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7 COMMON ROADBLOCKS TO WRITING A BOOK

And How to Overcome Them

By Michael J. Dowling

About the Author

Michael J. Dowling helps business professionals and thought leaders write and publish non-fiction books that communicate their ideas, promote their capabilities, and advance their careers.

Eighty-one percent of Americans feel that they have a book in them — and should write it.”

That’s the observation of Joseph Epstein, former editor of *The American Scholar* magazine. Obviously, the great majority of these aspiring authors never pursue their dream.

What about you? Do you have a book idea percolating inside you? If so, what’s been holding you back? Below are seven common roadblocks. Do you resonate with any of them? This paper will help you overcome these roadblocks and move forward with your dream, if that’s what you truly desire.

Roadblock #1: Not Enough Time

Like most successful people, you are no doubt extremely busy. But interestingly, it’s the busy people who somehow find time to write the books that bring them even more success.

How do they do it? In the process of helping numerous busy professionals become successful first-time authors, I’ve noticed that most share the following two traits:

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- 1. They prioritize important matters over urgent matters.** *Urgent* matters demand immediate attention. You can't ignore them. But it's the *important* matters that determine your long-term success.

A book falls into the *important* category. It can catapult you to the next higher professional level. However, writing that book is usually a non-urgent priority that can be easily postponed. But no matter how busy you are, you can find the time to write a book if you desire.

"No matter how busy you are, you can find the time to write a book, if you make that a priority."

- 2. They leverage their strengths.** Trying to write a book on your own is an uphill battle. Successful leaders focus on doing what they do best, and they enlist the help of qualified specialists to handle the rest.

Consider hiring a ghostwriter to do the heavy lifting, so you don't need to neglect your day-to-day responsibilities. A ghostwriter can also provide helpful accountability that keeps your project on the front burner.

Roadblock #2: Lack of Clarity About the Subject

If you're up in the air about the topic for your book, perhaps Theologian Frederick Buechner's words about the choice of a vocation will help clarify your thinking. Buechner said, "Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world's greatest need." Try extrapolating from Buechner's advice by asking yourself, "What am I most qualified to say that my readers most need to hear?"

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Here are some additional questions that may help you achieve clarity:

- What are you most passionate about?
- What problem(s) would most like to help solve?
- If you were invited to give a presentation on a topic of your choice to an audience you could select, what topic would you choose and what audience would you select?
- What group of people would you most like to influence? Describe this “target audience” as specifically as possible.
- What specific knowledge and experiences do you have that you would most like to write about for the benefit of this target audience?
- When other people meet you, what do they seem to find most interesting? What questions do they ask?
- What kind of book would best accomplish your goals and give you the greatest satisfaction?

“Trying to write a book on your own is an uphill battle.”

“Ask yourself, ‘What am I most qualified to say that my readers most need to hear?’”

Your answers to the above questions may point you to one or more possible subjects for your book. If you don’t have clarity after completing this exercise, postpone writing your book until you do.

Roadblock #3: Lack of Motivation

Writing a book requires a serious investment of time and money. Before you start, you need to have confidence that you will earn a meaningful return on that investment. If you’re having trouble getting out of the starting blocks with your book project, perhaps you need to more fully appreciate the potential benefits of becoming an author.

First, a word of caution: don’t count on getting rich by selling copies of your non-fiction book. In most cases, proceeds from sales

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will only help offset the writing and publishing costs. But there are plenty of other rewards. Below are some key things you can expect your book to do for you:

1. Promote your ideas

A well-written book allows you to present your ideas clearly and convincingly, so readers will be inclined to adopt your point of view. You can make even highly complex subjects interesting and understandable by including stories and case studies.

2. Sell your capabilities

A book is the ultimate content marketing tool. It will promote you and your organization in an informative, appealing, professional, and persuasive manner 24/7/365. Readers will come to you predisposed to buy. Your income level and overall success will increase. One book in the right hands can sometimes generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in new business.

3. Establish your brand

When you become an author, people will view you as a thought leader and an authority in your field. New opportunities will open up to you.

4. Clarify your goals and message

The book-writing process will naturally force you to clarify your goals and hone your message. You will emerge from the process with sharper focus and valuable content you can use for informational and promotional materials.

“Early on, begin thinking about what you’re going to do when the writing is done.”

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5. Advance your career

Numerous people say they want to write a book, but few actually do it. When you become an author, you join an exclusive club. People will take notice, and your career will take off.

6. Multiply your speaking invitations

Writing a book can help make you a sought-after speaker. If you charge speaking fees, you'll be able to increase them. Media outlets are always looking for interesting people to interview. If your book has wide appeal, you could become a "go-to" person for regional and national media.

"Whether you self-publish or go with a traditional publisher, you will need to do much of your own marketing."

Here's how one of my ghostwriting clients summarized her experience as a first-time author:

Michael, writing a book with you 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.

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If you've been up against the "lack of motivation" roadblock, understanding the benefits listed above should help remove it!

Roadblock #4: Lack of Knowledge about Publishing

You'll be more inclined to start writing your book if you understand how you're ultimately going to publish and distribute it. Early on, begin thinking about what you're going to do when the writing is done.

You might start by reading my white paper "Publishing Options: How to Choose the Best Method for Publishing Your Book," which is available on the White Papers page of my website. It provides an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of traditional publishing, subsidy publishing, and self-publishing.

"Don't count on getting rich from sales of your book."

If you decide to self-publish, I recommend reading *Dan Poynter's Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book* and *The Publishing Game: Publish a Book in 30 Days!* by Fern Reiss.

Whether you self-publish or go with a traditional publisher, you will need to do much of your own marketing. To learn about book marketing, I recommend reading *1001 Ways to Market Your Books* by John Kremer and *The Well-Fed Self-Publisher: How to Turn One Book into a Full-Time Living* by Peter Bowerman.

Roadblock #5: Concerns about Costs

If you're unsure about whether becoming an author makes economic sense, write down the specific benefits you stand to gain

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“The writing process will help you clarify your professional goals and focus your message. The publishing process will help you broadcast your message and establish your brand.”

“When you become an author, you will join a rather exclusive club. People will take notice, and your career will take off.”

from your book. Do your best to put a dollar figure on the non-monetary benefits. Then, project your costs for writing and publishing your book and calculate your anticipated ROI. Once you've completed this exercise, you'll feel more comfortable with whatever decision you make.

Roadblock #6: Lack of Writing Ability

You don't have to be a good writer to write a good book. A competent professional ghostwriter can effectively present your ideas in your voice, saving you considerable time and effort. (If you want to do your own writing, I strongly suggest that you at least hire an editor to work with you.)

Roadblock #7: Lack of Confidence

Writing a book is a highly creative endeavor. Your vision and motivation must come primarily from within. The process demands imagination, initiative, discipline, passion, perseverance, and even courage. That's one reason why so many people never follow through with their dream of becoming an author.

But don't be intimidated by the challenge. Do your research. Talk to professionals in the field. Hire a ghostwriter or other publishing professional to help you. After investigation, if you decide your book idea has merit, take the plunge. You can do it!

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About the Author



Michael J. Dowling is an award-winning author and the ghostwriter and editor of more than twenty non-fiction books for business leaders and other thought leaders. He offers turnkey services that make the writing and publishing process understandable, cost-effective, time-efficient, and enjoyable for his clients.

Mike earned an MBA degree from Columbia Business School, where he was a Harriman Scholar, and a Bachelor of Science degree with honors from the University of Florida. Prior to founding Wool Street Writers in 1999, he served as president of an educational publishing company, president of a national gift company, and administrator of a 1000-member church. He is the ghostwriter, author, or editor of numerous books and articles.

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