

# What's Holding You Back from Writing That Book?

## Seven Possible Obstacles and How to Overcome Them

By Michael J. Dowling

Can you picture this scene? You're relaxing beside a swimming pool when you happen to notice a child teetering at the end of the high diving board. The child leans forward, bends his legs, and prepares to jump. Then he backs away.

After a few moments he again musters his courage, walks to the end of the board, leans forward, and starts to jump. But again he backs away. He just can't seem to make the plunge.

For many people, thinking about writing a book is like that. They know they'd like to become an author. It sounds exciting. They strongly believe that the visibility and credibility they would gain would be good for their career and their business. But for some reason, they keep backing away.

### **What are the roadblocks that keep people from taking the plunge and becoming authors?**

Here are seven negative reasons people give, with some advice about how to overcome them.

#### **1. "I'm too busy."**

Like most successful people, you probably don't have any "free" time on your hands. But have you ever noticed that it's the really successful people who find time to write books and do other things that bring even more success? How do they do it?

**First, they put first things first.** They set priorities, plan their work, and work their plans, so they're not always putting out fires.

**Second, they leverage their capabilities.** They know they can't do everything equally well, so they concentrate on doing what they do best, and they enlist the help of qualified people to do the rest.

If writing a book is really important to you and to your career, you can make it a priority and find the time to do it. And you can leverage your own capabilities by engaging the services of a professional ghostwriter.

You'll be pleasantly surprised to find out how much time a competent ghostwriter can save you. He'll do the heavy lifting and leave you free to concentrate on your business.

And just as important, he'll make sure your book project keeps moving forward, even when you're tempted to put it on the back burner.

**Yes, you are busy, but you're not too busy to write a book if you really want to.** You can join that select group of successful people who don't buy into the excuse, "I'm too busy."

## **2. "I don't know what to write about."**

To overcome this obstacle, ask yourself questions like the following:

- What are you passionate about?
- What knowledge or expertise do you have that will interest and benefit others?
- What would you choose as your topic if you were invited to speak to a group of people?

Brainstorm with your friends, colleagues, clients, and customers. Throw out a few ideas and get their reactions.

If you have a strong interest in writing a book, and if you're passionate about your life and your vocation, you probably have a worthwhile book inside you. Shut down those negative voices in your head, and ideas will start bubbling up.

## **3. "No publisher would want my book."**

That's possible, but you won't know for sure until you test your book idea with a few people who know the publishing field. Besides, finding a publisher is not nearly as important as it used to be, because self-publishing is becoming increasingly popular and profitable.

In the past several years, the publishing world has witnessed enormous changes. Advances in printing technology make it easy for anyone to self-publish a book. The Internet has dramatically changed the way books are marketed.

So, you don't really need a publisher in order to publish your book. In fact, you might be better off to publish it yourself. To find out more about self-publishing, I recommend reading *Dan Poynter's Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book*.

## **4. "I'm not a good writer."**

You don't have to be a good writer to write a good book. You're successful because you're good at what you do. Team up with a professional writer who's good at what he does. A competent professional ghostwriter will make your book better and save you an enormous amount of time and frustration.

## 5. “It costs too much.”

Writing and self-publishing a book with the assistance of a ghostwriter typically costs \$15,000 to \$20,000. That’s not a trivial investment. But brochures are not cheap either, and books are much more powerful marketing tools than brochures.

As you consider whether to write a book, don’t just look at the cost side of the picture. Carefully evaluate the potential return on your investment. Consider how you could use a book to take your career to the next level.

Joan Walsh, president of Kashbox Coaching, did just that. Here’s what she wrote me:

*“Writing a book has been the one of the best moves I’ve made at this stage in my career. The impact in terms of visibility and credibility has been huge. Now when I’m introduced to people, I’m not only a business coach and consultant, I’m also an author.*

*“As a direct result of the book, my speaking engagements have increased almost 50 percent. Many of the organizations who invite me to speak buy my book and give it to the attendees. That, of course, brings in additional revenues and further promotes my services.*

*“On several occasions, it’s opened doors to profitable new business. In fact, before the first copy of the book was in my hands, it had already brought in two new consulting contracts that more than paid for its cost.”*

And here’s what another very successful businessman, David Herdinger, had to say his book, *Healing A Hospital*:

*“Initially I viewed my book strictly as an expensive brochure to give away to promote my coaching services. Well, the promotion part certainly happened. The book has brought in new business and increased my speaking invitations beyond my wildest expectations.*

*“But something else happened that I didn't expect. People began to buy my book, sometimes in quantity. Within the first three months of its publication, proceeds from book sales had more than paid for the entire writing and publishing process. Instead of a somewhat effective brochure that would have cost me money, I actually had a highly effective sales tool that became an additional revenue stream.”*

I can't guarantee that your book will pay for itself within the first few months of publication, or even that it will generate a significant return on your investment over time. However, I know firsthand that writing a book has been a good investment for many others.

## **6. “My friends and relatives haven't encouraged me.”**

Unfortunately, that's not uncommon. Those closest to us sometimes don't see our potential. Perhaps they even feel threatened because you're about to take a big step.

It's important to listen to your friends, family, and colleagues. Their advice can be very helpful. But it's a mistake to depend on their encouragement for your inspiration. Writing a book is a creative process. Your motivation must come from within.

Get plenty of input, and then make an informed decision.

## **7. “Frankly, I'm afraid to take the plunge.”**

Fear typically rears its head when we face new challenges. Some people let fear stop them in their tracks. Others utilize the energy aroused by fear to drive them forward. Choose to be in the latter camp.

Since uncertainty is a major cause of anxiety, reduce the fear level by learning more about the writing and publishing process. List the specific benefits you would derive from writing and publishing your book. Once you've done your homework, you'll probably feel very comfortable with whatever decision you make.

Michael J Dowling is a writer, editor, and ghostwriter of books, articles, and Web copy that enable individuals and organizations to increase their visibility, credibility, and profitability. He has an MBA from Columbia Business School (NYC), where he was a Harriman Scholar, and is the author of three published books. Visit <http://www.michaeljdowling.com> to learn more.