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TAG Publishing's **Write Your Book in 30 Days!**

This article will give you a very good understanding of all the elements that go into writing a non-fiction self-help book. This formula has been well known in the industry for literally decades, and we have taken that formula and broken it down for you into a series of action steps that are easy and simple to follow. This will help you start the process of thinking about your book content and give you the tools you need to get that first draft on paper. This article is designed to help you flesh out a first draft in 30 days. After that you will be able to edit, add to and enhance to form a full manuscript.

But first a few notes:

1. **Length:** The target length that we recommend for this type of book is 45,000 to 50,000 words. This will produce a finished book of about 200 pages in a 5.5" x 8.5" format. This is true whether the book is hardback or softback. This length is the most popular because most people can read it in a few hours.
2. **Vocabulary:** Most people read at a 7th grade level or below. We tell authors to use vocabulary that any 5th grader can understand – and realize that today's 5th graders are way ahead of where you were when you were in the 5th grade! We recommend this not because you are necessarily conveying simple concepts, but because you want to be easily understood. Most readers think that there are only two reasons people write a self-help book, either the author wants to show how smart they are, or they want to help people. Do you want to read 200 pages of college level vocabulary? Probably not. Readers can immediately feel the difference and you want your intention of improving the lives of others to shine through so do your best not to use college level vocabulary.
3. **Stories versus concepts:** What makes your book unique and different is your personal experience. There are thousands of books on the market, but your book will be unique because your experience is unique. For that reason, you should want at least 40% of your content to be stories (up to as much as 60%). These don't necessarily all have to be stories that you experienced but many of them should be. You can use other stories (such as those from other people, parables, or university studies) as examples of specific content but don't be afraid to show the reader your vulnerability. No one wants to learn from a perfect person and by showing your own missteps and failings, it allows you to personally connect with your readers.

4. **This is a relationship:** When you are writing a book, it is a tremendous journey of personal growth, but you also have to remember that when people read your book they will be growing as well. You want to create a personal relationship between you and your readers so their lives will be touched and changed in a positive way. When you sit down and start writing, imagine you are talking to your best friend over a cup of coffee. Be open, honest and do your best to explain even complex ideas in the simplest way possible. Even CEOs recognize the genius in being able to explain concepts in a way everyone can understand.

The Formula

This formula is based on a 10 chapter book just for ease of discussion, but your book can have any number of chapters you want. We recommend that a 200 page book have at least 10 chapters but even at that, the chapters will be quite long so feel free to break the chapters up into shorter segments if you like. If you do have more than 10 chapters, you can project based on this formula what goes where and how much text should be spent on any one subject.

Introduction

Not all books have an introduction but most self-help books do. This is because many people – even those purchasing online – like to look through the first few pages of the book (online they use the ‘search inside’ function to do this before buying). This gives you a great opportunity to sell them on what you have to offer. Within the introduction, you want to explain who you are and why you wrote the book. Then you give a brief overview of the benefits they will gain from reading it which might be things like reduce stress, improve relationships, find a new career, create wealth, or lose weight depending on the subject matter of the book. It is very common for us to write the introduction last as it is hard to give an overview of the content before you have written it. Introductions are usually 5-7 book pages which translates into 1200-1800 words – so quite short.

Chapters 1-2 (first 20% of book)

In these first few chapters you want to immediately connect with the reader, so you have to meet them where they are at and that means talking about the problems. If they didn’t have problems they wouldn’t need to read your book! So address the issue or issues right up front, define it, what created it, why it exists, why current quick fixes don’t work, and what happens to those who buy into the accepted solutions. This may feel like you are starting the book out on a negative note but that is not what you are doing. You are acknowledging the readers’ worries and fears. If someone came to you to discuss a problem, would you start the conversation talking about how great their life is? No, because they would feel you had no idea where they were or how they felt. The same is true here. There is an old saying we like and it is, “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” Show your readers you care *first*.

Chapter 3 (10% percent of book)

This is where you tell readers the good news - that there is a solution to their problem and it is called _____. You talk about what it is, what the premise or theory is based on, what it does for people, why it works, then you show some examples of those who have benefited from it as well as your own experience in implementing it.

Chapters 4 - 8 (40% of book)

This is the real meat of your book where you talk about the concepts, ideas and actions steps the reader will use to change his/her life. These might include: understanding the root of the problem, finding the right people to learn from, getting the right perspective, setting the right goals, then taking specific action steps to success. You might also talk about accountability and follow up. This is the real ‘teaching’ section of the book and by this time you have identified with the reader so they trust you. Then you have excited them by sharing the idea that they can change and you have a solution. Now they are eager to read this section to learn the ‘how’.

Chapter 9 (10% of book)

We encourage all self-help authors to include a chapter about what to do if the reader gets off course or ‘falls off the wagon’ on the way to success. Here again, this is to acknowledge that none of us are perfect and even when you are going the right direction you can encounter obstacles and problems that must be addressed. Show the reader the type of issues you have had to overcome and how you got back on track after a setback. They will see that if you can do it, so can they, and they must believe that to make real change.

Chapter 10 (Final 10% of book)

This final chapter is your chance to show the reader why they should implement these ideas immediately and what benefits they will receive if they do. It is a call to action to start immediately. It can also show why the author is the person to help them if they need additional coaching. You want to leave the reader with a positive, encouraging, uplifting feeling so they close the book and think, “That was an awesome book!”

The Outline

Now that you have an idea what each section should contain, you can create a very short outline using the formula. You simply list ten chapters and write a short few sentences based on your book content as to what that chapter might contain. This can be used for any type of self-help book, even complex financial books. Just to show you how this is done, here are a couple of actual sample outlines we, or our authors, have used:

Sample Outline #1

Why Not? Attila Varga

Introduction: This is where you tell the reader who you are and why you wrote the book. You want to give them a little preview of the benefits they will receive by reading it. Write this last.

Chapter 1: The Hamster Wheel – You want to relate to the reader right where they are at. Talk about how they feel, and how we slowly get in ‘hamster wheel’ mode where we just work and pay the bills thinking we are on track. Then one day we look in the mirror. We see the gray showing up in our hair and ask ourselves, “What happened? What happened to my dreams? This is not what I thought life will be like!!! I am not happy.”

Chapter 2: The Rear View Mirror – In order to even think of a different life, you must let go of the past. Living in the past means focusing on all the instances where others wronged us, we did wrong, or just the feeling that we could have or should have made certain choices but didn’t. We often now feel it’s too late - that I am not as good as I would like to be or that I made too many mistakes and too people really wronged me. Living in the past convinces people they ‘can’t’ do things and that it’s easier not to try rather than try and fail.

Chapter 3: The Competitive World – This chapter talks about the world we live in and how we are almost swallowed in a sea of negativity on a daily basis. Most people have a general view of lack and limitation because of what they see all around them instead of knowing we live in an abundant world where we can have it all. We must learn to change from wanting to compete to a creation mindset. We show the joy it brings when something new is created that others benefit from. This is where I wanted to start focusing on changing the mindset, regaining the control. In this chapter I want to show that the light at the end of the tunnel is the sun.

Chapter 4: The Unlimited Potential of YOU - This chapter will talk about the evolution of human development over the last century. How we have moved away from developing our muscles for hard labor, to developing our mind and intellect. We don’t add intellect, but we discover and exercise the abilities that are already there. Include description of our infinite potential and how it works. Most of these abilities have just lain dormant and need to be activated and practiced to reach the unlimited potential that we all have. Here I want to further build on the momentum of getting excited by showing how incredibly capable we all are.

Chapter 5: The Catalyst to Your Future – This chapter discusses how our thinking drives our actions and why we need to stop focusing on changing our results. We need to change ourselves and the results will automatically change with that. Let’s stop changing the whole world so we can feel better about ourselves and take responsibility for what is – then be accountable to choose change. In this chapter I want to further build on the feel good factor, showing that we in fact can have a happier, healthier and wealthier life.

Chapter 6: Captain of YOU – This chapter is all about taking control and making a plan. We will talk about having a burning desire and how to find your passion. We want to emphasize that it is not too late to dream and achieve those dreams. We’ll include an expansion of the ideas of personal responsibility and how to take charge of life rather than just float along. We will teach them to remember how to dream without limits.

Chapter 7: The Secrets of Ultimate Achievement – This chapter is all about setting effective goals based on the new dreams. We teach step-by-step how to set big goals then break them down and accomplish something each and every day. We will discuss the mental persistence and toughness that you will gain by proving to yourself you can do it.

Chapter 8: Living the Dream – We will discuss that success is not an endpoint but a journey and there are many techniques and ideas that will help you enjoy every area of life as you push toward your goals. We will talk about meditation, affirmation and how to live each day in gratitude. We will also discuss how to adjust to living in the world as the changes in you affect your interpersonal relationships at home and in the workplace. We will seek to help people understand the changing dynamic and how they can effect change in others just by changing themselves.

Chapter 9: Self Rescue for Beginners – This chapter will address how to recover from some of the devastating experiences of life. Death, loss of income, moving to a different country, starting over, etc. We want to let the readers know that there are going to be difficult times in their lives, but these times will define who they are by how they respond – and that response is a choice. You can recover from anything if you only choose to.

Chapter 10: The Best is Yet to Come! – This chapter is an uplifting call to action. We will discuss why the reader should implement these concepts in their life right now, the benefits they will receive if they do and why you are the person to help them. It will be a positive and uplifting finish so they feel excited and passionate about changing their lives.

Sample Outline #2

Set For Life

8 Financial Strategies that Ensure Peace of Mind and Financial Security

John Svalina

Chapter 1 – The Nest Egg Illusion – In this chapter we will talk about the major worries people have with money. I.e. that they will outlive their resources, that they will lose on investments, and that they will constantly have to worry about their finances – or that their families won't benefit from their lifetime of hard work. We will discuss the emotional relationship that people have with money and why it causes such stress in their lives.

Chapter 2 – Money Matters – In this chapter we will talk about the goals they want to achieve and the power money can have to relieve stress both for themselves and those they leave behind. We will talk about how money is just an exchange of value, but how we think about money makes all the difference in what we are able to achieve through wealth management.

Chapter 3 – The Right Fit – In this chapter we will address one of the biggest concerns people have and that is finding the right person to help them manage their wealth. We will talk about the key factors the relationship brings to the table and how that relationship can help in building wealth. We will talk about what to look for in a good wealth manager and how to spot danger signals.

Chapter 4 – You are HERE – In this chapter we will talk about the importance of having clear financial goals and priorities and how those will change over time. You can't just set up a plan and forget it because your wealth must be managed to match your change in life from working to retirement to estate planning and so forth. Often people have multifaceted needs and so they must also have multifaceted goals. In order to meet those goals you have to look at the reality of now and make a plan.

Chapter 5 – Retirement isn't the End – Retirement is the biggest financial goal and priority for most people but what does it mean for you? No one really sits on the porch in a rocking chair the last twenty years of their life – instead they may travel extensively, start a business or second career (or third!). Often people just want to know they will have a big pile of money for 'retirement' but they really don't think far beyond to how they will live or how their life will flow.

Chapter 6 – Handing Down the Business – This chapter will talk about business succession and the pluses and minuses, i.e. should they completely divest the company and pass on the money, or do they pass on the business itself? We need to list the considerations and also some examples or case studies.

Chapter 7 – Your Estate, Your Legacy – In this chapter we will talk about estate planning and the various factors that need to be addressed. We will talk about that various issues that arise with family, business and other concerns.

Chapter 8 – Put Your Money Where Your Heart Is – In this chapter we will talk about providing for loved ones that need your financial support such as a disabled child, spouse or sibling. We can include other possible scenarios and how to ensure the people you love are taken care of long after you are gone. We can also talk about charitable trusts and various philanthropic endeavors that can be addressed for the long term.

Chapter 9 – Planning for the Unexpected – This chapter talks about how to handle unexpected financial issues such as death of a spouse, long term care needs, or when investments take a dip. Often the anticipation of these events are much worse than dealing with the actual event and we will go back and again highlight the importance of your relationship with your financial advisor to work through any unexpected issues and still come out in good shape financially.

Chapter 10 – The Real Goal is Peace of Mind – This is an uplifting chapter that reminds the reader that real goal of wealth management is peace of mind and anyone can achieve it by implementing these strategies. We will again touch on how you focus on relationships and people and why your clients achieve their financial goals without the stress and worry many other people face when dealing with their money. We'll give a little promo for your services and encourage them to start today to plan for their future.

These outlines show you that the same formula works even though these books are vastly different from one another. These will give you a good starting point to write your own outline in literally just a few minutes!

Creating the Chapters

So let's say you have your outline, now what? Good news! There is also a formula for creating the chapters! This formula is pretty flexible and should be used as a general guide but just understand that it can vary and is not set in stone.

Under each chapter, list 3-5 concepts you want to address in that chapter and it is often easier to list them as a question. For example if you are writing a chapter about overcoming fear, your list of ideas might look like this:

- What is fear?
- How can fear hold you back?
- How do you get past fear?

This hardly sounds like enough for a whole chapter, but it really is and here's why: Once you have your 3-5 ideas, you are going to go back and under each bullet, you are going to answer the question and explain each idea, then show how it manifests itself or effects people and then give an example. So if we use this same example, you might end up with something that looks like this:

- How can fear hold you back?

If we allow them to, fear, doubt, and anxiety can stop us from broadening our horizons and expanding our lives. They can even make us sick. This book is a great example of how I refused to give into fear and limit my life. I had never thought about writing a book before I attended a seminar in Florida. As the week progressed, I felt a calling to write a book. I had two choices: to let fear stifle this calling or to take the challenge head on and get my book out there. Fear didn't keep me from sharing my story and attempting to touch the lives of others, and it shouldn't prevent you from accomplishing your goals either. Have you ever had a calling but were too scared to pursue it? Maybe you, too, want to write a book or perhaps speak in public. So what's holding you back? How many times have fear, doubt, and anxiety kept you from taking advantage of all that life has to offer? Far too often, we veer away from any type of new endeavor or "risk" because we're scared of something bad happening. Fear can prevent us from taking risks. The problem with this thought process, however, is that risks can many times bring great rewards.

When I was seventeen, I graduated from high school. Like all Canadians, I had to attend two years of college before moving on to university. At that point, I had completed all my schooling in French, my mother tongue. I had high ambitions for my professional life, and in order to maximize my career opportunities in the business world, I decided to pursue my college and university studies in English in order to master this universal language. The prospect of studying fulltime in another language was frightening, especially at this academic level. Even though one side of my family is primarily English-speaking and I had been exposed to English since early childhood, it would be quite a challenge to be immersed in a different environment. I was worried I wouldn't be able to get marks as high as those I had been accustomed to all of my student life. In the end, I graduated from college and university with distinction. I am now fully functional in jobs that required a high degree of fluency in both languages, and am even writing a book in my second language! Many times, we focus too much on the fear of the unknown, and overlook the satisfaction and excitement that may occur as a result of risk-taking. I encourage you to write down three goals you've been avoiding because of fear, and to describe that fear.

I want to point out that like all fears in life, the ones you have written on your list are baseless. They are merely a perception of what can go wrong. Rather than attempting to unwillingly force your way past fear, why not explore the various methods that fear can be effectively released from your mind, emotions, and body.

Some cutting edge research indicates that the mind and body are really one entity, not two separate parts. To try and explain this simply, it means that there is no separation or division between the mind, body, spirit, and emotions and they each significantly affect the other. Studies recently conducted at Ohio State University and Tufts Medical School indicate that ongoing emotions of resentment and fear can actually suppress the immune system. An inhibited immune system is never good but for patients with other health risks, it can be serious. With this in mind, it is very important to understand that these emotions must be managed and you must be able to move yourself from a place of fear toward a place of peace.

So the next time you are scared or doubtful, remember that thinking to yourself “I’m going to fail” can actually trigger a physiological response. Living in fear can program your body to fail. When we know the right way to free ourselves from fear, we simply handle it as we would any challenge or obstacle, and then continue on with creating the best life possible.

In my experience, the best way to let go of fear is to understand that there are other perspectives out there—to break out of tunnel vision, and seek out new ways to elucidating the issue or situation at the source of my fear. Taking the time to examine your fear with a magnifying glass allows you to transcend it and remove the power it has over you. Only then can you see the priceless benefit at the end, much like when we say that after the storm, stillness returns. The fear is the worst part of the storm and the stillness is the dissolution of the bondage that previously held you prisoner. Many of my stories in this book are testimonies of this truth. Removing fear from your life is the hardest work you will ever do. However, the rewards are beyond words.

This excerpt is taken from Lorie Gannon’s book, *The Infinite Power Within*. You will note that she talked about what fear is, how it manifested in her life and even used some scientific evidence to support the fact that it creates a physiological response.

3-5 concepts doesn’t sound like many ideas, but you have to consider (based on a 50000 word, 10 chapter book) that each chapter should contain about 5000 words. So if you have 5 ideas in each chapter, that is 1000 words per idea.

This excerpt from Lorie’s book is 800+ words so you can see that it wouldn’t take long to create enough content to fill an entire book. Don’t forget that you can include scientific studies, case studies and other supporting information as well.

That’s it. The whole formula. Is it really this simple? Yes! Is it also challenging? Yes! Writing a book is sharing a part of yourself and that is the barrier most authors encounter – themselves. It has nothing to do with putting words on paper which is why ghostwriters can put together books so very quickly – they don’t get hung up on the emotions.

We hope this article has been helpful to you and we are here to answer questions and assist you on your journey to publication.



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