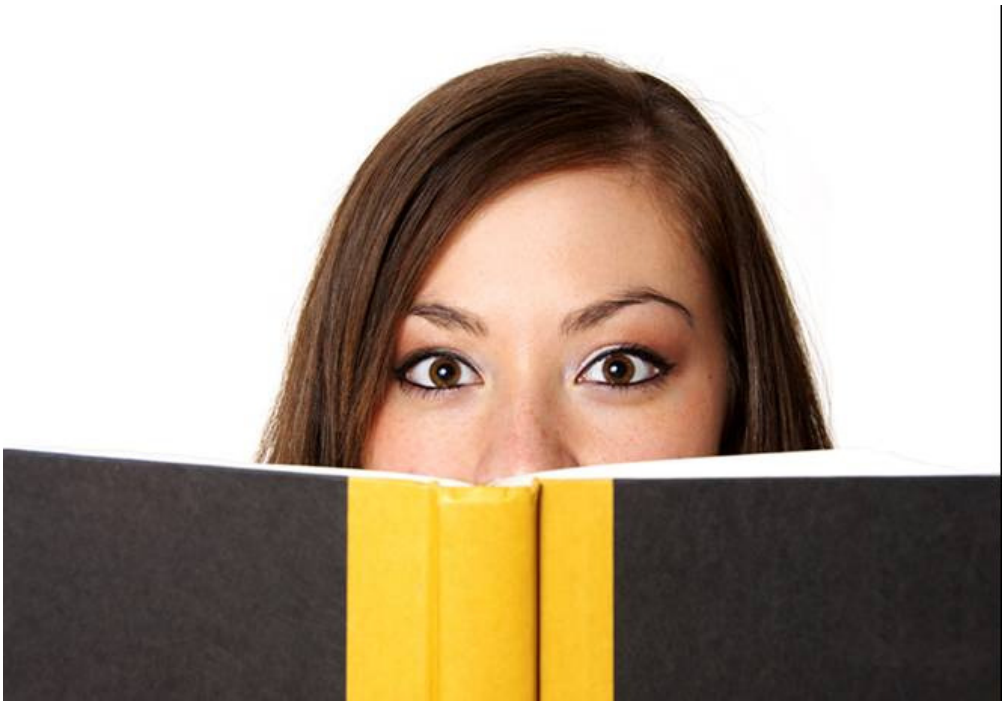


5 Reasons Why No One Will Read Your Book

And How You Can Change That

By

Barbara Grassey

Introduction

After sweating bullets (not to mention blood and tears) to finally, ***FINALLY*** finish your book, wouldn't you like people to actually read it?

Well, yeah. That's kind of the whole point of writing it.

The sad truth is that while many books are written, the average book sells fewer than 250 copies a year and less than 2,000 in its lifetime. That's average. In fact, most books sell fewer than 100 copies in a year and under 1,000 copies in their lifetime. Less than 1% of business books sell more than 5,000 copies.

But don't be discouraged. These dismal numbers are in many ways a result of the "low barrier to entry" process that is book publishing today. With print on demand publishers such as Lulu and Create Space and the ease of uploading a file to Amazon's Kindle, anyone can publish a book. And anyone does. You can easily game the system and have an "Amazon Bestseller" with as few as three sales. Don't believe me? A man took a picture of his foot and put it in a Word document. He made a cover for his "book" which utilized the same picture, titled the book "My Foot" and uploaded it to Kindle. He had three friends buy it and he hit bestseller status in a subcategory. Seriously.

I am fervently hoping that your aspirations do not include claiming you're a bestselling author without having a real book and real sales to back it up. But if you want to put out a book that will be read, a book that will help others while creating authority and credibility for yourself, there are some pitfalls you need to avoid.

I'm Barbara Grassey, a writer and book coach. I have been writing professionally for over 15 years and I am one of those lucky people who gets paid to do what I love. I have written over 40 books, ebooks, home study courses, and manuals, including ghostwriting for national speakers and coaches. I can "crank them out" relatively quickly because I've developed a system to take the words and ideas out of people's heads and put them on paper.

Along the way, I've worked with a variety of people who have had varying degrees of success in selling their books. I have seen many books fall by the wayside due to a lack of guidance more than anything. So many books could do better with a little help in the right places.

If you've been tempted by those webinars and ads that promise a quick path to riches by writing your book, but a voice in your head says "Sounds too good to be true" please listen to that voice. However, that doesn't mean your book has to fall into the land of misfit books. It doesn't mean your book will never see the light of day or never help the people it is meant to help. You can create a book that creates an income stream, either in and of itself or through bringing you wider reach, increased credibility, and new clients.

This report is meant to help you write a book that is worthy of being read.

With that, let the countdown begin.

Reason #5:

No One Reads Anymore

Is it true that "no one" reads anymore? It seems that way sometimes, doesn't it? When people correspond with "How RU?" and the response is "GR8" you just kind of fear for civilization as a whole. Just me?

Somebody is reading. In fact, US sales of physical books actually rose slightly in 2015 over 2014. By early December of 2015, sales reached 571 million paper (hard copy) books compared to 559 million for all of 2014, according to Nielsen BookScan. That doesn't count all of the electronic books sold.

Obviously, people are still buying books. Whether or not they actually read them may be a different story. Here are some stats compiled by the Jenkins Group:

- "One third of high school graduates never read another book for the rest of their lives." They are **NOT** your people.
- "Forty-two percent of college graduates never read another book after college." Guess what? They are **NOT** your people, either.
- "Fifty-seven percent of new books are not read to completion." **NOT** your problem.

That last stat is great news if all you care about is selling books and not about actually helping people. I am fortunate to have the kind of clients who want to actually provide value to those who read their books. I hope you're on the same page.

But, the statistics point out that many people never finish reading a book they bought. According to the New York Times, using data scraped from e-reading devices, fantasy, romance, and mystery novels had the highest reader finish rates (59%-62%) for U.S. readers. Nonfiction and religious books had the lowest finish rates (36% and 35% respectively). That could be the nature of the beast. Many of us read a nonfiction book to get specific information—we may not ***need*** to read the entire book. (Just a bit of trivia – the French have the highest overall book finish rate with the Italians a close second.)

READING IS NO LONGER JUST READING

People learn through different modalities: some by reading, some listening, some watching, and some by actually doing. (And, of course, some people never learn.) Whether or not your target audience reads is not as big a question as whether or not your target audience wants certain information.

With today's technology, more and more authors are putting their books into multiple formats in order to reach as many people as possible. It is not expensive to record your book and offer an audio version of it. Depending on your topic and maybe especially if you are teaching a process, it may be better to put out a video or video series.

No matter which format your book or project is in, it starts with an outline (at the bare minimum). In the case of an audio book, you will still need to write your book. A video series will require a well-planned and yes, written script.

And your signature book—that book that tells your story and creates your brand—should still be a hard copy book. A hard copy book (which includes paperbacks—I am talking about a book people hold in their hands) is a marketing tool that can create its own income stream or be leveraged to create or enhance other income streams. Let's talk about that briefly.

DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB

In spite of all the huckster come-ons proclaiming that you can make thousands of dollars every month selling books on Amazon, odds are overwhelming that you won't. It's a pretty tough nut to crack. And a book is a pretty low ticket item. One of my first book coaching clients wrote a book in the hopes of replacing her income and ultimately quitting her day job. We sat down and did the math together. The book was priced at about $20. She was making in the neighborhood of $40,000 per year. She would have had to sell 2,000 books a year to replace her income or just under 200 units per month. That was if she sold it in electronic format. Double the required number of sales if she sold a hard copy version.

The average book sells fewer than 2,000 copies in its lifetime. Two thousand or more copies per year was unrealistic, to say the least. Not impossible, mind you. Just highly improbable given that she was virtually unknown.

What would happen if she created an audio version of the book and sold the two as a package for $30 or $40? What if she put together a home study course from her book, packaged it with audio and video and sold it at anywhere from $97 to $997? At $100 per unit, she'd have to sell 400 units a year instead of 2,000. At $500 per unit, she'd need to sell 80 courses. Does that seem more reasonable? What if she used the book to bring in private coaching clients? Ultimately, she did a combination of these things and leveraged that experience to go on to even bigger and better things.

A BOOK IS A MARKETING TOOL

People may read all, part or none of your book. It doesn't matter. Think of your book as the Swiss Army Knife of marketing tools: It has a number of useful functions. Your signature or flagship book is used to establish you as an authority in your field. It may or may not ever make money. But it can open the door to things that will make you money—speaking engagements, consulting and coaching clients, introductions to higher level people and events. It's all in how you leverage the book.

So, it's not that no one reads anymore. It's that people now have a variety of ways to take information in that they didn't have twenty years ago. We no longer own dictionaries and encyclopedia; we Google the information we need. The same goes for books. Those who like to read buy the book. Others listen to the audio version or watch the videos. We may not work through the information from cover to cover or beginning to end. Fast forwarding is the electronic equivalent of skimming and people have always skimmed through books when they wanted specific information.

People still read. More importantly, people are still investing in information, whether it's in book, audio, or video format.

Your Book is Not Well Organized

People buy a book because they want information but they don't want to have to dig for it. The value of many books and courses is that the author has taken the time to go out and research the subject and put all the information together in one place. If that information is not well-organized, then it defeats the purpose of the entire project.

There are many ways to organize the information in your book and the method you use may depend on your topic and what you want to convey. In general, books are organized as steps in a process, by topic, or in chronological order. The bottom line is that the information has to be organized in some sort of logical progression.

I've seen many books or course manuals that are a straight transcription of a talk or seminar, including the "ahs" and "inaudibles." Believe me, this is not the way to impress your reader. I often use the transcription method to create the raw material for the first draft of a book. It's a method that works. But I know that speakers get off track. Maybe their talk wasn't organized well from the beginning or an audience member asks a question that leads everyone down a rabbit hole. Sometimes the speaker goes off on a non-related story or even uses an example that is poor or doesn't really pertain to the topic at hand. (People sometimes get rattled or distracted during talks no matter how many times they've done it.)

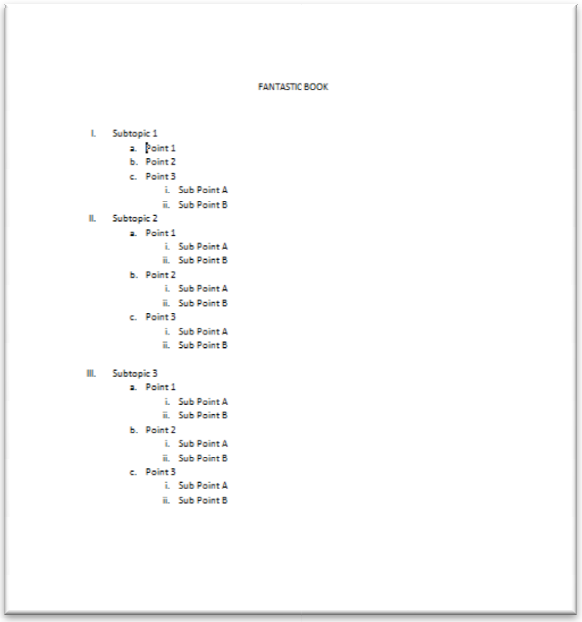
Can you start writing before you organize?

Sure. But you're making extra work for yourself and/or your editor. Organizing a book before you start writing…

- Gathers all your research material in one place
- Uncovers areas that need more research and/or development
- Gives your book a logical order
- Gives you direction when you don't know what to do next
- Allows you to work on sections of the book instead of being overwhelmed by the entire project

Listen, I get it. I hated outlining as a kid in school. All those Roman numbers, capital and small letters were confusing and time consuming. Now you can basically click a button and Word takes care of the letters and numbers for you. You have to love technology.

I can tell when an editing client has just sat down and started writing vs. taking the time to fully outline his work. Using an outline allows you to move sections and topics around to create a logical order without having to deal with moving large sections of text and worry about whether or not you're repeating information. It also prevents you from leaving out something that is important. I hate when that happens.


FANTASTIC BOOK

I. Subtopic 1
  a. Point 1
  b. Point 2
  c. Point 3
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B
II. Subtopic 2
  a. Point 1
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B
  b. Point 2
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B
  c. Point 3
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B
III. Subtopic 3
  a. Point 1
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B
  b. Point 2
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B
  c. Point 3
    i. Sub Point A
    ii. Sub Point B

One of the other benefits of outlining your book first is that it gives you a consistent structure to hang your words from. If every chapter in your book starts from the general and focuses down to the specific (or vice versa), it not only helps you write, but it helps your reader comprehend the material better. Some people skim for general information—they may never dig deep into a subtopic where others will want to know every last detail.

A well-organized book creates a user-friendly reading experience. You want people to read your book and find it valuable. Outlining is the way to do that.

Your Book is Literally Unreadable—Riddled with Typos, Spelling, and Grammatical Errors

Remember in school when the teacher said spelling and grammar count? The rules have become looser, our writing has become less formal over time, but spelling and grammar still count. It's every bit as important as the information that you share.

There's a reason why spelling and grammar are standardized in every language. It's the same reason there are rules of the road for driving or regulations in football. People need to be "on the same page" in order to communicate and work together.

Think about all the acronyms young people use when they text. They made them up so their parents wouldn't know what they were talking about. If you're using your own spelling (or, as a friend of mine says, you're an "alternative speller") it does the rest of us no good. We're not "in" on your code. You may as well write your book in another language for all the good it will do your readers.

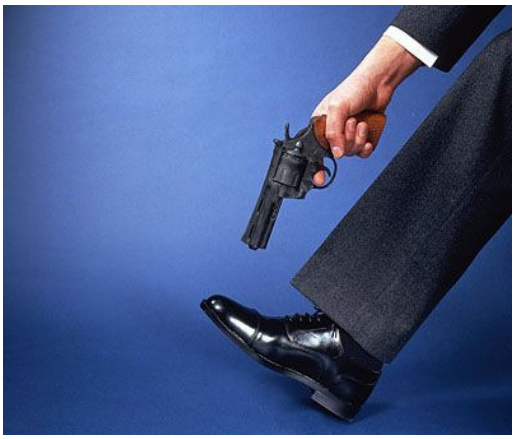
THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

The same goes for grammar. Sentences are structured to make it easier for the reader to understand what's going on. Have you ever read a stream of consciousness piece? It may be touching, forceful, or artistic, but more often than not, it's just plain confusing. It takes effort to read and understand it. More than that, it takes a willingness to put in that effort. Given the choice between two "How To" books, one written in a freeform style with words spelled whatever way the author managed to jot them down, or a book with simple, correctly spelled words, straightforward sentences, and well-organized topics, which would you choose? There's nothing wrong with being artsy—until your message is lost to those who need it.

Professionals like you who have reached upper levels of expertise in your industry also run the risk of using jargon or assuming that the reader understands concepts that seem basic to you. It seems the more intelligent the person, the longer and more complex their sentence structure is. That doesn't work for the average member of a target audience. Even in fiction, this will be a factor in whether or not your reader stays with you. (I mean, seriously, have you ever tried to read James Joyce's *Ulysses*?)

One of the problems with self-publishing is that it's so easy and affordable anyone can do it. Amazon's Kindle is flooded with flimsy ebooks containing a minimal amount of poorly chosen and spelled words. Which leads us to the real reason why spelling and grammar count.

DON'T SHOOT YOURSELF IN THE FOOT



A poorly written book can damage your credibility. Those quick and easy "book-in-an-afternoon" or "three-day-books" at the very least do not receive the benefit of an editor combing through and cleaning up the manuscript.

In fact, there are two types of editing and both take time. A copy edit is the line-by-line mark up that scrutinizes for spelling and punctuation mistakes, grammatical errors, erroneous information, and consistency in how you use things such as numbers, capitalizations, hyphenations, etc.

Truth be told, you don't have to be a great speller. That's what your editor is for. But if you're self-publishing, you could save some money on the editing job if your spelling is at least good enough to help the editor guess what word you mean.

A line edit looks at the content, writing style, structure, and organization. It focuses on how well you communicate your message to the reader and the overall readability. These are the editors who will tell you a section is unclear or needs to be moved. They'll point out when you've missed a step in the process or made a jump in logic that will confuse your readers.

YOU NEED AN EDITOR

You need an editor. I'm an editor and I need an editor! You can't edit your own work because your eyes will see what your brain expects. Your brain fills in missing words for you; it makes the jump in logic that leaves your readers behind.

Most of all, an editor makes you look good—like the professional you are. A good editor isn't cheap and an expensive editor isn't always good. (No, your teenage daughter who is "really good" in English is not an editor. Your kids probably won't even read your book. Ungrateful whelps!)

I am currently editing a book that a friend sent over to me. The author, my friend's client, had paid over $10,000 to a "book-in-a-box" company to help him write his book, then edit, and lay the book out for publishing. My friend said, "I can't let his book be published like this. It will destroy my client's credibility." Typos, grammatical errors, bizarre punctuation (including over 400 exclamation marks added by the editor, which makes me suspect the editor actually WAS a teenage girl). The layout was equally horrendous.

You are writing your book to make you stand out from your competition, to elevate you above your peers. Again, don't shoot yourself in the foot and throw all your efforts down the drain by looking like an amateur.

Not Enough Interest in the Topic Itself

(Or Why Memoirs Sell So Poorly)

I know a man who has written a 2,900+ page book on a religious topic promoting the perspective of an obscure semi-Christian cult. Even if the book was readable, there is such a small target audience for his book that he could probably hand out copies to all 27 members of his church.

Now, his project was much more about his commitment to his faith than it was to ever selling a book. (Probably a VERY good thing.) It was a labor of love. And there's nothing wrong with writing something because it is so close to your heart that your life will be incomplete unless you write it. I get that. But don't expect anyone to read it, much less buy it.

Memoirs are deeply personal and as such, have meaning only to the person who wrote it and maybe close friends and family members. Very seldom does a memoir step outside its limited circle and get taken up by the masses. Unless you are famous, semi-famous, or infamous, the interest just isn't there.

For those of us who are writing business books, whether the book is aimed at potential clients or the general public, it's easy to do some basic research to uncover the amount of interest in a subject. My first stop is Google Adwords. Yes, you need to set up an account to access the data, but you don't have to spend any money. Type your topic (aka, keyword or keyword phrase) into Google's Adword tool and you will be presented with data on how many people searched on that keyword or keyword phrase in the last month, with numbers for both the US and the world. It will also give you a list of related keywords which makes a dandy list for blog post titles. (After all, people are searching on those phrases.)

Another tool to find out how many people are interested in a topic is SEMRush. It is pricey and mostly used by professional SEO companies. I mention it only because you can go onto Fiverr.com and hire someone to run a SEMRush report for you for about $10. That's much better than paying the monthly fee and having to go through the learning curve to use it yourself.

A third way to check interest in a topic is to see how many Facebook groups, Meetup groups or online forums have formed to discuss this topic. If there are fewer than a dozen groups on a topic, most of them small and/or inactive, then this is probably not a hot subject.

And, one more way to see if you have a viable topic—go to Amazon and see if there are other books on the same subject. If there are lots of books on the topic, it's a good sign. It's also a great place to do some market research. Go into both the good and bad reviews and see what people liked and didn't like and especially, what they wanted to find in a book and didn't. Amazon reviews are a gold mine of market information.

Depending on your goals, the number of online searches may be smaller than someone with a different business. For instance, if I were selling a $20 book online, I'd want to write about a topic that had a lot of people interested in it. Why? Because I'm going to have to sell a lot of copies to make any money. (I often jokingly refer to this as "Ferragamo Money" as in "That's gonna take a lot of work to make Ferragamo Money.")

I run what's called a "Boutique Business"—I have a small number of high-level clients who pay me well. I don't market to the masses at this point. If you are a coach with a high-level program and a limited number of spaces available, you probably don't need 20,000 people a month searching for help on your specialty.

If you're working a specialty niche without a lot of traffic and you need high numbers, then you are setting out on a hard road. It's better to offer chicken recipes than frog leg recipes because a whole lot more people eat chicken than frog legs. It's just common sense.

That's not to say that you can't make a good living in a seemingly strange, totally niche market. It's more about knowing the numbers you are working with and knowing how to locate your target market. The good news is that if you have an offbeat subject, you're probably not going to have a lot of competition. It also may be an easy path to becoming an "Amazon Bestseller" for what it's worth. (You can become an Amazon Bestseller in a well-chosen, obscure category with minimal sales. That's why so many people have "Bestselling Author!"plastered all over their marketing.)

Most of my clients would like people to actually read their book. It's always good to run the numbers and see if people are interested in your subject before you dedicate large chunks of your time to writing a book on that topic. No magic on this one—just common sense.

Nobody Knows Your Book is Available

Writing a book is just one half of the job. Marketing the book is the other half. In spite of all of those webinars and courses telling you how you can write a book and get rich selling your books on Amazon, sad to say, it takes a bit more effort than that.

I tell people that putting a book on Amazon is like having a kiosk in the Mall of the Americas. You are in the largest retail space in America but no one knows you are there. Your audience has to enjoy playing *Where's Waldo* in order to find you.

Many of my clients have a built-in market. They are coaches, trainers, and speakers. They are writing their book for a specific purpose, i.e., they need course materials for their students or they'd like a low-ticket item to sell at the back of the room or to start their sales funnel.

Whether you have a built-in audience or not, you'll still want to reach more people and a book is a solid way to do that… if people actually know about your book.

And now I'm going to say something that is very, very wrong. For some of you, it may not matter if anyone ever reads your book. I'm not spewing that consoling "At least you finished a book! That's an amazing accomplishment!"pablum. It ***is*** an amazing accomplishment. That's just not the point here.

The point is that it is often good enough just to have the words "published author" or "Author of Such and Such" in your bio. That is impressive, even in this day of self-publishing. When you are booking speaking gigs, it is often enough to open the door. When people are checking you out online and see a picture of your book, it gives you credibility. They rarely order the book, much less read it.

"But," you say, "I want people to actually READ my book!"

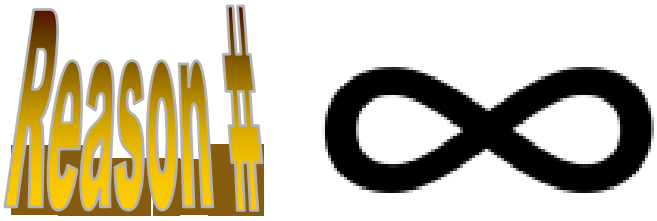
Good. (You're the type of person I like to work with, by the way.) In that case, you need a marketing plan which starts before you begin writing your book. One of the first questions I ask my book coaching clients is "What do you want your book to do for you?" Your marketing plan stems from the answer to that question.

Getting the word out that your book is available can be a full-time job but fortunately, it often falls in line with your other marketing efforts. The important thing is to have your platform in place.

If you don't already have one, you need to start your mailing list. It's great to have 5,000 friends on Facebook or 10,000 Twitter followers, but until someone has gone to your website and given you their name and email address, they're not really interested in what you have to offer.

Even with a publishing company backing you, you will be expected to bear the brunt of the marketing efforts. This is just the reality of publishing today.

Getting the word out about your book will take an organized, concerted effort. That's a course unto itself. You can outsource this work or you can do it yourself. The best results I have seen involve a combination of the two. Just know that "If you write it, they will ***NOT*** come." It will be up to you to make sure people hear about your book.



You Never Finish Writing Your Book

Yes, ∞.

Infinity is a lot bigger than #1. ☺ As I mentioned earlier a lot of people say they want to write a book (81% of people surveyed). The truth is they really just want to be an author. The actual process of sitting down and writing a book does not appeal to them. Seriously, if I could be an author without actually doing that pesky writing…

But that's why so many people want to be an author and so few are.

Many people start a book. Maybe they have a partial or even a full outline or they've put a few chapters down on paper.

One of the most common things I hear from prospective mentoring students is, "I wrote and wrote and wrote and I only have 20 pages."

Ouch. I feel your pain.

I totally get that. It reminds me of writing a one hundred word book report when I was a kid. You'd write a sentence, count the words. ("Seven. Ninety-three to go.") You'd write another sentence. Count the words. ("Twelve. Eighty-eight to go.") It was excruciating! I am quite sure the last sentence in every book report was "It was very, very, very, very good."

TIME

There can be any number of reasons why you don't finish your book. For starters, a book takes a significant amount of dedicated time to write. Most of us don't have that kind of spare time. Can you write a book in three days? A pro can. But even with a professional writer, the book will not be very long and it won't be very good. And those three days may not all be in a row. There's a very good chance it would involve locking yourself up in a hotel room and working 12 hours a day for the duration while gulping espresso and Red Bull cocktails.

I don't know about you, but most business people don't have the luxury of weeks of free time to sit and gaze out over some scenic vista while they tap their Mont Blanc fountain pen against their teeth, lost in deep thought.

LOST IN THE WOODS

The second most common reason people don't finish writing their book is they get lost in the woods. Somewhere in the middle of the manuscript, they lose their direction and can't find their way through to the end. As a professional writer, I have been in the woods many times and I still hit that phase in almost every book I write. The difference is I've been there before and I know I can always find my way out.

Part of the solution is to have a comprehensive outline before you begin. You need a well-marked trail when you're travelling through a dark forest in order to see your way through to the other side.

THEY NEVER START

Probably the biggest reason why people don't finish their book is because they never start. Unless you need a book for a very specific reason, writing it gets put on the back burner, relegated to "some day." For those who know they need a book to help their clients, establish their authority, spread their message, or tell their story, it's more of a priority.

It is also overwhelming. Writing a book looms up ahead of you and the project seems impossible. Think about it this way. You need to spring clean your entire house. You wake up on a Saturday morning and you look around the house and truly, the first question is where do I start? But then the little voices in your head start up. "It's going to take more than a weekend to clean this place properly" or "I'll never get this done." The job would be easier to face if you said, "I'm going to just clean the guest bedroom today. I can deep clean the dining room on Sunday, and next weekend I can hit the laundry and bedrooms."

You're breaking the project down into bite-sized pieces. You can choose where to start cleaning your house; you've done this before.

But still… if you've never written a book, where do you start?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A book is a project, pure and simple, and as such, it needs to be managed. You decide on the topics and develop the structure. Benchmarks are set and time is blocked out for each phase of the project. As with many projects, you may need to bring in an outside consultant or contractor to advise or handle some aspect of the venture. But having a plan in place will take you from the overcrowded land of wannabes into the realm of published author.

Conclusion...

or Is This Where You Start?

Congratulations on deciding to write a book. So many people say they want to write a book and yet don't. It takes organization, determination, and a commitment to seeing the project through. While it is not drop-dead easy, it doesn't have to be complicated or overwhelming, either.

Your book can be the differentiating factor, that piece of the puzzle that finally elevates you above your peers and sets you apart from the crowd. A book is still the best way to take your personal message to the masses, to let people know who you are, what you do, and what you stand for. If you have been looking for a way to take your business to the next level, your book will help you strengthen your brand and increase your credibility, authority, and reach.

But you need to get started.

I'd love to help you step into the realm of published authors. If you find you need some one-on-one help—maybe you've hit a stopping point or have written yourself into a corner, or maybe you need help getting your book organized, please contact me. For people who have read this report, I am offering a special 30 minute Jump Start Session. Find out more about how you can schedule your session by going to this special private link: Jump Start Session.

To your success,