

Title:

Book Proposals 101.: What Publishers Want

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Summary:

Lots of writers like to talk about writing books. You hear very few talking about writing book proposals. Maybe that's why it's easy to forget that a strong book proposal is the first step to getting a great deal for your non-fiction book. It's where you make the big pitch and tell the editor everything that's going to make him or her want to buy.

A book proposal is also a great time saver for you because you'll find in the course of researching your book proposal whether ...

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Lots of writers like to talk about writing books. You hear very few talking about writing book proposals. Maybe that's why it's easy to forget that a strong book proposal is the first step to getting a great deal for your non-fiction book. It's where you make the big pitch and tell the editor everything that's going to make him or her want to buy.

A book proposal is also a great time saver for you because you'll find in the course of researching your book proposal whether or not your idea is viable, or whether your category is already crowded with similar books. Here are the parts that make up a book proposal, and a few tips on how to make it really stand out to a potential publisher.

Title Page

This is the first page of the book proposal. Your title should be centered and printed about two-thirds of the way down the page. In the bottom left hand corner you'll type in your name, address, phone number, email address and the name and contact information for your agent.

Overview

You'll want to have two to three pages explaining the overall premise of your book. You'll also want to include a Table of Contents that shows what points

will be covered in each chapter.

Bio/Credentials

This isn't just your usual resume stuff, this is a big opportunity to sell yourself as THE person to write the book. Write it in the third person starting with your education and credentials. You'll want to point out any experience that specifically relates to the subject matter of the book. Have you written articles or previous books on the topic? Note those as well. List any public speaking that you have done and will do in the future, including television and radio interviews. Include a really nice photo. It doesn't have to be a glamour shot, but you do want to look interesting and engaging. A 5"x7" is fine.

Competition

The publisher will want to know if there are books similar to yours already out there. It will help them to see that there is a market for such books. At the same time, you'll want to point out how your book will be different, or better, than what's already out there. Do not trash someone else's work. It's bad form. It's enough to say a competitor's book left something out, or doesn't cover a certain aspect. If you don't know what competing books exist, you can look them up in Books in Print. Most libraries have it in the reference section.

Outline

This will be your chapter-by-chapter outline showing what you will cover, point-by-point, in each chapter. You can plan on allotting about half a page per chapter.

Sample Chapters

This is where you get to show that you really can write! You should submit at least three chapters of content. It doesn't have to be the first three chapters, but if you haven't written anything yet those may be the easiest to do. Then again, some writers like to start in the middle of a book! The main key here is to be good--no typos, no misspellings and no factual errors.

Marketing

The marketing section of your book proposal is so important that many publishers will often read it first. So make sure you spend the time to make this the best it can be. Lay out your whole marketing plan here. Explain who your target audience is, how big it is and why they will buy this book. How do you plan on reaching them? Are you buying your own advertising? If so, in what publications and what is their combined circulation? Will you be reaching out to book clubs, corporations or college classes where your book could be taught? How can you make your book stand out against the ones that are already out there? You want to make the case that there is a ready made audience out there and all the

publisher has to do is reach out and grab them by signing you.

Promotion

Remember, a publisher wants to acquire you and your connections, so this is another important section of the proposal. How will you put yourself out there for your book? You'll want to explain if you'll be doing public speaking, or maybe you have a huge list you communicate with via newsletter every month. How many are on your list? If you plan to hire your own publicist, put that fact in as well. Do you have famous connections that will help you get great blurbs? Do you have a budget? If so, how much? Yes, they do want to know if you plan on spending some of your own money!

Publishing Details

Here you'll detail the length you propose for the book (in words) and whether the book will have any illustrations or photos. You'll also want to give an estimate for the time you'll need to turn in the finished manuscript.

And that's it. When your proposal is done you might want to hire an editor or a book consultant to go over it and give you some strong feedback. That way you'll know you have it in the best shape possible and you can feel confident when you're sending it out.