



dawnjosephson

MASTER WRITING COACH

Could Your Book Idea Be the Next Best Seller? How To Determine Your Book's Potential Appeal By Dawn Josephson, The Master Writing Coach™

Everyone has a unique story to tell. From explaining business processes to revealing our personal history, we all have a natural desire to share our experiences with the world. As a result, bookstore shelves are packed with numerous titles that promise to entertain, enlighten, and educate readers.

Perhaps, then, the old saying that “everyone has at least one book in them” is true. If so, how do you know whether your current idea really is book worthy or if it needs some fine-tuning to have maximum marketability?

Before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), put your book idea to the test. Use the following questions as a way to hone your idea's development and create a manuscript destined for the best-seller list.

- **Can you state your book's purpose in 10 words or less?**

Many new authors face the challenge of wanting to give too much information at once. Instead of focusing on one specific idea, they try to wrap multiple concepts into one book. This approach not only makes it difficult to organize your book, but it also overwhelms your readers.

With any good book, you can state the book's *specific* purpose in 10 words or less. Realize that your purpose is not the same as your theme or plot. The book's purpose is what you specifically want the reader to do or think as a result of reading your book. Now, a statement such as “to live a better life” or “to run a better business” is not specific. A purpose is not a generalization. It's a specific action that you motivate the reader to embark upon.

For example, if you're writing a business book, your purpose should be to help your readers improve one specific business function, such as its marketing efforts, its customer service, its project management, etc. Your purpose should not be “to teach business executives how to create better marketing materials, deliver improved customer service, establish long-term customer relations, increase employee retention, and locate the best new talent.” That's simply too much for

one book to cover. Keep your purpose specific so you can deliver targeted and useful information.

- **Does your book have a specific audience?**

While you certainly want a large audience to market your book to, you also want an audience that's targeted to your topic. Simply stating that your audience is "business people" or "women" or "the general public" is not a targeted audience. Why? Not all business people have the same concerns, not all women are interested in the same topics, and not everyone in the general public will be able to identify with your ideas.

When you narrow your audience to include those with a specific tie to your theme or who fit a certain demographic, you gain a marketing edge that can position your book more effectively. So instead of stating that your audience is "business people," perhaps you can narrow it down to "company owners," "middle management," or "entrepreneurs." Rather than target the broad category of "women," you'd have better sales by focusing on "women over age 50," "working moms," or "single women under age 35." All these categories consist of a large number of people, yet they are narrow enough so you can streamline your message.

- **Are you saying something new?**

If you want people to invest the time and money to read your book, you have to tell them something new. Too many authors attempt to reword or rehash old ideas that others have stated over and over. While you should use other people's works to substantiate claims or add credibility to your message, make sure your central idea is fresh and unique.

How can you make sure your approach is new? Incorporate the results of a survey you personally conducted. Include case studies from your own business or life. Interview people who can contribute facts and information. Add elements of yourself to punctuate your message. This is *your* book, so tell *your* story or stance on an issue.

Many authors are afraid to state a new opinion on a topic that others have covered. They think they may turn people off or offend. Remember that people like controversy, so if your book can stir things up and make people think twice about something, you'll have a greater chance of creating a buzz about your book.

- **Are your writing skills up to par?**

You could have the best idea in the world, but if your text is filled with errors, is poorly organized, or is difficult to understand, no one will want to read it. Before you write too much of your book, brush up on your writing skills by attending a writing class, studying a writing guide, or hiring a writing coach to help you correct your writing challenges. Also, educate yourself on what writing

style appeals to your audience, and then strive to imitate that style. Gear your writing to your intended audience as much as possible.

If you're unsure whether your writing skills make the grade, consult with a professional editor or ghostwriter who can rework your writing and bring it up to publishing standards. Don't let poor writing skills ruin your best-selling idea.

Start Writing Now

Writing a book is no small undertaking. When you can answer “yes” to each of the above questions, you'll be on your way to transforming your idea into a publishable piece of work. Take the time to nurture and develop your idea before you start writing so you can be sure to create the best book possible. A little pre-planning and foresight is all it takes to give your book the most market appeal.

About the Author

Dawn Josephson, the Master Writing Coach, has been helping professional speakers and business leaders write better to earn more since 1998. As the author of *Write It Right: The Ground Rules for Self-Editing Like the Pros* and *Putting It On Paper: The Ground Rules for Creating Promotional Pieces that Sell Books*, she empowers leaders to master the printed word for enhanced credibility, positioning, and profits. Contact her at dawn@masterwritingcoach.com.