is once again key here. Too many boxes will become a distraction and take away from the reader's enjoyment, and too few will make readers question why they are there in the first place.

Tip 10: Don't Make Your Table of Contents Boring and Utilitarian

The final tip is to make sure that your table of contents serves the purpose not just to navigate readers through the book, but also to provide your readers with a clear informational roadmap.

Your editor will be of great help in organizing your table of contents to have a clear flow and to be useful beyond navigation.

What you don't want is a table of contents that is too "thin" (not enough details beyond the chapter title and a couple of headings) or too "dense" (so much information that it becomes overwhelming).

Visually speaking, this is an area where your designer, in consultation with you, can play with different font sizes and text positioning for added emphasis.

YOU NOW HAVE THE BASICS FOR A STRONG NONFICTION BOOK LAYOUT

The main lesson is to always strive for balance:

- Balance between white space and textual elements
- Balance in your line spacing
- Balance between graphical elements and text
- Balance in the use of breakouts
- Balance in the design of your table of contents.

The above information will allow you to have an informed conversation with your book designer as you define together the layout elements that would best represent the message contained in your book.

Step 5.3: Hire a Book Cover Designer

Finding the best nonfiction book cover artist for your book project is essential for your success, because as book discovery has migrated from bookstore shelves to the world of search engines, you'll need to be competitive against established titles produced by traditional publishers.

When your book shows up on a search side by side with a bestselling title in your niche, the contrast between both covers will be immediately apparent. So it's imperative that you aren't tempted by low cost operators and hire instead an experienced nonfiction cover artist.

If you do a Google search for book cover designers you'll find pages upon pages of potential candidates showcasing many beautiful covers. However, you'll also find that 99% of the covers you see are for fiction books.

The reason is that the vast majority of the millions of books that are self-published every year are fiction titles.

As a nonfiction writer, you need to find a specialist in your genre because the skills of a nonfiction book cover artist are very different from those of fiction cover artists.

A fiction designer's goal is to capture the essence of the story in the cover imagery. In other words, to create a visually appealing representation of the book's characters and their journey. Fiction covers are about the book, not about the reader.

Nonfiction covers, on the other hand, must always be about the reader and *not* about the book. Their goal is to show a visual representation of the life of the reader after they put into practice the solution conveyed throughout the pages of your book.

While a fiction cover focuses on the character or characters in the book, a nonfiction cover focuses on the reader and their deep desires.

For this reason, you must find a book cover artist who understands how nonfiction works, who understands the needs of your target audience and who understands your reader's aspirations.

Don't Look for Cover Artists as a Commodity

In the age of the gig economy, exemplified by websites where you can find cover artists that'll work for under \$20, it's easy to treat book cover designers as a low-cost commodity.

While this approach may prove valuable for fiction books, where you might want to keep your overall costs down in order to test the book in the market before you commit more resources, it could prove disastrous for nonfiction.

The reason for that is that nonfiction titles are expected to be written by subject matter experts and as such your book will become a projection of your professional reputation.

Therefore, you can't afford to cut corners and hire anyone but the most experienced nonfiction book cover artist that you can budget for.

Ask to See Lots of Nonfiction Cover Samples

Once you find the right candidate, ask to see as many nonfiction cover samples as possible – this will be proof of their length of service in the trade.

Then compare these covers with the book covers of bestselling nonfiction books in your niche to see how they measure up.

Ask How Many Sample Covers They'll Make Available for You to Choose From

Another important question to ask is how many different covers they'll include in their fee in order to give you greater freedom of choice.

Typically, you want to have at least three different covers to choose from, and by different I mean unique concepts, not the same cover with some twists.

Ask How Many Revisions Are Allowed Before Extra Charges Are Triggered

Once you decide on the main theme of your cover, you'll want to be able to make tweaks to get it right where you want it to be.

So you need to ask the designer how many revisions their standard fees will allow before extra charges kick in.

Ask to See Their Contract, Fees, and Terms of Payment

Always work with an artist who has a clear contract that details the services that they'll provide, the fees, the terms of payment and, more importantly, how they'll handle and charge for change requests.

The world of design is highly subjective and experienced book cover artists will not offer unlimited changes (*beware of those who do*).

What you're looking for is a fair amount of changes to be covered by their standard fee and then reasonable charges for additional changes beyond that number.

Ask for Their Expected Timeline Based on Their Current Workload

Something else that must be stipulated in your contract is the expected length of time required to produce your cover design.

This must include the initial timeline from capture of your requirements to production of the initial set of covers plus the time between a change request and its execution.

These times will vary based on the designer's workload, so you must ensure that their timeframes fit the schedule of your self-publishing project plan.

Ask Them to Provide You With 2 or 3 References

Although having access to book covers produced by the artist in the past is a necessary first step, you'll also want to talk with their clients so that you can learn details about the working relationship.

To this end, ask for two or three references. Any reluctance to provide you with references is a sign of inexperience (*i.e. lots of sample covers but few actual clients*).

Check for a Good Rapport

Finally, make sure that there's a strong rapport with the designer during the interview stage.

Creative endeavors require that professionals that you hire be good listeners and empathetic to your needs. After all, they may work with you for a few weeks, but you might have spent years on your book project.

If you feel you have to walk on eggshells when you communicate with your designer, no matter how talented they may be that's a sign to take a pass and go down the list.

Creative relationships demand openness and vulnerability and you must ensure that you can always work with your book cover artist on a basis of mutual respect and understanding.

In conclusion, nonfiction book covers are a critical element in your book's potential success in the market and require a deep understanding of the needs of your target audience.

Therefore, you must hire a book cover artist who's not only skilled in the visual arts but who also understands the psychology of readers in your niche so that they can tailor your book cover to their aspirations.

STEP 6

Promote Your Nonfiction Book Strategically

For a nonfiction book-marketing plan to be successful, you have to tailor it to a specific group of people – your target audience. The more targeted your plan, the better the results.

When your book-marketing plan is laser-focused on your audience and their needs, you're no longer marketing a book. You're marketing your unique solution to a specific a problem and that puts you in a class of one.

This is an important distinction to make because the job of your book-marketing plan is to connect with people (i.e. the “*right*” audience), not to sell books – although the better your connection the more books you'll sell.

In short, book sales should be a secondary consideration, not the primary driver of your marketing decisions. In this step, let's look at the best ways to plan your book marketing efforts.

Step 6.1: Create a Book Promotion Plan

The aim of your book promotion efforts is to establish a number of outreach plans so you can connect with your target audience in a way that's meaningful to them (remember: you're not in the business of selling, you're in the business of solving).

Your ultimate goal is to get them to know you, trust you and like you. You'll achieve it by following the following five book promotion plans:

1) Social Media Plan

Identify the social media platforms that your target audience frequents and then take advantage of their engagement features to connect with them.

For example, on *Facebook* you can create and moderate groups, or write long-form posts full of valuable information. On *LinkedIn* you can publish articles that are meaningful to your audience.

On *Pinterest*, you can create boards with information that addresses your target audience's problem, linking back to an author blog for a more in-depth learning experience (we'll talk more about blogging later).

Here's a rundown of the main social media platforms and strategies for reaching out to your target audience:

Pinterest

Pinterest is a great platform if your demographic is primarily women in the 25-65 year-old age range. It tends to work better if your nonfiction book and your professional services are B2C (business-to-consumer).

The way to reach out is to create boards with pins that are relevant to your target audience in relation to your book's content, which then link back to relevant posts in your blog.

The idea is to use Pinterest as a traffic source for your author blog so you can then capture email addresses to grow your email list. This will happen when your pins are discovered and when users re-pin them in their own boards.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the ideal platform to promote B2B (business-to-business) nonfiction books and services.

On this platform, you'll reuse your author blog posts in order to publish LinkedIn articles that either show a synopsis of your post with a link to the original or duplicate your post entirely inside the platform.

If you use the latter approach, make sure that you include a line at the beginning of your article that reads "Article reposted from <Your Website Address>" which links back to your actual post, so that Google knows it's duplicate content whenever they crawl your blog and your LinkedIn article.

As with Pinterest, the goal here is to send traffic to your blog so that you can convert it into email addresses and grow your list.

Facebook

Like Pinterest, Facebook caters primarily to B2C audiences, but you should use both if they're frequented by your audience.

In Facebook, you can either post from your personal account or you can create a fan page for your book and post from there. In either case your goal is to drive traffic back to your blog. You can either use a short-form Facebook post that highlights valuable nuggets of wisdom from a blog post and then links to the entire article, or you can use a long-form Facebook post with a duplicate of the content.

If you use the entire post, make sure to add the line that says "Article reposted from <Your Website Address>" which links back to your individual post.

Instagram

Instagram caters to a younger audience and it could potentially be a valuable way to promote your book. However, the only way to add a link to an Instagram post is to open a business account and use a paid ad, which can quickly skyrocket your costs.

For this reason, I don't consider Instagram to be a cost-effective social media platform to direct organic traffic back to your author blog.

Twitter

Twitter can be a valuable platform for either B2C or B2B audiences. Whenever you post an article to your blog you can tweet about its salient points, adding a link back to your original post.

In closing, the goal of this social media section is not to recommend using one platform over the other, but to only use social media platforms that are relevant to your target audience and skip the ones that aren't.

2) Public Speaking Plan

Identify the offline meeting places that your target audience likes to frequent and then create a public speaking plan so that you can get yourself booked into those venues as an expert speaker.

Fortunately, with the help of a published book this won't be hard to achieve. Now, always begin with free speaking events in order to get experience before you reach out to venues that offer paid engagements.

Keep in mind that most free speaking venues will allow you to sell your book at the back of the room, so you'll have revenue coming in to cover some or all of your expenses.

Here are some places to get started:

Trade or Professional Associations

Many trade and professional associations run regular meetings for their members and they're always looking for topics of interest to their members.

At the local level, they often don't have a budget for paid speaking but sometimes they'll have a budget for buying your book in bulk to give out to their members in attendance.

Also, you may be allowed to collect people's email addresses to receive a regular newsletter or other information of interest to them, which you'll get to add to your email list.

Social Business Organizations

Organizations such as Rotary International, Kiwanis, and Lions hold regular meetings for their members and they invite public speakers. This is a great place to connect with a B2B audience.

Most of the time, they'll allow you to sell your book after the event and also to get email addresses from those interested in connecting with you.

Non-Profit Organizations

Many non-profit organizations hold regular meetings where they invite speakers to talk about a subject of interest to their members. They often allow authors to sell their books and to collect emails from the members in attendance.

Bookstores

Bookstores like to invite authors to speak because it brings foot traffic into their stores. If you do a good job with your talk, many of the attendees will also purchase your book on the spot since you're there to autograph them.

To book these events, you simply have to connect with the store's event manager to see where they could fit you in their upcoming schedule. If the store is in your local area, it pays to come in person and make a direct connection.

Depending on the size of the store, you may be required to leave behind a one-pager showing media appearances and other events that you've done in the recent past or are planning for the near future, plus a copy of your book.

Libraries, Community Centers, Schools

Finally, libraries, community centers, and schools often invite speakers and authors to come in and give a talk about a subject that's relevant to their audiences.

All you have to do is get in touch with their event coordinators to find out what their preferences for topics are, always leaving a copy of your book behind.

You can always do a Google search first to check out their calendars of upcoming events in order to get an idea of the topics that they tend to get speakers for.

3) Earned Media Plan

The next book promotion goal is to get interviewed as an expert by a number of mainstream media outlets, such as radio, TV, print, and online.

Most media outlets derive the bulk of their revenues from advertising so they're constantly seeking new content to fill the airways and pages with relevant information from experts just like you.

Although the time allotted for interviews by mainstream media sources is short (typically under 15 minutes for radio and a couple of minutes maximum for television) they're ideal places to promote upcoming public events.

For example, if you were able to book yourself in a couple of Barnes & Noble bookstores and a couple of public libraries, then you want to time your media appearances ahead of these events so that you can announce where their audiences will be able to find you next.

4) Influencer Plan

The online information revolution has spawned a new breed of influencers with large audiences who operate blogs, podcasts, and *YouTube* channels.

Your plan is to establish mutually beneficial relationships with these influencers so that they offer you the opportunity to be a guest on their platforms in exchange for links back to your website.

Most of those sites generate advertising revenue from traffic and are constantly looking for topics of interest to their audiences to keep them engaged, so if you have something useful for their audiences, they'll listen to you.

But first you need to develop a relationship with the influencer by signing up to their email list, leaving useful comments and eventually by reaching out if you have something helpful to offer.

Many nonfiction authors are able to leverage relationships with influencers into book sales simply by getting them to recommend their book to their large captive audiences. But this is a process that is organic and cannot be forced.

Having said that, keep in mind that online relationships of trust are first built by giving without asking for anything in return, letting the law of reciprocity do its job over time.

5) Self-Promotion Plan

Finally, you need to develop your dedicated online presence outside of social media.

Social platforms can certainly become very useful as promotional tools. However, their terms and conditions are outside of your control and they often update them in ways that may not always benefit you.

Having your own author website, on the other hand, will always be 100% under your control. Your website will become your author's hub for information.

Below you'll find the basic tools that you'll need to implement on your site in order to support the promotion of your nonfiction book.

Author Website

A typical author website will contain information such as:

- Your bio
- Your calendar of events
- A list of past and future media appearances
- Your past and future public speaking engagements
- Photos and videos relevant to your audience
- A contact form where people can reach you
- Information about your book (*or books*), where to find it, and links to Amazon so they can purchase it.

Nowadays, you can create websites very easily without having to hire an entire IT team.

My recommendation is to use wordpress.org (*not wordpress.com!*) as your website-creation platform since it's open-sourced, cost-effective, and very stable – in fact, over 40% of all websites currently in operation globally are built around Wordpress.

More importantly, your website will host your author blog.

Author Blog

Blogging is an effective technique for building audiences because it capitalizes on the way that we look for information whenever we have a need: search engines.

As search behavior migrated on a large scale from offline to online sources over the last decade, blogging has become the primary means for providing answers to searchers.

Your blog posts need to be created in response to specific searches from a specific group of users.

Before you begin writing an article, you need to research what keywords your target audience is typing into search engines when they're looking for help on matters that your book can answer.

Now, you may be wondering, *"How do I find out what people are searching for?"*

The short answer is simple: by using Google. First, you enter a search phrase that you think a member of your target audience would use – for example: *"effective time management techniques."*

Then you check for key areas where Google will provide you with the answers that you're looking for. The first area is Google's *"autofill"* search field. As soon as you begin typing your query, Google will show you a list of variations that other people are typing.

Write down those phrases which you think will become useful to you. Another area of interest is located at the bottom of the first page of search results, in a section called *"Searches related to <your keyword>."*

Write down new phrases not found through autofill. Then scroll back to the top of the page and look for a section called *"People Also Ask."* Write down any useful questions you find there.

Tip: Google initially shows you only four questions, but if you click on any of them, they'll show you two more questions, so keep clicking and you can get dozens of valuable questions that other people are asking Google related to your search.

Finally, type *"time management a"* and look at the autofill variations to capture the ones that you think are valuable to you, then type *"time management b," "time management c"* and so on going down the alphabet, and before you know it you'll have a treasure trove of keywords to use in your blog.

Once you have a decent set of keywords, clean it up and whittle it down to subjects that you can write about in your blog. Then, write a post centered on each of those topics.

For example:

- Blog Post 1: Effective Time Management Techniques
- Blog Post 2: Time Management Techniques at Work
- Blog Post 3: Time Management Techniques for Nurses
- Blog Post 4: 7 Effective Time-Management Techniques
- Blog Post 5: The 4 D's of Time Management.

All the above great blog post examples came verbatim by scratching the surface of a single Google search!

Lead Conversion Tools

Once you have an author website in place, you'll need to post links back to your site and to your blog articles in order to drive traffic to be converted into leads and customers.

Every time you contribute to a forum, online group, write an article on *LinkedIn*, or answer a question on *Quora*, you'll be leaving backlinks as breadcrumbs that allow your target audience to follow you back to your author website.

Once there, you'll encourage members of your target audience to leave you their email so that you can build an email list of people who know you, trust you and like you. Over time, your email list will become your most important marketing asset.

You'll use email to create a deeper bond with your target audience, by sending them frequent, relevant information of genuine value to them.

Using this method, many nonfiction authors have grown their email lists into the thousands and tens of thousands of followers over the years, creating a trusting audience that becomes an on-going pipeline for added business revenue and book sales.

In order for this lead-conversion strategy to work you'll need the following pieces:

Opt-in Email List

The most effective mechanism for creating an opt-in email list (besides in-person public speaking events) is to create an author blog.

As stated above, you want to blog regularly by targeting the keywords that your audience uses to search Google for solutions. In your blog posts you'll be providing them with free tips and strategies, mostly from your book, to help them address specific issues.

After a few months of blogging, you'll begin to get noticed and earn people's trust as someone who offers what they're looking for free of charge and without asking for anything in return. As you collect emails, you'll begin to develop a personal relationship with your audience by providing value on a regular basis to strengthen your connection. At this point, many of them will begin to order your book simply because you've earned their trust, so over time sales will begin to add up.

After a year to a year and a half, you'll build up your email list into the thousands through blogging and speaking events, and if you announce a follow up book you'll be able to sell thousands of copies before you do any other marketing activity.

This strategy is used successfully by many indie nonfiction authors who consistently outsell traditionally published books!

Opt-In Page, Lead Magnet and Autoresponder

At this stage, you'll need to enlist the help of a tech person to add an email opt-in page to your blog where you'll offer something of great value for free in exchange for an email address – for example a short eBook, a white paper, an infographic, etc. This is referred to as a “lead magnet.” The opt-in page will pop up after a certain amount of time has elapsed (say 20 seconds or 30 seconds after readers land on one of your articles). This time delay is there to ensure that they already started reading your blog post.

The opt-in page also contains special code that'll capture your readers' email addresses and place them in an email autoresponder. This is the tool that you'll use to build and maintain your email list.

You'll also use this tool to broadcast emails to your list regularly so that you can continue to build on your relationship with your target audience.

Step 6.2: Plan out Your Book Promotion Timeline

When you ask: “*How do I promote my self-published book?*” the best answer isn't “*Make sure you do A, B, C, D, E, etc. as soon as you publish your book.*” The best answer is: “*Make sure you do advance planning.*”

Most times if you begin your promotional activities right after your book launch, you're already several months too late.

Unfortunately, this is all too common among new self-published authors. They're so consumed by the creation of the actual book that they leave the promotion to the very end. The problem is that most of these activities take months to come to fruition.

For example, public speaking event schedules are booked months in advance. So are media interviews. Advance reviewers need plenty of time to read your book and then write a thoughtful review, and so on.

The minute your book is officially published (i.e. the minute it becomes available through Amazon) a rapid aging process begins.

If your promotional efforts aren't happening in quick succession, it'll be nearly impossible to create momentum and buzz for your book. For starters, selling tools like Amazon demand a lot of user interaction in a short amount of time in order to rank books properly.

If the selling signals are few and far-between, the tool has no data to go by and it'll relegate your book to the “*digital basement*” of the online bookstore. The same applies to bestselling lists computed by media publications, which are usually based on weekly sales.

So, to keep you from hitting the demoralizing wall of frustration that most self-published nonfiction authors encounter when they don't plan their book promotion in advance, here's a formula to create the necessary momentum and buzz right at launch.

BOOK LAUNCH MINUS 6 MONTHS

To have a successful book launch, you need to begin your promotional activities six months in advance.

At the six-month mark you need to begin preparations for the activities that have the longest lead-time: enlisting the help of influencers and public speaking event managers.

Develop Relationships with Influencers

Online influencers are one of the most powerful means for promotion because of the large audiences that they command.

The level of trust by their communities is so high that the mere mention of your book by them can launch it onto bestseller lists. But, because of this they get flooded with requests, most of which go unanswered.

Here's what you need to do to get noticed: first, look out for those influencers who cater to your target audience and who'd be interested in your subject matter.

Next, and this is the trick to getting on the good side of influencers, use a methodical approach to reach out, such as the one outlined below:

1. Join their email lists: this will allow you to learn more about the way they connect with their own communities and you'll also learn what they like and dislike.
2. Comment on their blog posts and on their social media posts. Make every effort to provide good value in your comments so that yours will stand out. Saying "Great post, thanks" is one thing, but saying "Your discussion of XYZ allowed me to have an epiphany: <describe it here>. Now, I really understand the importance of ABC – thanks for your insight!" will take your comment to a whole new level.
3. Many influencers request that their followers ask the questions via commenting (e.g. *What topic would you like me to cover next?* etc.). Take advantage of this outreach and ask meaningful questions that elevate the discussion. They'll appreciate it and over time they'll get to know you.

If you connect with them in an authentic, helpful way, over the months you'll develop a relationship that will open the doors for you to ask for an endorsement of a review for your upcoming book.

After providing valuable feedback and insightful comments, it'll be hard for them to decline (naturally, your book has to be well-written and well-produced!).

Now you can see why this process requires a six-month lead time!

Plan Public Speaking Events

Organizations that hold regular public speaking events plan their line-ups months in advance. Six months seems to be the norm.

As soon as you launch your book, you want to schedule as many public speaking events as you can in quick succession to build momentum.

The reason you want to bunch them together is that in the first several weeks after your launch, you want to generate as many sales, coming from multiple sources, as you can to "prime" the bestseller list algorithms.

Since most of them compute sales on a weekly basis (Amazon does it on an hourly basis!) you need to be able to generate volume sales in a relatively short timeframe.

BOOK LAUNCH MINUS 5 MONTHS

At the five-month mark, you need to develop your digital presence and it's also time to prep your first book order for advance review copies.

Create Your Author Website

As stated before, your website will contain your bio, your current and future books, your calendar of events, your blog, a testimonials page, ordering information, your online media kit, and a contact form.

Now, unless you've done this work before, it's better if you enlist the help of a freelance techie or an IT outfit. Building a website properly requires a lot of specialized knowledge and your disposable time is better spent doing book promotion.

Set Up Social Media Accounts

Next you need to set up the social media accounts that are required to connect with your target audience. Don't set up accounts on social media sites that your audience doesn't frequent, no matter how popular they may be.

Social media outreach can be time consuming, and unless you're connecting directly with your audience, you'll be wasting a lot of time.

If you've heard that certain platforms worked well for another nonfiction author, that doesn't necessarily mean that it'll work well for your book. Research your target audience carefully and reach out to them only where you're the most likely to find them.

Print Review Copies of Your Book

In preparation for your outreach to advance reviewers and the media, you have to print an initial book run. Make sure that your book designer is ready at this point to supply you with print-ready files.

For this initial print run, you'll need to hire a local digital printer because you need to obtain these copies "off the grid." In other words, you can't use the premier self-publishing platform Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing in order to print these books.

The reason is that once you upload your book to Amazon it'll become widely available immediately. So to prevent prematurely publishing your book, you'll have to produce them locally.

In order to have enough pre-publication copies to give out to reviewers and to pitch to media producers for expert interviews, you should print around 100 copies to start with.

The reason you need so many copies is that you need to maximize the number of early book reviews you obtain, and for every two books you hand out to reviewers, you'll likely get one review back.

BOOK LAUNCH MINUS 4 MONTHS

Do Google Keyword Research

Four months before your book launch, you need to develop the list of search keywords that you'll be targeting when you begin blogging on your website.

In essence, you'll need to identify what type of searches members of your target audience perform on search engines related to the types of subjects that your book covers, and then write blog articles that provide the information they're seeking.

Your goal is to generate valuable content targeted to those searches so that your article appears on the first page of search results, increasing the chances of your audience finding you, your site, and your book.

If you've never done search-engine keyword research before, you'll need to enlist the help of a book marketing company or a marketing consultant that specializes in nonfiction books.

Start Blogging

Now, it's time to start writing and publishing articles on your blog. Your goal at this stage is strictly informational – you're not selling, you're telling.

For your blog to become a trusted source for your audience, your content can't be commercial. This will turn your audience off. You'll monetize your blog later on in a more organic way.

For now, focus on providing value to your readers without asking for something in return. Over time many will buy your book and some will even hire your professional services.

Also, in addition to blogging on your site, you may need to blog on other platforms that your audience likes to frequent.

For instance, if your book caters to a B2B audience, you'll find that publishing articles on LinkedIn is valuable. Medium is another popular blogging platform that has a number of social features.

BOOK LAUNCH MINUS 3 MONTHS

With three months to go, it's time to put together your advance review team, reach out to bookstore event managers, and begin your media outreach.

Create Book Review Team

In order to hit the ground running on Amazon, you need to create a book review team that will read your book in advance of publication and then leave positive (hopefully!) reviews on your book page on Amazon (more on this in Section 7).

You'll need to identify the best candidates, who are members of your target audience and who are connected to you through friends and business associates. Amazon has strict rules for reviewers, so make sure you're familiar with them.

The idea is to reach out to as many people as possible, with the goal of obtaining between 20 and 40 reviews in the first 30 days after publication. This is the timeframe that Amazon's product ranking algorithm uses to gather sales data.

Also, your reviewers need to leave honest reviews that aren't influenced in any way by you. Anything that the algorithm perceives to be fabricated will be flagged and automatically deleted.

Plan Bookstore Events

Three months out from publication is also the time to begin reaching out to bookstores to schedule yourself for a workshop, seminar, book-launch event, or book-signing event.

Begin by making a list of all the bookstores in a 50 miles radius, large and small, and find out which ones schedule authors for talks or other events – check their websites to see if they have an events calendar.

Connect with their event managers (I recommend doing this in person) and ask to be added to their schedule. You'll need to leave them a review copy from your stash and also a one-pager with planned public speaking events as well as media interviews booked (see next).

Start Engaging with The Media

This is also the perfect time to begin your earned media outreach. Your first order of business is to add an online media kit to your author website.

This is a webpage that shows the following information:

- A hi-res headshot
- A hi-res image of your book cover
- Your bio
- Your calendar of events
- A list of other media appearances (this will grow over time).

Then, begin reaching out to local media. They love to cover local authors provided that your pitch connects your book with a newsworthy story. You'll have to leave them with an advance review copy of your book and the link to your media kit.

BOOK LAUNCH MINUS 2 MONTHS

You're getting close to your book launch! Now it's the time to set up your email list and all the technology associated with it. Unless you're a techie at heart, I recommend that you hire a local IT consultant to do this work.

For the most part, this is a one-time effort and you'll be able to perform the maintenance yourself, or hand it to a personal assistant if you already have one.

Create Your Lead Magnet

The first thing you need to do is to create a lead magnet for your target audience in exchange for their email address.

As mentioned before, this could be access to a newsletter, a white paper you wrote, a short eBook summarizing your book, a valuable infographic, a checklist that's highly relevant to your audience, and so on.

Set Up an Autoresponder and Start Building Your Email List

Then, your techie will create an opt-in page for your website, with an autoresponder system that will automatically capture and store the email addresses that you collect. In this autoresponder you'll create an initial sequence of engagement emails.

These are going to be the icebreakers that you'll use to develop a relationship with your email list. They must contain valuable information.

You'll be using your autoresponder to send these emails automatically with a chosen frequency. When the sequence ends (say, after the 6th or 7th email) you'll begin to broadcast regular emails announcing your new blog articles.

BOOK LAUNCH MINUS 1 MONTH

So far, you've taken the time to create a solid foundation for your book launch. Now you're just a month out and you need to shift your focus to your main distribution channel: Amazon.

Do Amazon Keyword and Category Research

In order to stand out from the multiplicity of new books that are constantly being added to Amazon, you need to stack the deck in your favor.

You'll do so in the following two ways:

1. By researching the keywords that your target audience types into Amazon when they're looking for a book like yours, and
2. By placing your book in the right category/sub-category.

If they're properly researched and entered correctly into their database, your book will be easily found and you may even be able to land on one of the thousands of nonfiction bestseller lists that Amazon compiles hourly.

If you get this wrong (which is what most new self-published authors do), your book will end up buried deep in Amazon's catalog, making discovery very difficult, if not impossible.

These two tasks are critical for your book's sales and they'll be covered in detail next in Step 7.

Create Your Book Description

If your great book title and great cover will make your book stand out from the crowd of search results, your description will make sure people click on your book and want to learn more.

The key is for you to spend a lot of time on this important task and not rush through it. Find the top bestselling books in your category and study the marketing copy in their descriptions.

Learn how they engage their audiences, what hooks they use, what tools of persuasion they use and what buttons they push. Then create multiple versions of your book description.

Run the versions by your advance review team and survey them for their preferred choice, then go with that. This task will also be covered in detail in Step 7 below.

STEP 7

Master the Biggest Bookstore in the World

Amazon has completely reinvented the way books are distributed and sold by disrupting and reinventing the book industry. This has leveled the playing field for nonfiction self-publishers in ways unimaginable in the not-too-distant past.

As a result, the only thing stopping your book from reaching a global marketplace is no longer a multiplicity of gatekeepers, but your own passion and drive.

Now, I don't want to imply that this is a cake walk, because you'll still have to give it your best to compete in the marketplace (hence the need to hire a team of experts to help you get there). But this was no different before the advent of Amazon.

What's different now is that you can enjoy the same access that used to be restricted to traditional publishers. By hiring a few key professionals, you'll be able to develop the necessary competitive advantages to thrive in the nonfiction book market as a self-publisher.

Below are the breakthrough changes that Amazon has introduced in the book market for the benefit of self-published authors like you:

BENEFIT 1: WORLDWIDE REACH

The global ubiquity of the Amazon brand has truly leveled the playing field for nonfiction self-publishers.

In short, Amazon managed to change the shopping behavior of buyers from offline-bookstore discovery, where shelf space is highly coveted and tightly guarded, to online discovery, where shelf space is virtually unlimited.

With gatekeepers gone, publishers of any size – including single-book publishers like yourself – can share the same shelf space, and with some digital marketing savvy (which you can learn or hire) you can become just as discoverable.

What this bookselling revolution has achieved for nonfiction self-publishers is something that just twenty years ago was nearly impossible: reaching a global audience at minimal cost.

Up until the late nineties, if you wanted your book to cross borders you would have had to engage an international rights agent, and if you were lucky enough to land one you then had to deal with reams of complex legal contracts.

And even then, there was no guarantee that your book would appear on bookshelves in international markets.

Nowadays, more and more nonfiction self-publishers are fielding business enquiries for services from places as far away as South East Asia and South America as a result of their book appearing on Amazon.

BENEFIT 2: WORLDWIDE BOOK PRINTING

As if global reach wasn't enough, Amazon also implemented distributed on-demand printing technology to make it possible to print one book at a time cost-effectively and ship it locally soon after an order arrives.

This game-changing development allowed Amazon to free up large amounts of space from their warehouses by not having to inventory the majority of titles they carry, while eliminating costly shipping expenses.

With several plants serving North America, Europe and Australasia, your nonfiction book is now printed upon the arrival of a paid order and shipped to the end user at low domestic rates (or free depending on their level of service).

This means that you no longer have to invest in costly inventory before any books get sold, plus it allows you to make quick changes to your book's content at any time (e.g. fixing typos) without having to throw away misprinted books.

With this new distribution paradigm, you get to receive payment for every book sold on Amazon without ever having to write a check to cover printing costs.

Upon receipt of payment, Amazon will take 40% from the top as their commission (this amount is taken off your list price), they'll then deduct their printing cost and pay you the balance as a royalty.

BENEFIT 3: WORLD'S BIGGEST BOOK SEARCH ENGINE

But the story keeps getting better. On top of the above two amazing benefits, Amazon also happens to operate the largest dedicated book search engine in the world.

In fact, as of late 2018, Amazon surpassed Google in the number of product searches conducted globally every year (including books), and they haven't looked back since. This is another game changer in the industry.

Before Amazon, readers would have to visit a physical bookstore and browse the aisles in order to discover a new title, with premium shelf space being restricted to titles that had a history of moving product for the bookseller.

Now, all readers have to do is to enter a search into Amazon about a problem they want to solve, an area of interest, or simply a question like “*how do I lose 10 pounds in 10 days?*” and Amazon will oblige with the titles that most closely address the user’s search.

And unlike the past, you can’t pay your way into this *virtual shelf*.

All publishers large and small have to do exactly the same work: conduct keyword research on their target audience to find the keywords that match the most searches in their niche.

Even if you don’t really know how to do this (you probably won’t), you can always hire a book-marketing professional for a few hours to help you find the best set of keywords for your book.

But here’s the best part, the vast majority of self-publishers choose the keywords themselves without doing the proper research. So, just by doing this work right you’ll be creating a tremendous competitive advantage over your peers.

BENEFIT 4: LOW SELF-PUBLISHING COST

All of the above benefits can be achieved at a very low cost. As a matter of fact, the creation and set-up of a new self-publishing account is actually free of charge.

It’s just mind blowing to have free access to the hundreds of millions of dollars that Amazon has spent over the years developing the largest online bookstore and the largest dedicated book search engine in the world, plus a global network of on-demand printing facilities. This was unthinkable just a short 20 years ago.

Having said that, you have to consider that if you want your book to be successful in the marketplace, you’ll have to incur expenses above the self-publishing setup.

At the low end, you’ll have to purchase an ISBN for your title (\$125 for a single number or \$295 for a block of ten). In addition, you’ll have to hire a book-marketing professional to properly set up your book in your Amazon account.

But beyond that, you’ll have to hire one or more editors, a book designer and a cover designer. These costs are a must for nonfiction authors (think of it as an investment, because you’ll obtain a return on these expenses).

There’s no point in launching a new nonfiction title on Amazon if you can’t compete on quality with traditionally published titles, which are all designed and edited by professionals.

How much will all of this work cost you? Depending on the level of experience of the professionals you hire, between \$5,700 and \$11,500.

Now, this may sound on the surface like a lot of money, but consider that your business or your career will get to a new level by leveraging the “*expert*” status you’ll gain by publishing a top-notch nonfiction book.

For example, many nonfiction authors have turned their books into magnets to land lucrative contracts worth tens of thousands of dollars that would be very difficult to land without the cachet of being a published nonfiction author.

Many others have launched highly profitable public speaking careers because of their books, regularly attracting fees anywhere between \$5,000 and \$20,000 per talk (depending on the scale of the event and their public-speaking experience).

And most managed to increase their business revenue as their books become profitable prospect-conversion machines.

BENEFIT 5: LOWER BARRIERS TO ENTRY TO BESTSELLER LISTS

The final benefit is another game-changing feature offered by Amazon for the benefit of self-publishers: lower barriers to entry into bestseller lists.

Amazon's massive library of nonfiction titles is organized into a tree of categories, sub-categories, sub-sub-categories, etc. As of right now, there are over 3,000 different nonfiction categories available on Amazon.

Each of these "*tree branches*" has its own bestseller list. Now, top-level categories will always be highly competitive, requiring a large volume of sales in order to qualify for entry.

But lower-level branches require a much lower number of sales to be considered a bestseller. So, if you choose the right tree branch for your nonfiction book, you'll be able to be included in its bestseller list at a relatively low volume of sales.

Once you do, you'll get full bragging rights as an Amazon bestseller, which is marketing gold regardless of the category!

This new bestseller status will, among other things, attract media attention, command higher public speaking fees and increase demand for your business or professional services.

How do you find out what the best categories are among the over 3,000 tree branches, in order to maximize the chances of your book being included in a bestseller list?

This can be quite complex and may require that you hire the services of a book-marketing professional.

But the investment of a few hours of time from an expert will make a huge difference in the ultimate success of your nonfiction book.

Step 7.1: Create a Bestselling Title and Subtitle

Before we expand on the final leg to creating a nonfiction bestseller, we need to address the front lines in the battle for the attention of consumers: your book title.

We've all heard the metaphor "Don't judge a book by its cover." Ironically, this metaphor doesn't apply to books themselves!

Books are judged by their covers, and within the cover, it's the title that'll be mostly responsible for their market appeal.

Good book titles can mean the difference between limelight and obscurity; poor book titles can reflect negatively even on the best-written books.

When you're writing your book, it's better to use a working title for inspiration, leaving the creation of the final title for the very end of your book project.

The selection of the title you'll go to print with is by far the most critical marketing decision you'll make regarding your book and it requires a great deal of thought.

Choosing perfect book titles is part art and part science. We're talking, more specifically, about the art and science of persuasion.

Your title must persuade your target audience to not only pick up your book but also compel them to read it. Ideally, your book title will speak directly to their subconscious, without being filtered through their critical thinking mind.

In this section, we'll have a look behind the curtains of human persuasion and we'll use marketing and advertising research to arm you with the tools that you'll need to create a killer title for your nonfiction book.

Before you can persuade your audience, you have to know what it's like to be in their shoes.

You'll have to understand who they are – this applies whether you're a professional targeting new clients or a business owner targeting decision-makers in other businesses.

The more you know about the *needs, desires, fears/challenges, and goals* of your target audience, the more you'll be able to come up with a book title that speaks directly to them.

What Makes a Good Title? And for Contrast, What Makes a Bad One?

- A good book title is centered on your audience / a bad title is *centered on you and your product or service*
- A good book title is short, strong and to the point / a bad title is *meandering, weak, and confusing*
- A good book title solves a problem / a bad title *sells a solution*
- A good book title connects with emotions / a bad title *targets the intellect*
- A good book title is memorable / a bad title *is hard to remember*

It's well understood in sales and marketing circles that most purchasing decisions are at their core emotional decisions, and this is no different with books.

However, books have a built-in advantage over many products: their title can be engineered to directly target the emotional core of their audiences.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A TITLE FOR MY BOOK?

To answer this question, we need to take a page from the world of sales and marketing and, more specifically, we need to follow the lead from the masters of emotional persuasion: advertisers.

In order to persuade people to purchase a product or service, advertisers make use of copywriting techniques. To choose a title for your book, we're going to borrow from some of those techniques.

Here Are 3 Key Rules of Copywriting that Apply to Nonfiction Book Titles:

Rule #1:

Your book title must always be addressed to an audience of one. You never want to write a book for a group of people, you always want to write it for the single reader who is holding the book in their hands. For books to persuade someone into action they have to be *that* personal and, by extension, your book title has to follow the same rule.

Rule #2:

For your book (and title) to connect with your audience, you must have a thorough understanding of their desires as well as their biggest challenges. Human beings are internally wired to go toward pleasure (their desired result) and away from pain (their biggest challenge or fear).

Rule #3:

The job of your book title is then to show your audience with a couple of very short phrases (the title and the sub-title) how your book will help them achieve their desired result while avoiding their biggest challenge or fear.

HOW DO I MAKE MY BOOK TITLE INTERESTING?

Your job now is to make sure that your book title sparks interest in your audience by following the above rules.

Here are some techniques to generate book title ideas:

Using Numbers to Add Specificity to the Desired Result

- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
- *The 4-Hour Workweek*
- *The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing*
- *The 90 Second Fitness Solution.*

Using a “Key” Word that Sounds Counter Intuitive

- *“Stumbling” on Happiness*
- *The “Tipping” Point*
- *“Learned” Optimism*

- *The Motivation “Myth”*
- *The “Gifts” of Imperfection*

Single-Word Titles Can Be Effective (provided the sub-title expands on them)

- *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can’t Stop Talking*
- *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*
- *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*
- *Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive*
- *Outliers: The Story of Success*

Inventing a New Word or Expression (provided the sub-title explains it)

- *Buyology: Truths and Lies About Why We Buy*
- *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explains the Hidden side of Everything*
- *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*
- *The E-Myth: Why Most Small Businesses Don’t Work and What to Do About It*
- *Brotopia: Breaking Up the Boys’ Club of Silicon Valley.*

How Long Should Book Titles Be?

As a rule, you’ll want to make your title short and punchy and your sub-title long and explanatory.

Usually the title will be designed by your cover designer to stand out from the crowd in a physical bookstore or within a group of thumbnail images in an online bookstore, so they’ll typically choose a fairly large font-size.

The sub-title, on the other hand, needs to be longer to expand on the meaning that the short title is missing due to its real estate limitations. No one expects to be able to read the sub-title from a distance. The goal is for the title to spark enough interest to make readers curious about reading the sub-title in order to learn more.

Should I Use a Book Title Generator?

Personally, it’s my opinion that book title generators are counterproductive. The title of a book is something that requires a lot of thought and analysis, and this is something that shouldn’t be left to automation.

Instead of using a book title generator, study the titles of nonfiction bestsellers in your field to learn how they managed to apply the above copywriting rules and techniques to find success.

How Do I Find Out If a Title Is Trademarked?

A single book title cannot be trademarked. The only exception to this rule is when you are publishing a series of books that share the same brand (e.g. *The Chicken Soup for the Soul* series or the *Harry Potter* series).

While on the subject of trademarks, make sure you don't mention someone else's trademark in your book title unless you are authorized to use it. Most online bookstores including Amazon have strict guidelines against using unauthorized trademarks, which may result in your book being banned from the site.

FINALLY, GET PLENTY OF FEEDBACK

Don't just focus on a single title because it happens to sound great. Remember, it doesn't matter what *you* think, all that matters is what your audience thinks.

A clever play on words that makes perfect sense to you may be lost on your audience. The best approach is to come up with 3-5 title options and test them out in the world.

At first, you may ask business acquaintances, colleagues, and clients for initial feedback. But eventually you're going to have to find people that fit the description of your audience as closely as possible to get their first impressions.

These are the people your book has been written for, and they'll provide your most valuable feedback.

SPLIT TEST YOUR TITLE AND SUBTITLE

The first thing people will see when searching Amazon for a book in their area of interest is a list of titles and cover images. Therefore, your title and cover are your best weapons to captivate the reader.

So, it's imperative that you spend a significant amount of time, and perhaps even money, to make sure that you have the most compelling title that you can come up with.

Remember that what you think about your title is irrelevant. All that really matters is what your audience thinks, so the only feasible way to arrive at the ideal title is to test it with them.

I'll show you two options for split-testing your title – one is paid and the other one is free.

The paid option is something that's used quite commonly in the marketing and promotion industry for testing ad headlines. In fact, this is something that was used to great effect by nonfiction author Tim Ferris to choose the title of his mega bestseller "The 4-Hour Workweek."

The first thing you need to do is to create a Google Ads account and then create a campaign with a single adgroup. In this adgroup you're going to add a number of keywords that reflect the audience's problem your book is solving.

For example, if you're a nutritionist working in the weight-loss industry, and your solution is losing weight using a vegan diet, then you could choose keywords like: "vegan weight loss," "plant-based weight loss," "vegan recipes for weight loss," etc.

Next, you'll create two ads in this adgroup to sell your book. Both ads will be identical except for your book title. Finally, you'll link both ads to a very basic dead-end webpage you'll add to your website saying something like "Book coming shortly. Check again soon."

Then, you run these two ads for two weeks. At the end of the test period, one of the two ads will be declared the winner by Google based on their click-through rate. Next, you'll pause the losing ad and create a replacement ad using book title number 3.

You now repeat the test for another two weeks in order to find a new winner. Then you'll pause the loser and create a new ad in its place using book title number 4. Using this technique, you'll be able to come up with the absolute winner as declared by a group of perfect strangers in your target audience.

To prevent runaway costs, set your Google Ads daily budget to \$5 – your ads will stop when this limit is reached. So, be prepared to spend \$35/week. Testing three titles will cost you \$210 and 4 titles \$280, but it'll be money well spent!

The free option involves enlisting the help of 10 -15 people who are part of your target audience and who are connected to you through a friend or acquaintance but who don't necessarily know you personally.

Basically, you're replicating the paid test procedure we did above by showing each one of these individuals two different titles and letting them choose the one that resonates the most, the one that doesn't.

You then repeat this test until you run out of titles to show, which will give you the winner. You do this 10-15 times and pick the one that's selected the most. If you get a tie, then just flip a coin and chose one of them.

Step 7.2: Use Amazon Reviews to Turn Your Book into a Bestseller

Now that you have a winning book title, it's time to master the most powerful feature on Amazon to land you on one of their bestseller lists. In fact, learning how to get reviews on Amazon will make the difference between healthy sales for your nonfiction book and being relegated to Amazon obscurity, making it difficult to be discovered by potential buyers.

Amazon has built the largest online bookstore in the world, which is great given their massive customer base (over 300 million at last count). But this scale also means that you'll be facing stiff competition for attention, so you'll need to understand how Amazon's underlying technology works in order to stand out from the crowd.

The way Amazon operates is similar to Google. Both platforms are search engines. The only difference is that Google displays information to be consumed and Amazon displays products to be purchased.

As such, if an Amazon search result (your book title) doesn't appear on the first page, there's a high probability that it won't be found by the vast majority of people doing searches.

Now, these search engines use certain signals to rank results. For Google, the strongest signal they use is the number of quality sites linking to a website. For Amazon, their strongest signal is the number of quality reviews for a product.

In both cases, the company is aiming for the same thing: a strong customer experience. If you do a Google search and the results are useless, then you'll stop using Google and switch to a competitor.

Similarly, if you do a search on Amazon and buy a product only to find out on delivery that it's substandard and that all the reviews were misleading, you're going to ask for your money back and then take your shopping elsewhere.

HOW REVIEWS IMPACT YOUR CONVERSION RATE

For this reason, Amazon makes every effort to ensure that product reviews are legitimate and truthful. In this section, I'll teach you how to attract legitimate reviews for your nonfiction book.

Once you achieve a critical mass of quality reviews shortly after launch, your book will begin to appear higher and higher in the search results and will begin to be found by more and more buyers looking for books in your subject area.

Statistical analysis performed on Amazon sales data shows that the higher the number of positive product reviews, the higher the sales conversion becomes – more people click on the “*buy button*” and complete the purchase.

Unfortunately, the minute you load your book onto Amazon's database, you'll be at a large disadvantage because you'll have zero reviews to your name. So you'll need to mitigate this situation, and the most effective *legitimate* way to do so (without getting you banned) is to generate a large number of reviews from an arm's length group of advance readers.

This strategy will allow you to hit the ground running and show the Amazon product-ranking algorithm that your book has what it takes to compete in its category.

As the algorithm promotes your book to higher spots, your sales and your reviews will begin to originate from the Amazon customer base at large, which will feed the algorithm with more positive ranking data, creating a virtuous cycle.

Let's now look at the steps you need to follow in order to create this positive loop for your book.

HOW TO GET GREAT AMAZON BOOK REVIEWS

The following six steps will show you how to generate a groundswell of positive reviews that comply with Amazon's strict product review rules, so that you can rest assured that your book reviews won't be deleted.

The first step is to become familiar with their rules to make sure that you're always operating in compliance.

1) Master the 9 Amazon Review Rules

Given the abuse over the years to Amazon's review system, through the use of overseas "review" farms, freelance paid reviewers on websites like Fiverr, fake reviews, automated reviews generated by bots, and so on, Amazon has had no choice but to crack down hard on illegal operators.

Since Amazon's product ranking process is automated (given the sheer volume of products in their database), they've instituted a set of rules that have been codified into their algorithm.

This means that their software will make decisions on the fly as to which reviews will be allowed to stay posted and which ones will be automatically deleted on entry or shortly thereafter.

And it's very difficult to have Amazon reverse a deletion decision because their rules are part of their terms and conditions, and they reserve the right to enforce them at their sole discretion in order to maintain a high level of customer experience.

So, learn these rules in-depth before you implement your book review strategy to make sure that it's always in full compliance.

Here are the 9 product-review rules:

Rule 1: The Reviewer Must Be an Existing Amazon Customer

In order to leave a review, a user has to be a paying customer of Amazon. More specifically, they have to fulfill the following two requirements:

- 1) Have purchased \$50 or more on any kind of merchandise over the past 12 months.
- 2) Have a valid credit card or debit card on file (a valid card number with a past expiration date doesn't count).

Rule 2: There Can Be No Mention of the Author in the Review

Nowhere in the review can the reviewer acknowledge that they know the author. Even a tangential mention of the author is sufficient to disqualify the review. There can't be any perception of bias caused by a connection with the author.

Rule 3: Users Personally Associated with the Author are Automatically Disqualified

Family, friends, and direct business associates of the author are not allowed to leave reviews. Amazon reserves the right to establish how people are related with one another using any internal data as they see fit.

Rule 4: Limit of One Review Per Household

Only 1 review is allowed per mailing address on file. If other people who live at the same address (e.g. spouses, roommates, relatives, other relationships) leave a review, it'll be automatically deleted by Amazon's algorithm.

Rule 5: Limit of One Review Per Payment Card

Only one review can be left for each unique credit or debit card number on file. If two or more people who share an Amazon account leave reviews (i.e. both are using the same card for payments), the algorithm will delete all reviews except for the first one.

Rule 6: No Dishonest Reviews

Reviews are checked for tone. If the system deems that a review is dishonest (e.g. over-the-top positives with an excessive number of flattering adjectives) it'll be deleted.

Reviewers must make every effort to be authentic in their reviews. Any perception of dishonesty can be a disqualifying factor.

Amazon doesn't make it clear how they perform this check (using some kind of AI perhaps?) but they seem to have a good handle on dishonest reviews.

Rule 7: Using an Unrealistic Timeframe

If a reviewer purchases your book and then leaves a review right away, without allowing for sufficient time to elapse (i.e. "*reading*" the book in 5 minutes) the system will automatically delete it.

Rule 8: Arm's Length Relationship with Author

Amazon doesn't allow vendors to offer products for free in exchange for a review, with a single exception: book publishers (including self-publishers).

Since handing out advance copies of a book in exchange for a review is a long-standing tradition of publishers, Amazon has decided to extend this tradition to their platform.

The only rule is that the reviewer and the author must remain at arm's length from each other.

Rule 9: (this is an unofficial rule)

Ensure that your reviews are evenly spaced out over the initial 30 days. What you don't want is for 15 or 20 reviews to be left one day and nothing for the next 2 or 3 days.

Out-of-the-ordinary patterns like this will likely trigger alarm bells in Amazon's algorithm.

2) Plan Your Book-Review Critical Path

The next step is to plan your timeline in advance because once you upload your book's information onto Amazon the clock will start ticking right away.

Amazon's product ranking algorithm is designed to gather training data on a new product for a period of 30 days, after which it moves on, leaving your product to fend for itself.

This initial timeline is absolutely critical for your success. Before you upload your book to Amazon, you have to make sure that you have all your ducks in a row.

In essence, what you're going to be doing is following a variation of the strategy traditional publishers use to launch new books – you're going to create an official advance book review team.

Now, traditional publishers have pre-existing relationships with influential book reviewers, such as American Book Review, Publishers Weekly, Foreword, and many others, where they send pre-publication copies of their books in order to garner advance praise.

Armed with these powerful early reviews, they use their connections with mainstream media to get their authors booked for interviews in front of large audiences.

Without these advance reviews, their authors wouldn't be able to get much interest from the media (unless they're already well-known). As a nonfiction self-published author, your path may be different but the strategy will be the same.

Instead of getting 3-5 reviews from highly influential reviewers, you'll be getting Amazon reviews from dozens of people that you assemble as part of your advance review team.

Since it takes time to coordinate that many people, you need to begin the process of cultivating those relationships at least three months before you upload your book to Amazon. Then, you have to send them advance copies of your book and give them 6-8 weeks to read it.

Finally, you'll have to give them 1-2 weeks to create a review draft so that it'll be ready to enter into Amazon when given your signal. Two weeks before your upload day comes, you'll need to check that their reviews are indeed ready.

Now an important caveat: your role in communicating with your team members is to act as a project manager. Amazon doesn't approve of you talking to your reviewers about your book or the review itself.

If a book review team member compliments you about your book, just say thank you and tell them that you are not allowed to talk about it with them before they officially post their review on Amazon to avoid the perception of influence.

3) Assemble Your Advance Book Review Team

It's now time to assemble your team. This needs to be a large group of people preferably located in different parts of the country.

Since Amazon rules prevent your family, friends, and direct business associates to write reviews, you'll need to enlist their help to ask their own friends, families, acquaintances, and associates to join you in your cause.

Since a lot of those people won't know you personally, you'll be in compliance with Amazon's "*arm's length*" rule.

Your goal is to have as many committed reviewers as possible, taking into consideration that not everyone will provide you with a review. For some people, perhaps your book won't resonate as much and some may just be too busy to comply with your request in a timely manner.

Have the expectation that in a worst-case scenario only 50% of the people you requested reviews from will provide you with one. In a best-case scenario you can expect two-thirds of the requests to come through.

To minimize your attrition rate, take your time early on to identify people in your network that match your target audience, since they'll be the most likely to be committed to reading your book and leaving you a positive review.

4) Hand Out Advance Copies of Your Book

Now, it's time to distribute advance copies of your book. In my experience, you'll get much better results with a physical book, in spite of the cost, than distributing a pdf file. A physical book conveys more perceived authority and credibility.

Also, by emailing a pdf file you run the risk of it being pirated if it ends up in the wrong hands. Finally, a physical book becomes a tangible gift for your reviewer and with it they'll be more motivated to reciprocate with a strong review.

This is why it's key that you ensure that your reviewers are members of your target audience so they can actually benefit from reading your book, leading to a better-quality review.

To create your printed books, get two or three quotes from local printers for up to 100 copies (you need to print twice as many books as the number of reviews that you expect) and then have your book designer upload the print-ready files to the selected printer.

Getting your books printed through Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (which you'll be using to upload your book to Amazon) is not a good idea, even if it's more cost-effective than your local printer.

The reason is that the moment you upload your book files to the platform in order to print them, the proverbial algorithm clock will begin ticking.

From the time you upload your book into your KDP account, it'll take 3-5 days for your book to appear on the Amazon website with a status of "*In Stock*" and then your 30-day countdown will begin.

It's much safer to run the entire advance review process off the grid.

Finally, create a spreadsheet so that you can manage each reviewer. You'll need to:

- Enter their contact information and mailing address where you'll be sending the review copy to.
- Keep track of when they received the book, either in person, via a friend, or in the mail (use the mail tracking code to confirm receipt of the package).
- Keep track of any follow-ups you do to find out how things are going (polite code for "*Have you started reading my book yet?*").
- Finally, keep track of the dates when your review drafts get completed.

Set the expectation with your advance review team that you'll be following up with them once a week for the month or two, so that you can keep your review activity database up to date (the squeaky wheel always gets the grease!).

When the last week before your planned Amazon upload comes around, make a final round of calls to make sure everyone who's on board is ready with their reviews and awaiting further instructions.

5) Drip the Amazon Reviews Over 30 Days

When everything is ready to roll, let your team know that you'll need to space out their reviews and that you'll be sending them the *"add your review now"* signal over the following four weeks.

The first batch of reviews needs to come on the first day or two of release, which as stated above will be 3-5 days from your upload (i.e. book status changes to *"In Stock"*).

When you confirm that your book becomes orderable, add a new column in your spreadsheet called *"Review Date"* and assign dates for each member of your advance review team spread out evenly over the next 30 days.

To make sure no alarm bells are triggered by Amazon's ranking algorithm, it's better if reviews originate from different parts of the country, preferably by people who don't know each other.

Now, the upload date is here!

After you upload all your print-ready book files into Amazon and enter all the required setup information, it's time to contact your day-1 reviewers. Let them know that you'll be contacting them over the next 3-5 days with the go-ahead signal.

Moving forward, give each group a 2-3 day heads up and then contact them on their review-posting day. This may sound like a lot of work, but if you have, say, 30 committed reviewers on your team, then we are talking about reaching 3 people a day for the next 30 days.

Step 7.3: Set up Your Nonfiction Book Title on Amazon

It's now time to walk through the mechanics of adding your title to the Amazon product database. As mentioned earlier, Amazon is not only the largest online bookstore in the world, but also the largest dedicated book search engine in the world.

This search engine is frequented by over 330 million Amazon customers, plus millions more that don't have accounts on Amazon, to discover new titles every day.

In order for your book to be discovered through user searches, you'll need to set up special *"keywords"* used by the Amazon search algorithm to match your book to the most common user searches in your niche.

You'll also need to create a book description that's compelling for readers browsing search results.

Next, you'll have to select the right category/sub-category combinations in which to list your book among the more than 3,000 available ones in the nonfiction genre.

Now, all this information is critical for your book's success on the platform, and it's not something that you should try to tackle on your own. To maximize your chances for a successful outcome, you'll need to enlist outside help.

This is where an experienced book-marketing professional comes into the picture.

These experts will help you uncover the most common user searches in your book's niche and then they'll help you find the best keywords to match.

Next, they'll help you identify the best category/sub-category combinations to list your book under to increase your chances of landing on one of the over 3,000 Amazon nonfiction bestseller lists.

Finally, they'll help you write compelling marketing copy for your book description on your Amazon book detail page.

This section will teach you how to self-publish your nonfiction book on Amazon using their author platform: Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP).

It'll show you below how to create a new KDP self-publishing account and how to set up your nonfiction book so that you can receive royalties on your sales.

WHY KINDLE DIRECT PUBLISHING?

KDP allows you to not only list your nonfiction self-published book on the largest online bookstore in the world but also have your book printed on demand and shipped domestically to customers from a number of printing facilities located around the world:

North America:

- U.S. (books purchased through Amazon.com)
- Canada (books purchased through Amazon.ca)

Europe:

- U.K. (books purchased through Amazon.co.uk)
- Germany (books purchased through Amazon.de)
- France (books purchased through Amazon.fr)
- Spain (books purchased through Amazon.es)
- Italy (books purchased through Amazon.it)

Asia/Australasia:

- Japan (books purchased through Amazon.jp)
- Australia & New Zealand (books purchased through Amazon.com.au).

8 STEPS TO PUBLISHING ON KDP

So, how do you get started? Simple. Just follow the 8 steps below and you'll have your nonfiction book published on Amazon in no time. Having said that, some of the steps below will require that you make an investment and enlist outside professional help.

This is necessary to make your book stand out from the crowd in the Amazon ranking algorithm so that you can increase your chances of landing on one of their coveted Amazon bestseller lists.

Here we go:

Step 1: Create Your KDP account

If you already have an account with Amazon, then sign in to Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) with your existing Amazon username and password (visit <https://kdp.amazon.com>).

If you don't have an Amazon account, then enter your name, your email address, and create a password.

After you log in, click on your Account tab and complete the "Author/Publisher Information" section including your country of residence, your full name and your postal address making sure you enter your real name and not a pen name because Amazon will use this information to send you royalty payments.

You'll be able to use a pen name later on when you enter your book title information.

Next, complete the "Getting Paid" section, to receive royalty payments. Available options include direct deposit, wire transfer, and check. If you live in the U.S.A. then direct deposit is the most efficient and least costly way to receive payments. If you live in a country where electronic payments are not available, you'll receive checks in the mail instead.

Amazon will pay you 60 days after the end of each month in your local currency.

Finally, under "Tax Information," answer the step-by-step online interview regarding your tax status under U.S. law so that Amazon can establish your tax identity.

This is required under U.S. law in order to receive payments from Amazon, even if you don't live in the U.S.

Step 2: Get Your ISBN

Before uploading your title, you'll need to get an ISBN for your book. This is a unique book identification number that associates your book with its publisher (you or your company).

In order to purchase ISBNs in the U.S. visit <https://www.isbn.org> (for other countries, do an online search to locate the local agency that issues them).

In the U.S. the cost for a single ISBN is \$125 and the cost for a block of 10 numbers is \$295. In some countries there's no cost for this service.

Step 3: Set Up Your Title

To set up your book title click on “*Bookshelf*” and click on “+*Paperback*.” Then, under “*Paperback Details*” enter the following information:

- **Book Title:** Enter your book’s title and sub-title.
- **Series** (Optional): Unless your book is part of a series, skip this step.
- **Edition Number** (Optional): If this is your first edition then enter 1 or skip this step. If this is a revised edition of a previously published book of the same title, then enter 2 for the second edition, 3 for the third and so on.
- **Author:** Enter your name *exactly* as you’ve typed it on your book cover. You can also use a pen name here; just make sure it matches your book cover.
- **Contributors:** If you wish to credit other people who helped you create your book, name them in this section (e.g. your photographer, your illustrator, your editor, the person who wrote your foreword, etc.).
- **Description:** *See Step 4.*
- **Publishing Rights:** Unless yours is a public domain work, select “I own the copyright and I hold necessary publishing rights.”
- **Keywords:** *See Step 5.*
- **Categories:** *See Step 6.*
- **Large Print** (*found under Categories*): Select this option if your book edition is written for the visually impaired. For large print editions you have to use a font-size of 16 or higher and you must use a separate ISBN.
- **Adult Content:** Select yes only if your book contains language or graphic images that are considered inappropriate for children under the age of 18.

Step 4: Enter Your Description

This is the marketing message about your title that will appear on your Amazon book detail page, giving readers an overview of your book as well as including sales copy to persuade them to purchase it.

It’s imperative that your book description be created with the help of a book marketing professional because it’s one of Amazon’s top drivers of book sales, along with your title and your cover design.

Your book description is the first significant opportunity you have to sell your book on Amazon.

When readers do a search and your book comes up in the results, aside from your book title and cover, readers will make their purchase determination based on the marketing copy of your description.

A weakly-worded description will invite a hard pass on your book as readers quickly move on to the next one down the list of results, and you’ll only get a few seconds to command their attention.

Now, given that Amazon has over 330 million customers who regularly use their internal search engine for products, a strong description will make the difference between healthy and poor sales.

For this reason, it's imperative that you hire the services of a book-marketing professional to help you craft this critical piece of advertising copywriting.

If you want to win at this game, then your Amazon book description must beat the text of your competitors and drive the attention of users to your title.

Don't attempt to do this creative work on your own, unless you make a living as a marketing expert. Keep in mind that the book-marketing specialist that you hire will be helping you in a number of areas that are critical for book sales.

For example, they'll also help you identify the best keywords for your book as well as the best categories for your book (see below).

Step 5: Choose Your Keywords

These keywords are then used by Amazon's algorithm to present your nonfiction book in search results when users are looking for topics that relate to the subject matter of your book.

Now, a well-chosen keyword set will ensure that your book consistently appears on the first page of search results, and a poorly chosen keyword set will ensure that it never does.

So, it's of critical importance that you conduct thorough keyword research in order to identify the keywords that will best match the majority of user searches in your book's niche.

The sales of your book or lack thereof will depend on this work, so this is something that you shouldn't attempt to do on your own unless you happen to make a living as a digital marketing expert.

My recommendation is to enlist the help of a book marketing professional to create the 7 keywords that KDP allows you to enter into the setup of your book.

This investment will be repaid many times in book sales over time as people find it easier to discover your title while searching on Amazon.

When you're ready, enter your 7 keywords in the "Keyword" section – *note: ignore the fact that KDP lists this section as optional; this is one of the most important sections in the entire KDP setup.*

Step 6: Choose Your Categories

The final marketing element that you need to master in the KDP setup to get a significant leg up on competitors, is the selection of book categories.

Amazon lists over 3,000 nonfiction categories and sub-categories. This means that they keep tabs on over 3,000 nonfiction bestseller lists. Your job is to get on one or many of these.

How do you do that? By carefully planning how you select your categories during your book's KDP setup. But wait a minute, you may think: I thought you make it onto a bestseller list only when you sell lots and lots of books ...

Well, not necessarily. Each category and subcategory has different criteria for the number of sales that's required to make it onto its bestseller list.

If your book is in a highly competitive category surrounded by books that move a lot of copies, then it'll take a much higher number of sales to gain access to that list.

But if you place your book in a sub-category or sometimes a sub-sub-category and even a sub-sub-sub-category that is populated by books that don't move that much volume, then there's a good chance that you can make it into the list.

How? By moving more copies than your competitors on that list. Now, keep in mind that your book has to be in a category that makes sense for your subject matter. However, you aren't required to list your book in the highly-competitive parent category.

Child categories offer much better chances of ranking inside a bestseller list if a) you know what to look for and b) you know how to calculate the number of books competitors are selling on that list.

Now this process is a bit complex and, once again, you'll need to enlist the help of an experienced book-marketing professional to assist you in identifying the best categories for your book.

Step 7: Enter Your Book Content

This is the section where you'll enter your *ISBN*, your *Print Options* and upload your book interior and cover files, so you need to make sure that your book files are produced with the exact specifications required by Amazon's on-demand digital printing presses.

The advanced nature of this equipment demands a degree of precision that can only be produced by professionals using specialized book layout and cover design software, so don't attempt to generate these files by yourself.

Book Layout File

This is the file that holds the contents of your book, excluding your cover – it's often called the "typeset." This file must be produced using professional-grade book publishing software designed to match the specifications of digital printing presses.

For your book designer to be able to generate the correct format for Amazon's equipment, you'll need to give them access to your self-publishing account so that they have access to Amazon's specifications.

They include:

- Choosing the correct trim size for your paperback book: Amazon only supports select trim sizes. Custom sizes are not supported.
- Color paper: Amazon can print black and white books on white or cream-colored paper. Books with color images can only be printed on white paper.
- Maximum and minimum page counts: Each trim size and paper type combination has a different maximum page-count allowed. The minimum page count is 24 pages.
- Specifying whether images in your book bleed to the edges: If this is the case pages must be extended a specific amount beyond the trim size to allow for cropping equipment to work correctly.
- All layout layers should be flattened: Layering is a feature of professional book-layout software. Un-flattened or transparent layers will be rejected by Amazon's pre-flight check.
- All fonts and images must be embedded in the native file: Amazon does not support the submission of fonts and images in separate files.
- All images should have a resolution of at least 300dpi: A lower resolution will result in printed images that are pixelated, which looks amateurish.
- Margins must be defined based on the total page count: Amazon requires different minimum margin sizes based on your book's total page count. Thicker books require higher margins on the edge where the book is bound.
- Files should not include crop marks, trim marks, bookmarks, comments, invisible objects, annotations, placeholder text, or metadata: These are visual aids used in professional layout software to assist the designer during the creative process. They must be removed prior to submission.
- PDF files should be optimized. This is to eliminate unnecessary data from being transmitted, thus reducing the file size. This allows for better performance when transferring, uploading, viewing, and printing the submitted book layout file.
- Only single page spreads are allowed. No multiple page spreads are allowed (e.g. 2-up files or higher).

Book Cover File

The specifications for your book cover file are very involved and also require the use of publication-grade illustration software.

Give your cover designer access to your account so that they can get the correct information before uploading your cover file. These specifications include the following requirements:

- Your cover size must incorporate the correct spine size: This information varies according to the type of paper used in your book (two specifications for black and white printing and one for color printing)
- Cover formatting: Amazon requires one continuous image centered left to right on the spine.

- All graphic and text layers must be flattened in the book-cover file (except for the barcode)
- A cover bleed must be set on all sides using Amazon specifications.
- All fonts must be embedded in the book-cover file.
- Spine text: For spine text to be printed, your book must have more than 100 pages. The spine text must keep a minimum distance from the edges.
- Barcode: It must follow detailed Amazon specifications regarding size, image resolution, and distance from your back cover's edges. The barcode must not be flattened into the main cover as a single image.

Stage 8: Set Your Book Pricing

Once *Step 7* is completed, you'll be able to open the "*Paperback Rights & Pricing*" tab. First, you'll select the territories where you want your book to become available for purchase.

There are two options: you can either select *All Territories (Worldwide Rights)* or you can select *Individual Territories* and then list the countries where you want your book to be sold.

Next you'll be setting up your book pricing. Here you have two options as well.

Option 1 allows you to select your primary or default market (say the U.S.) and then set your list price in the currency of that market.

List prices in the currencies of any other territories where your book is sold will be automatically calculated by KDP based on internal currency exchange rates.

Option 2 gives you more flexibility by allowing you to enter specific list prices for each marketplace and available currency.

Once you've completed Steps 1-8, your nonfiction book is ready for publishing on Amazon!

Conclusion

Congratulations, You made it to the very end!

By now, you've probably concluded that writing bestselling nonfiction is not a walk in the park – but it's not rocket science either.

My attempt with this definitive guide was to show you the path to follow, explaining how all of the moving parts work so that you'd be able to understand what it is that you need to do, every step of the way.

Now you have the blueprint to nonfiction bestseller success laid out in a clear sequence of tasks, but you're still going to have to put in the hard work, day in and day out, to succeed.

The secret to success is to divide and conquer. In other words, just focus on a single task at a time without feeling overwhelmed by all the others. This process is additive and over time the results will naturally compound.

All it takes is sustained effort. As motivation, just think about the multiple benefits of publishing a nonfiction book for your business or your career:

- 97% of people who begin writing a book never get around to publishing it, and that includes your competitors. Being part of the remaining 3% puts you in an exclusive club that you can leverage in many ways. As an example, whenever you bid against a competitor for a lucrative contract, you'll be able to use your book as a calling card. More often than not, the cachet of your book will be enough to push your bid over the fence and make you land the contract.
- Media outlets love to interview experts. Radio, television, and online & offline print media use business models that constantly demand new and fresh content – and if you play your cards right, you can easily become a media “go-to” expert in your field.
- A by-product of this exposure, you'll notice how you no longer have to chase after clients – instead they'll start chasing you! It's quite common for published nonfiction authors to get to a point where they have to start turning people away because there are simply not enough hours in the day to meet the demand. This is a great problem to have.
- Another welcomed by-product is that you'll be able to increase your professional fees significantly. This is a matter of supply and demand: demand for your professional services due to added exposure will increase demand on your limited time, which will automatically drive up your rates. The funny thing is, people will be glad to pay you more

because your time will become a scarce commodity and our brains are wired to want that which is scarce much more than that which is widely available (your competitor's services!)

- Finally, as word of your expertise spreads, other businesses that don't offer what you have will begin to refer business your way because they'll implicitly trust you. They'll rather send their business to an expert who will make them look good with their professionalism and excellence, than send it to someone else who isn't as well known.

This guide lays out the exact steps followed over the years by countless bestselling nonfiction authors to achieve success in their fields, and here's the best part – the vast majority of these authors were unknown prior to publishing their books.

So, you're in good company.

Now is time to bring this blueprint to life and create a top-notch nonfiction book that will cement your professional legacy and take your business and your career to a whole new level of success – the level that only a nonfiction bestseller can help you achieve!

I wish you all the best on this exciting journey,

Ben

Bennett R. Coles is an award-winning author of six books published through Harper Collins (New York) and Titan Publishing Group (London). He is also the publisher at Promontory Press, editor for multiple bestselling authors (including a NY Times bestseller), ghostwriter for CEOs and politicians and the founder of Cascadia Author Services, a boutique full-service firm that specializes in premium author services specifically designed for busy professionals. Our end-to-end services include writer coaching, ghostwriting, editing, proofing, cover design, book layout, eBook production, marketing, printing and distribution.



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