

Title:

What You Can Learn From Dr. Phil About Writing Non-Fiction Books

Word Count:

1078

Summary:

Even if your career doesn't involve being a full-time writer, being the author of a book can be a huge boon for you. Our society holds authors in such high regard that anyone who has written one is seen as knowledgeable, self-disciplined and special. A book can help your business or career by making you more visible and sought-after for your expertise. All very good things. But if your natural talents don't involve writing regularly, it may be difficult for you to figure out ...

Keywords:

Article Body:

Even if your career doesn't involve being a full-time writer, being the author of a book can be a huge boon for you. Our society holds authors in such high regard that anyone who has written one is seen as knowledgeable, self-disciplined and special. A book can help your business or career by making you more visible and sought-after for your expertise. All very good things. But if your natural talents don't involve writing regularly, it may be difficult for you to figure out how to organize your expertise into an engaging book. Luckily, there are tricks that make it far easier to write non-fiction than fiction. Here's how to get started. I'll use Dr. Phil McGraw and his successful line of books as my example.

It's Not About You

Okay, it's easy to forget that writing a non-fiction book is not about you. After all, most likely, your picture is going to go on the cover! But let's face it: people are not going to buy your book just because of you. People don't buy Dr. Phil's books because they're so excited to hear what he has to say. No. They are buying it because he's going to help them solve a problem like losing weight, strengthening a family or salvaging a marriage. Where do you come in? People will be attracted to your overall message and how it makes them feel. Dr. Phil's message is to make you take charge and "get excited about your life". That's what's going help you lose weight, strengthen your family or salvage your

marriage. Note that the message is simple, clear--and not about Dr. Phil. What is your message? Make sure you connect it to others and don't overthink it. Most likely it's something you already radiate in your words and your being and you don't even know it!

What Aspect of Your Expertise Do People Want Most?

What do people come to you for? Are you a mortgage broker, but you find most people come to you with questions about their credit? Are you a family therapist and you observe that most of your patients don't know how to talk to each other? Are you a house painter and most of your customers don't know how to choose colors for their home? Wherever you see such a void, there is room for a book on that topic. You have to figure out what people want to know. Notice I use the word "want", and NOT "need". People rarely buy what they need, no matter how good it is for them.

That's a trap many new writers fall into. They write with a sense of duty, thinking "people really need to know this", like they need to know what being overweight can do to a body in the long term--and that's probably true. But readers would rather buy a diet book that will tell them how to solve the overweight problem as quickly and easily as possible. Dr. Phil's *The Ultimate Weight Solution* is a book about doing the real work of exercising and correcting inner problems to solve weight issues--Dr. Phil has said he didn't want it to be a book about telling people what to eat. And yet that's what people wrote in and said they wanted most--they wanted Dr. Phil to tell them what to eat. So what did he come out with next? *The Ultimate Weight Solution Food Guide* and then *The Ultimate Weight Solution Cookbook*! You too can find out what people want by just asking. Create a survey if that's possible for you, but the more you can find out about what your readership wants, the easier it will be for you to decide how to write it for them.

Write a Punchy Title

Once you've figured out what people want, you have to make it crystal clear that you're going to give it to them. You'll do that with the title and subtitle. It may help you write the book if you come up with your title first, because a good title will remind you of what you have promised to deliver. When you find your working straying and unfocused, you come back to the title and think, "oh yeah, I'm supposed to be telling them how to do X." Ideally, the title should be a grabber, and the subtitle tells exactly what the reader will get. Dr. Phil's titles do that really well. Here are a few examples: *Love Smart: Find the One*

You Want--Fix the One You Got, and The Ultimate Weight Solution: The 7 Keys to Weight Loss Freedom and Family First: Your Step-by-Step Plan to Creating a Phenomenal Family. Note how each subtitle makes you think, "Yeah, I want that! or I want to know how to do that!". Result: reader picks up the book!

Think Steps, Keys and Strategies

Note Dr. Phil's use of "keys" and "steps" and "plans". Even if you're working with a complex subject, you want to chunk it down as much as possible and keep it simple for your readers. You want them to see that they can do X on their own just by reading your book. You will give them everything they need. Again, this tactic will also make it easier to organize all your knowledge and expertise because you know you only have to focus on one particular "how to" and the X steps it will take to handle it.

Tell Stories

This idea goes all the way back to the Bible and beyond: we learn best from stories. It helps to hear how someone else handled the same situation because we can see what is possible. As you outline your book, make a note as to what story or stories you will tell to illustrate every point you'll be making. Tell the stories of your clients (changing names, of course, to protect their privacy) or use anecdotes from your own life experience. Dr. Phil's Family First is peppered with his stories of growing up with his own family issues. Make sure you use the right stories. You want them to be clearly connected to your concept so there's no mistaking your point.

And that's it. Following these guidelines should help you create a book that not only showcases your expertise, it will also be one that's sought-after by a market hungry for what you have to offer. All you have to do now is get started!