

Why You Should Become an Author

By Michael J. Dowling

If you are an entrepreneur, small business owner, consultant, coach, or business professional of any type, your success depends to a significant degree on how well you are known and respected in your field. One of the best ways to increase your visibility, credibility, and profitability is to become an author.

"I tell virtually every self-employed professional, as well as many small-business owners, to define their niche specialty, write a book about it, and get it published," says Robert E. Bly, who is regarded by many as "America's Top Copywriter." "Nothing has been more helpful in establishing my own career and generating a steady flow of business than the many books I have written on my specialties of direct marketing, business communication, and more recently, Internet marketing."

"Having your name on a book can be an immense boost for your business," says Steven Van Yoder, author of *Get Slightly Famous: Become a Celebrity in Your Field and Attract More Business with Less Effort*. "The added prestige of being an information-product developer lends you the kind of credibility that allows you to increase your hourly rates and project fees. Information products also let prospects sample your approach, your expertise, and your skills before they hire you. Businesses that produce and market information products regularly report that prospects not only buy those products, but also are more likely to inquire about additional products and services."

"A book provides you with more credibility than anything else you can do: more credibility than an audio tape, a videotape, a seminar, a screenplay, or a song," says self-publishing expert Dan Poynter, author of *The Self-Publishing Manual*. "The fact is, authors are highly valued in our society."

Books Are Terrific Sales Tools!

Your book will work 24/7 to promote you and your organization. When you become an author, people see you as an expert in your field. New opportunities open up to you. Customers and clients come to you already predisposed to buy.

Here's what business coach and consultant Joan Walsh, author of *Ready, Set, PLAN, Go!, Strategies to Accelerate Your Success* (www.ReadySetPlanGo.com), wrote about her book-writing experience :

“Michael, working with you on my book - *Ready, Set, PLAN, Go!* - 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.”

Joan D. Walsh, Co-Founder
FSMI, Kennett Square, PA
www.fsmi.us

The Additional Advantages of Becoming an Author

When writing a book, it's important to present your thoughts clearly, concisely, and convincingly. The writing exercise forces you to organize and focus your message, which in turn will allow you to increase the effectiveness of your marketing literature and sales presentations. And don't be surprised if new, profitable ideas surface during the writing process.

A book can also form the basis for a seminar or class you might want to teach, and it will give you the credibility you need to get hired. By the way, if you're already teaching a seminar or class, your notes might serve as good material for a book.

Associations and other organizations are often looking for speakers. Your credentials as an author will move you to the top of their list of sought-after presenters. And selling copies of your book at your speaking engagements will generate extra income and promote your services.

David Herdlinger's book, *Healing A Hospital: The Turnaround at the Southeast Georgia Health System* (www.healingahospital.com), has certainly turned out to be a good investment for him. Here's what he told me:

“When I asked you to help me write *Healing a Hospital*, I viewed the 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.”

David Herdlinger, President
Herdlinger Associates, St. Simons Island, GA
www.herdlinger.com

What Should You Write About?

Rule #1: Write about your passion, which ideally will align with your area of expertise.

Rule #2: Think about your target audience. What are their needs? What questions do they typically have? What information would be most useful to them? Information that may seem elementary to you can be very helpful to others.

Some fields – such as law, insurance, finance, employee relations, and safety – have complex regulations that must be followed in order to avoid substantial penalties. Books about these subjects that are well-written and easily understood can be of great benefit to your readers.

If you're a business owner, consider writing a corporate history to celebrate a company anniversary or other important occasion. It's a good way to talk about your organization's values and philosophy in an appealing manner. Give your book away to customers and prospects to promote your products and services and strengthen customer loyalty. Give it to vendors to build relationships. Give it to employees to foster pride and enthusiasm. And give it to local civic leaders to advance your image in your community.

Of course, your book does not have to be about your business. Maybe your passion is coaching youth sports. Or maybe you have some other avocation or hobby that is interesting to people. If so, consider writing a book that makes that subject come alive for your target audience. Let your personality shine through. Don't necessarily be deterred if books already have been written on the same subject. Consider approaching the topic from a different angle.

If you're writing for a broad audience, you might want to look for a publisher. If your book has a narrowly defined audience in a niche market, take the self-publishing route. The self-publishing industry has made tremendous strides in recent years. Printing 500 or 1000 books is not expensive. And print-on-demand (POD) services allow you to print books one-at-a-time at a reasonable cost.

Articles and White Papers

To get even more mileage out of your book, use it as the basis for one or more articles and white papers. Magazines and E-zines are looking for worthwhile material to publish, especially for niche markets.

"Writing and posting informative online articles to your website as well as submitting them to others is one of the best methods for increasing your website's traffic quickly and dramatically," says Jay Conrad Levinson, author of *Guerrilla Marketing on the Internet*. "Your articles don't have to be long - 500 to 700 words are ideal - but they do have to be meaty. It's best to choose topics related to your website, industry, products, or company. Offer useful tips, solutions to common problems, or how-tos, and don't forget to pepper your major key words and phrases throughout."

For some ideas about how to get your articles published, I suggest reading the "Getting an Article into Print" chapter in Stephen Van Yoder's excellent book, *Get Slightly Famous*. For online submissions, J. Conrad Levinson recommends in his book *Guerrilla Marketing for the Internet* that you use an online submission site that targets your industry. For example, www.SubmitYourArticles.com will distribute your articles to a number of reputable websites for a modest monthly fee.

It's Easier Than You Might Think

Writing a book is not difficult with the assistance of a good professional writer/editor. To learn more, I suggest you visit the *Resources* page of my website (www.MichaelJDowling.com) and download the following two free white papers:

- 5 Key Qualities to Look For When Hiring a Professional Writer (So You Don't Make a Costly Mistake!)
- 11 Questions You Need to Answer Before You Attempt to Become an Author

Michael J Dowling (www.MichaelJDowling.com) writes and edits books, articles, and other print communications to help individuals and organizations accomplish their goals, with particular emphasis on increasing the visibility and credibility of small businesses and entrepreneurs. He has an MBA from Columbia Business School in New York City, where he was a Harriman Scholar. Mike is the author of three published books.