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

- 1. They don't let urgent matters crowd out important matters.** *Urgent* matters can't be ignored. 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. No matter how busy you are, you can find the time to write a book if it's important.

- 2. They leverage their strengths.** Successful leaders focus on doing what they do best, and they enlist the help of qualified specialists to handle the rest.

Trying to write a book on your own is an uphill battle. 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 these words by theologian Frederick Buechner about choosing 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 you 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 types 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 about your topic, 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 should 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, make a list of the benefits you can expect to gain by becoming an author.

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

First, a word of caution: don’t count on getting rich by selling copies of your book. In most cases, proceeds from sales 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 will allow you to present your ideas clearly and convincingly. Stories allow you to explain complex subjects in interesting and understandable ways, and case studies enhance your credibility.

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. One book in the right hands can sometimes generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in new business.

3. Enhance your credibility

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. Help you clarify your goals and message

During the book-writing process, you will find yourself naturally clarifying your goals and honing your message. You will emerge from the process with sharper focus and valuable content you can use for informational and promotional materials.

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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. Attract speaking invitations

Writing a book can make you a sought-after speaker. If you charge speaking fees, you may 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.

7. Give you satisfaction

What a wonderful feeling to hold your very own book in your hands!

“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. If you desire to write a book, and you have solid reasons for doing so, don't procrastinate!

Roadblock #4: Uncertainty about Publishing & Marketing

As part of my services as your ghostwriter, I'll guide you through the entire process from the conceptualization to the publication of your book. I'll explain the pros and cons of traditional publishing, hybrid publishing, and self-publishing, so you can choose the best route for you. I can also introduce you to book marketing experts, if you desire.

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

Roadblock #5: Concerns about Costs

I'll help you develop a budget for your book project before you start, so you will have a good idea about what your costs will be. The typical book project costs between \$25,000 and \$65,000. That's not a trivial amount, but a book that promotes your business can produce a tremendous return on that investment. The books of at least two of my ghostwriting clients have generated more than \$1 million in new business. Autobiographies, family histories, and similar books can produce enormous intangible rewards.

Roadblock #6: Lack of Writing Ability

You don't have to be a good writer to write a good book. A competent professional ghostwriter, editor, or writing coach can help you effectively present your ideas in your voice, saving you considerable time and effort.

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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.”

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 fail to 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!

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

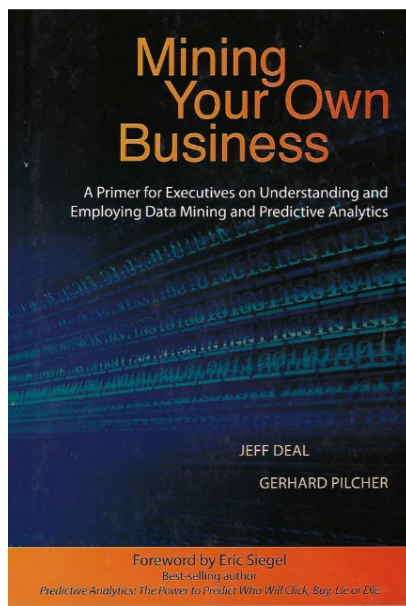
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A Success Story

As a ghostwriter and editor for thought leaders, I love it when a book I help a client write produces a huge return on investment. Here is one of these exciting success stories, told by Gerhard Pilcher, CEO of Elder Research Inc., a leading data analytics firm headquartered in Charlottesville, VA.



The management of a medium-to-large consumer packaged goods company wanted their firm to become more data driven, so they began working with some of the larger analytics firms. But these firms were expensive, and their results weren't always responsive to the company's needs, so they did some more research.

Along the way, they came across the book Michael Dowling helped Jeff Deal and me write, *Mining Your Own Business: A Primer for Executives on Understanding and Employing Data Mining and Predictive Analytics*. The COO read it and passed it along to the company's CEO.

We were one of four analytics firms invited in for a half-day interview. On the day that we pitched our services, the CEO pulled out his copy of our book. It was full of all kinds of stickies he had used to highlight key points, and we had a great conversation about it.

We ended up getting the contract, and it has been a multi-million-dollar engagement that has grown each year. **We were discovered because of our book, not because of our website or all our SEO marketing.**

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About the Author



Michael J. Dowling is an award-winning author and the ghostwriter and editor of approximately thirty 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.

Michael 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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