

Why Marketing, THEN Manuscript

It is as predictable as it is true, that most aspiring and first time authors put all of their focus and labor into crafting that perfect manuscript. After all, it is the words—the content—that makes a book desirable, right? Ultimately, that is true. But, what if the readers never find out about your book in order to take your masterpiece home? Uh-oh. Would you still agree that the content is the most important part?

In reality, the writing of the book isn't the end; it is only the beginning of the process. What comes afterwards needs to be considered up front in order to have a successful book project. Here are five questions that you must ask yourself BEFORE you start writing your book and why they are important.

1. Who is going to read your book? The answer isn't "everyone." While we might like to believe that everyone will be interested in our work, the truth of the matter is that they won't be. The more tightly you can focus on and identify your audience and their desires, the more successful your project will be. This is true for fiction as well as non-fiction. If you write for a particular audience, then you will have someone specific to market your book to. With over 500,000 new books being published in 2008, if you can't identify your audience, you have little chance of commercial success. TIP: The best time to identify your "market" is before the book is written.
2. What is unique or different about my book? If you say, "no one has written a book like this before" there may be a reason. You have to consider whether your topic is something that people WANT to read about. The more that people want to read about something, the more room there is for your "spin" or version of the story. But make sure your book isn't just a "me too"—that you have something interesting or unique to add to the subject. If the subject is finances, sex, how-to, or in-the-news, you will have a market that buys books. TIP: Before you start, make sure someone wants to buy it—beyond your mother.
3. What are your goals for your project? It is perfectly OK to write a book of your memoirs for your family or a cookbook for the church women, or the next great novel, or . . . Just make sure that your expectations of sales match the effort and money you will put into your project. The book business is a very complex, cost-laden business in the traditional sense. It can also be very inexpensive at the non-commercial end. TIP: Be clear early on as to what type of project you are attempting to do. Set your expectations realistically.
4. How much time and money can you devote to the project? The project doesn't end when you are done writing, in fact, I would argue that is where it begins. Producing a book, whether you are traditionally published or independently published or vanity published costs time and money. You are starting a business that will be with you for some time. Before you sink your heart, soul, and time into producing a book be sure you understand the ramifications. Unless you are a celebrity, politician, sport figure, etc., you will participate with time and money in making your book successful—in other words—marketing your book. TIP: Get your business set-up before you start writing your book. You will need to keep track of everything for the IRS regardless of how you are published.
5. How will your book ultimately get published? As the ad says, "now everyone can be published" is true. However, not every publishing option is right for every project. The sheer volume of people writing and wanting to be published has put tremendous strain on the traditional resources, spawning all kinds of new options—some good, some not so good for any given book. Unless you have been successfully published before, or you are a celebrity, or your brother heads Random House, you have very little chance of being traditionally published. So before you write your book, consider what your back-up plan may be, how much it may cost and do you have the time and

inclination to be involved in producing your book. TIP: Do your research before you write your book so that you know your game plan.

As I'm sure you have figured out by now, all of these questions are intertwined with your manuscript, but they aren't about your manuscript—they are about marketing and the business of writing a book. A lot of disappointment can be avoided if you have a serious conversation with yourself and knowledgeable people in the industry before your dreams are shattered because you just didn't know what to expect. As Will Rogers said, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." This couldn't be more true than in publishing.

Carol White is an author, speaker, and book marketing coach. In addition to co-authoring the best selling, award-winning book, *Live Your Road Trip Dream*, Carol is a frequent guest speaker at conventions such as the national AARP Life @ 50+ and The Great North American RV Rally. She is also a published writer for magazines and websites and has spoken to publishing groups including Publisher's Marketing Association's PMA-U, PNBA's annual book show and locally to the Northwest Association of Book Publishers. Carol's writing has appeared in such publications as Me* Magazine, AAA Living, Perceptive Travel and more. She is frequently quoted as a travel expert in such publications as Publisher's Weekly, National Geographic Traveler, Real Simple and Health. Find out how Carol can help you successfully launch your book project also. See www.carolwhitemarketing.com for more information.