

# Is there a Book in Your Future?

If this title caught your eye, you have likely thought about writing a book. People get published for many reasons. Some of those reasons might be to leave something behind, give something back to their profession, and communicate a unique view or new information. Many people want some credibility in their field, and authoring a book is one way to get that. I think based on our unique experiences we all likely have a book in us. Whatever your reason, hopefully you will find some ideas here to help make this happen.

I published my first book in 2006. What a process this is. There are many lessons to be learned. For the purposes of speaking on the topic at a national conference, I interviewed 3 different acquisitions editors from small and large publishers. I have compiled their comments here, for the purpose of learning the lessons from the experts, rather than learning it the hard way.

Let's say you have identified your topic. You have identified what the book does, how, why, and for whom. You have written a sample chapter (many people don't know you do not have to have a completed manuscript to submit it to a publisher). So now, how do you choose a publisher to submit it to?

Do your homework. Search for books in the same industry and find out who published them. Find a publisher that publishes in the exact area of your interest and expertise. Determine how your topic either complements or is different from their current offerings. If your book is exactly like one currently sold by your prospective publisher there's not much chance the editor will be interested.

I asked the editors their advice on how to get the attention of a publishing house. These were their thoughts:

- Have a leading edge or need-to-know topic
- Include a catchy title that reveals the author knows the market
- Create a well written proposal that shows the potential author can write and express ideas clearly
- Make the proposal flawless – no typos
- Provide direct evidence that the author will aggressively market the book (an established client base, history of published articles on related topics, or is a popular and accomplished presenter)
- Answer the big question: who is the audience and why would they read this book?
- Have a proven track record of success and demonstratable expertise
- Give regular speaking engagements, have a reputation for great ideas and great presentations
- Have publishing credentials (articles or an author or contributor to books)

Another question was advice for author wannabes. What can we do to prepare now to make ourselves more attractive to publishers? The main response here was, increasing author platform. Platform refers to being renowned or recognized in the field. Speaking on the topic or writing articles on the topic all help to gain credibility. Having a following will increase your attractiveness to a publisher. “Why will potential buyers buy a book you have written” is the question the publisher will ask themselves when reviewing your proposal. Having a close association with professional societies in your field will help. You want people outside your company to know how you work, to see your potential and be able to vouch for you. As the editor of this publication, I must shamefully promote the fact that we are always looking for well-written articles on best practices or lessons learned in the learning and development field.

So, what if you have great ideas and original content, but no particular skill at writing? This is what ghost writers do! They will take your content and ideas and write it the way you want it written. They know how to make it more readable. Be willing to invest in a writer to supplement your skills or to help manage the time factor. Maybe it is your turn to be the SME!

Don't be afraid to think outside the box when it comes to writing a book. The book I referred to writing, *Sales Training Solutions*, was 12 chapters written by 11 different authors. The quality of the content was so much improved with each author writing about their specialty. Publishers loved it. I submitted it to 3 publishers and two of them made an offer to publish. They liked it for two reasons. One, there are 11 authors in the training field, which will increase the marketing reach of the book. Second, the credibility of the book is terrific because the authors have backgrounds with companies like RR Donnelley, Motorola, Kraft, Time Warner, United Airlines and Kodak. People want to know what is working in those companies. So, don't limit yourself to the one book one author concept.

Another outside the box approach is to write a check. What does that mean, write a check? You write a chapter (or are interviewed as a subject matter expert) by a company and they publish the book along with other people in the field. The publisher does the work of finding the other authors, managing the deadlines, editing the content, etc. One company that does this is Insight Publishing ([www.insightpublishing.com](http://www.insightpublishing.com)). They will likely have an author that is well known in the field as a part of the book. You buy a minimum quantity of books (likely 1,000). You give those to clients; sell them in the back of the room or on your website. It is a relatively quick way to have a book publishing credential, if that is your goal.

Now I will leave you with a few last tips to help you on your journey to getting published, based on my experience. I'll call them Renie's Top 5 Tips.

- Find an angle (fill a void, different twist to a topic, theme)

- Make yourself attractive to publishers (expertise/credentials, speaking, publishing free articles)
- Have a marketing communications person review your proposal before sending to publisher, if proposals are not your strength.
- Find time/structure for writing (airports, Sunday evenings at Barnes and Noble, lunch hours, etc.)
- Get a coach for support and accountability

A final note here is, use resources. We are in an industry where we create and distribute great resources to help folks be more effective and efficient. There are many books and guides and classes to help improve writing skills and to give advice on publishing a book. Robert Mager wrote, ***The How to Write a Book Book***. This book helps to identify and overcome many of the excuses we use for why we haven't written a book. The book is a bit dated, he is writing on a typewriter, for instance. But the points are salient. There are many other resources as well that can be helpful to you. Find writing groups in your area where writers get together and support and read each others work on a regular basis (my public library has one). Accountability is one of the greatest challenges to reaching a completed proposal or manuscript. Having milestones and deadlines helps.

So, you have just read an entire article on getting published. I guess the question at this point is, is a book within you? What is your excuse?

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