



## Association for Creative Business Writing

### **Expert to Author**

#### *Nine steps for turning your know-how into a bestseller.*

Do you have information that can help others prosper? Do you want to share it with a larger audience? Time to write your book? You know, the one that's been noodling around in your head for months or years.

Get started on your book now and earn the respect prestige you deserve. Here's how:

#### **1. Just start.**

Sound obvious? It's not. It's the hardest step of all. First, niggling fears of not being good enough spell trouble for even the most successful people. (See my e-book, *Overcome Your Fear of Writing*.) And time. A book takes a lot of time, and where will you find it in an already busy schedule? Even with a ghostwriter or editor, you've got to do more than dump information. You need to share your unique perspective.

For others, the mystifying process of how to get published stops them cold. Add in the modern dilemma of whether to self-publish or go the traditional route, and the hurdles get higher. (More on that in a moment.)

But don't listen. All writers, even writers you've put on a pedestal, experience fears and procrastination. Join the club—you're in good company!

#### **2. Take it one step at a time.**

Don't overwhelm yourself. Use some psychology and eat that elephant one bite at a time. One friend who's published more than 100 books loves the 100 x 100 approach: 100 words in 100 days. She finds she writes more than 100 words—but the psychology of just having to write 100 words gets her going every day.

#### **3. Get clear on the takeaway value of your message.**

What will the readers get out of it? A book isn't just about sharing your expertise but how that information will help your readers. Once you understand your mission, you'll have more motivation to keep writing.

#### **4. Who cares?**

Figure out who will appreciate your message the most and write to them. Determine your audience and write about what's on their minds. Not what *you* want to tell them or what they *need* to hear—but rather what they *want* to know. Any extra fans you pick up along the way are bonuses.

## **5. Check out your competition.**

Not only will you need this information for the book proposal (for traditional agents and publishers), this research helps you determine the gap you can fill. You need to know what's out there, what's good, and what can be improved. For example, when I was researching my books, I often found that the competition was too technical, too long-winded, too corny, or too serious. At the same time, keep an open mind and respect what's good about the competition. Both the good and bad about their books will help you determine your niche and how to fill it.

If you find a book you really admire, deconstruct it. I write about this in my book *Words at Work*. It's not copying or even remotely related to plagiarism. That book is speaking to you on a deeper level, and you need to know why. Examine how it starts, how it's organized, what it covers—and how that information is treated. Then start writing yours. Again, this is not copying! You couldn't copy that book if you wanted to.

## **6. Keep a pad of paper handy.**

Jot down every idea—"good" or "bad"—for a week (or month) or two. Take advantage of the out-of-the-blue ideas that come to you when you're relaxed or not consciously thinking about your topic.

## **7. Start small.**

Start with articles on the Web and/or in magazines, association newsletters, op-ed pages—anywhere you can get your ideas published. (Each article is a bite out of that elephant.) Not only have you started writing (the biggest obstacle of all), but you've written content for your book. Just make sure to retain the copyright, and you're on your way.

## **8. Get an editor.**

This is especially important for self-published books, but even with traditional publishing, you'll want to send in the best manuscript you can. Good editors do more than dot I's and cross T's. They help you organize your material and identify when you've fallen victim to the curse of knowledge. What's that? The curse of knowledge rears its head when you write from an expert level that's over the head of your readers. It can be difficult to step back into beginner's mind, the place where most of your readers reside, and a good editor can help you get there.

## **9. Self-publish or traditional publishing?**

Today, both approaches are viable options. Consider these pros and cons:

### **Self-publishing**

#### **Pro:**

- a. Fast and (relatively) easy. You pay, you get what you want with quick turnaround.
- b. Higher return on each book sold (though this needs to be weighed against initial costs and the effectiveness of your marketing campaign.)

#### **Con:**

- a. You have to pay to have your book published.
- b. Most bookstores won't carry your book.
- c. Your online presence on major bookseller sites is primarily limited to Amazon.com (though there are changes afoot in self-publishing).

## Traditional publishing

### Pro:

- a. You get paid to have your book published. Advances help pay for your time up front. With reasonable success, you'll also receive royalties from sales.
- b. Cash in on cache. Traditionally published books deliver more prestige.
- c. Bookstores are more likely to carry your book.
- d. Online giants like Barnes & Noble and Borders will consider your book.
- e. It's easier to get PR, media coverage, and acceptance from speaker's bureaus.
- f. Publishers still offer some editing and marketing help (though today, this isn't guaranteed).

### Con:

- a. You often need an agent just to be considered by a traditional publisher.
- b. Once you have a contract, the process can take a year (or longer).
- c. You'll probably have to edit your manuscript much more.
- d. You receive less per book sold, and only once your advance has been repaid.

You didn't get to be an expert overnight, and you won't be an author overnight. Just take it step by step and before long, your book will be finished. And, with any luck, you'll have writer's cramp from all your book signings.

The mission of the Association for Creative Business Writing (AFCBW) is to “celebrate the creativity in everyone and offer support and inspiration that deliver improved writing—and results—in the workplace.” **Membership in the association is free** ([www.afcbw.com](http://www.afcbw.com)) and includes a regular e-newsletter, **Tips, Tools and Tricks of the Trade: Your business writing toolkit**, designed to inform and inspire writers at every level. For a limited time, new members also receive the e-book *Ten Worst Myths - and Best Truths - About Good Writers*. The association also posts free writing tips on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/wordwardrobe>. The Association for Creative Business Writing also offers writing assessments, mentorships, and coaching. It published the award-winning book, *Words at Work* (<http://bit.ly/9fSFIV>)