

Chapter

Book Publishing

The Guerrilla's 800-Pound Gorilla

If I read a book that cost me \$20 and I get one good idea, I have gotten one of the greatest bargains of all time.

—TOM PETERS¹

When Michael Hammer and James Champy published *Reengineering the Corporation* in 1993,² they launched a business revolution. The book, which called for the “rethinking and radical redesign of business,” became a *New York Times* bestseller and the handbook for business transformation. Hammer and Champy were also swamped with new consulting business.

Authoring a book has marketing clout with clients and prospective clients. The right book, at the right time, invariably will catapult a consultant to the top of a client’s list of favorites. However, writing a book is also a time-consuming, long-term commitment. For many consultants, devising, writing, and publishing a book takes longer than completing their longest client project.

■ THE POWER OF THE PEN

Few marketing weapons give as much bang for the buck as a successful book:

- *It establishes you as an expert.* On publication, the book instantly establishes you as an expert with your clients, potential clients, and peers. Authorship grabs the attention of prospective clients and experts both in your field and in other areas. They want to meet you to discuss your theories, their problems, and how you can help. Those who have read your book will know your ideas and approaches and may be looking for opportunities to work with you.
- *A published book provides a platform for speaking opportunities.* A book will get your name in front of those who hire speakers. With aggressive promotion, you should land multiple paid speaking engagements that can supplement your consulting fees and provide leads for new consulting work. With the right publicity strategy, the media will seek you out for interviews, quotes, and television appearances.
- *Your intellectual assets multiply.* You can condense the material in your book for multiple articles. Each chapter can serve as the basis for additional research and publication. You can create speech materials from the summary of the book's theories or individual parts of the book. You can create workbooks that help readers apply the book's concepts, audio recordings of the book, and book summaries of the basic ideas. The possibilities for using a book as a source for new intellectual assets are endless.

■ SHOULD YOU WRITE A BOOK?

For many, the *idea* of being an author is more appealing than actually sitting at the keyboard and working at it. It's fairly easy to envision a book-length work in your mind; it's quite another matter to get the whole thing on paper. You may have written dozens of consulting reports, but that experience won't always be helpful because many

GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: A BOOK'S VALUE TO A CONSULTANT

The greatest value of your book is the exposure it provides and the additional opportunities that follow. Look at your book as a platform and use it to create consulting opportunities and new contacts.

consulting reports are dry, fact-filled analyses of an arcane problem that average nonfiction readers would find painful to read.

A winning book shares some characteristics with a winning consulting project. You must have a compelling idea, a new way of looking at an old problem, or a unique twist on a new issue. To determine whether you should write a book, answer these seven questions:

1. *Do you have an idea that can fill a book?* It may be easy to imagine that a single, critical idea could fill a book, but that's not always the case. Do you have something compelling to say that will fill an entire book: an idea, a process, a story, unique position, or a combination of those elements? Drafting a rough outline of the projected book's table of contents will help you see whether you've really got a book.
2. *Do you enjoy writing?* Some consultants get heartburn when it comes to writing reports and proposals. If you don't enjoy writing, you shouldn't try to write a book.
3. *Are you willing to sharpen your writing skills?* Publishers want books that are less formal and easier to read than most consulting reports. Most readers won't slog through dense prose—they look for information that is presented clearly and concisely. You may have to change your writing style to appeal to business readers.
4. *Do you have the time and patience to master the details of preparing a book-length work?* Because of their expertise, consultants are often afforded great respect in the client environment. In the world of traditional publishing, the consultant is just another author, not a guru who commands high fees. You'll need time and patience to master the ins and outs of the publishing world.

Realize that you'll spend considerable time finding and working with agents, lawyers, publicists, and others. Ask yourself if you have the time to write a book proposal, find an agent, endure contract negotiations, and undertake a long-term writing project.

Writing a book usually requires a juggling act as you try to balance consulting assignments, your family, and your writing. Before you get too deeply involved, set your priorities and understand that everything will take longer than you think. Estimate the time you think you'll need—then double it. Then expect delays.

5. *Are you willing to write a detailed book proposal?* You will need to write a book proposal that meets stringent specifications because most literary agents won't discuss your project without such a proposal (see the discussion later in this chapter). Your book proposal, which can be a lengthy document itself, requires a substantial commitment. When you spend time writing a book proposal, you'll incur opportunity costs—you could have devoted that time and effort to other marketing efforts.

A word of caution about book proposals is in order. Most consultants see the word *proposal* and believe they can knock one out quickly. A proposal is, after all, a routine activity for consultants. A book proposal is very different from a consulting proposal, so be sure to read up on how to prepare one. *How to Write a Book Proposal*, by literary agent Michael Larsen, is a good resource.

6. *Are you willing to forcefully promote the book once it's published?* Authors are responsible for promoting their books, so you must be willing to invest time, money, and energy in this activity as well as in writing. Some of the hardest work in the publishing process comes *after* a book is in print. If you want it to stay on bookstore shelves, you and your firm must be willing to pull out all the stops to promote the book, particularly in the first few weeks after publication.
7. *Can you handle rejection?* Many first-time authors make numerous attempts before finding an agent willing to support their book proposals. With patience, you'll develop a salable idea, but you may get a stack of rejection letters from agents before you find someone to help you sell your book to a publisher. It can be a humbling experience.

If you answered yes to at least most of these questions, you're ready to take on a book project. If you're unsure, consider first writing on a smaller scale and then moving on to beefier publications.

GUERRILLA TIP: THE IDEAL BOOK

As a consultant, the ideal book for you to write would focus on a topic you know cold, that's in demand, solves a problem, and promotes the services you provide.

Begin by authoring articles for newspapers, newsletters, Web sites, and other publications. Work up to longer articles or special reports for targeted publications. Over time, you'll polish your writing skills, generate some publicity for your practice, and be in a better position to decide whether you're interested in writing a book.

■ TAKING THE LEAP

Think about writing a book as a consulting project. You'll need to propose a salable and valuable idea, create a plan for completing the work and, once the project is done, sell your results. Unless you're self-publishing, your first sale will be to a literary agent or a publisher. Agents and publishers are only interested in books that will sell, so stress your book's sales potential in your proposal.

A book proposal sets forth a business plan for your book. You have to convince yourself and an agent that your book—the business in this venture—has profit-making potential. Build your case around the size of your market, the need for this particular subject, and the competitive situation your book will face once it hits the shelves. Review similar and complementary books. Their existence will prove to publishers that there are potential buyers for your book.

Examine both what's being published and what's selling in your book's category. Browse online and in traditional bookstores and identify the specific book category your book would fall under. Booksellers have to know where to put your book, so be sure you define its subject category. Then, determine whether that category is saturated or underserved. Tap into your client experience to test your ideas. Solicit clients' input and perspectives.

GUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE: WHAT ABOUT ROYALTIES?

Before you even consider writing a book, understand the full commitment of resources required. Although the rewards of publishing can be enormous, only a few books make money for their authors. Unless you're a best-selling author, your royalties may not even cover your book promotion expenses. The direct income you receive from writing a book may not be as great as you expect, but then again, the client projects you win can far outstrip any royalties you might receive from sales of the book.

Once you've done your preliminary research and settled on an idea, you're ready to start writing your book proposal. Even if you plan to self-publish your book, the rigor of preparing a book proposal will shorten the time you'll eventually need to write the book while giving you a good idea of the level of effort you'll face.

Many fine books have been written about the art of preparing a winning book proposal, and you should study them. You can ease the effort of preparing a book proposal by following the guidelines set forth by the publishing world. A fairly clear set of steps guide your way, so follow them. Buck the system too much and you'll find yourself rewriting your book proposal more times than you revise a controversial client report.

At a minimum, a book proposal must include seven major topic areas.

1. *The idea*: What is your subject and how will it grab readers? What's new or different about your treatment of the subject?
2. *The market for the book*: Who will buy the book? How large is the potential market for the book? And, how many books do you estimate you can sell?
3. *Comparable and competitive books*: Who else is writing on your subject? What are the strengths and weaknesses of those books and how will your book add to the subject? What books complement your proposed book and how will your book add to what's been written?
4. *Potential spin-offs*: What other avenues exist for publishing your material—book summaries, audiotapes, or companion field guides?
5. *Your qualifications to write the book*: Agents and publishers will look at how qualified you are to complete the book and how aggressively you will push it into the market. A professional chef who wants to write about the joys of making pottery had better have some real qualifications on the pottery wheel. Demonstrate your expertise by identifying a problem and showing readers how to solve it.
6. *Your plan to promote the book*: Agents and publishers place the lion's share of the promotion burden on the author, so show how you'll support the marketing of your book to meet the forecast you've set earlier in your proposal. Many agents and publishers view this section as the most important part of the proposal. A great book idea with a lackluster promotion plan will come back to you for revision.

7. *The details:* A book proposal must also contain the book's proposed table of contents, a brief summary of each chapter, and one or two sample chapters.

Painful though it can be, writing a proposal forces an author to define and state what the book is about and why a publisher should buy it. Many authors think this task is the most difficult part of writing a book. But once it's done, you have a running start on drafting the manuscript, so you won't spend as much time staring at a blank computer screen wondering what to write.

■ HAVE YOUR AGENT CALL MY AGENT

Most publishers won't accept unsolicited proposals and manuscripts, and those that do will have your submission evaluated by an overworked junior editor who will super speed-read it. So it's usually best to retain a literary agent to act as your representative with publishers' acquisition editors. Most literary agents are swamped with requests, so they can also be difficult to reach, but they hold the keys to the publishing world.

Since literary agents work on commission—usually 15 percent of the funds their clients receive—they won't waste their time on projects that publishers are not apt to buy. By submitting a proposal or manuscript to an agent, you'll get a mixed bag. Some will give you an expert opinion on the commercial merit of your book. Others may send you a thin letter in the mail stating only that they have decided not to represent you.

If you find an agent willing to take on your project, the best ones will advise you how to shape your proposal or manuscript to make it marketable. They'll also refer you to other resources such as proofreaders, editors, and researchers who can help you smooth rough spots.

Agents know the best potential publishers for your work and how and when to approach them. If a publisher shows interest, they'll negotiate on your behalf. Most agents are skilled negotiators and since they've got a vested interest, they'll fight for a good deal.

The greatest benefit of agents may be their role as advisors. They become your partners and may be the only people you can really talk to about strategy for your book. Agents know the publishing business, the markets, and your contract, and will protect your interests. If your book sales are good, they'll push the publisher for more promotion or perhaps a second book.

For more information about agents, see *Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors and Literary Agents 2004*,³ and *Literary Agents*, by Michael Larsen.⁴

■ YOUR PUBLISHING DECISIONS

The publishing business is undergoing major changes, and that's good for guerrillas. Today, authors have many options to bring their ideas to market. They can approach a wide range of traditional print publishers, from prominent publishing houses to smaller specialized firms with obscure names. If that route isn't desirable, they can self-publish their work, pay to have a vanity house publish their book, or publish an e-book. Today, with so many books being published, the trick isn't getting your book published, but getting it noticed in the market.

Here's a brief rundown on the options you can consider.

► Traditional Publishing

The mainstream publishing houses are like the shopping malls of publishing. They publish titles on subjects from advertising to zoos. Their business is highly speculative and marketing driven. Manuscripts have long development cycles and publishers must incur substantial upfront editing, printing, and marketing costs. Few publishers will offer you a contract if they don't believe that they can profit from publishing your book.

Producing artful books is great, but that's not the main objective of most publishers. Like other businesses, they survive by making money and tend to live by the stock investor's credo, "Buy low, sell high." As a result, they are efficient at controlling costs. They buy manuscripts as cheaply as possible and keep their editing, printing, distribution, and promotional costs down. A publisher's emphasis on profit can sometimes set up a creative clash with authors about things like book design, promotion, and distribution.

But the mainstream publishers provide highly polished, well-designed products and usually have wide distribution. Their books are well edited and frequently indexed. Although publishers help their authors publicize books, most want to see quick success and won't continue supporting books that start slowly out of the gate.

Because of the sheer volume of books produced by most large publishers, new titles seem to take forever to hit the bookstores. Book projects take longer than you might think, so remain patient. After

you submit a manuscript to a large publisher, it will be many months before your book is published.

Being published by a major publisher certainly has cachet and can provide greater credibility than other publishing options, especially with clients who buy consulting services. So, don't shy away from this option, even though the process seems drawn out. However, that old canard "if your book isn't published by one of the big New York publishing houses, you're not a real author" is total nonsense. Never judge a book by its publisher.

► **Smaller Publishers**

Literally thousands of small publishers exist and many of them specialize in niches that could have great appeal for a consultant-author. Many smaller publishers have long histories and are highly respected.

Smaller publishers are usually able to bring manuscripts to the market faster than bigger publishers—often in half the time. They also tend to give books more personal attention and keep them in print longer. Many smaller publishers are experts at targeting their particular markets and can provide you with wise guidance on your book's content, approach, direction, and marketing strategy.

If you go with a smaller publisher, you still need to submit a proposal and usually have to go through an agent. Smaller publishers may pay low advances and low royalties, but they will bring your book to print.

► **Self-Publishing**

Self-publishing is the fastest growing segment of the publishing industry. Sophisticated hardware and software continue to make book production simpler and less costly. Self-published authors keep their book profits because they don't have to share profits with publishers. There is no need for a literary agent or a formal book proposal. The author has total control of the book's content, design, and distribution.

If you choose to self-publish your book, you've become more than an author. You're in the publishing business. Self-publishing requires authors to take operational and financial responsibility for every aspect of their books, which can consume that most precious resource, time. The good news is that people and firms can be hired at virtually every stage of the publishing process to help you edit, design, print, distribute, and promote self-published books.

Some of the world's best-selling books were originally self-published and later picked up by major publishers once the books

became successful. The primary challenge facing most self-publishers is getting wide distribution of their books in bookstores and online outlets.

With the advent of printing on demand (POD), publishing your own book has become an even more realistic option. POD lets writers print only as many books as they need. If writers self-publish and get requests for 20 books, they can have their contract printer produce only that number and ship them wherever needed. POD avoids large up-front printing costs because you don't have to publish mass quantities and you don't have any storage costs.

The cost of POD for each book is slightly higher than printing in bulk because you are printing incrementally instead of in large print runs. However, it is easier on the consultant's cash flow not to print large quantities of unneeded inventory. Since traditional publishers dole out such meager royalties, especially to first-time authors, self-publishing can be very profitable.

► **Vanity Publishers**

Vanity publishers publish books for a fee; you pay them to publish your book. Essentially, vanity publishers are little more than printers, although some provide editorial services and limited distribution. You may hear vanity publishers referred to as joint venture publishers, cooperative publishers, subsidy publishers, and shared responsibility publishers. Some even call themselves self-publishing companies.

The quality of vanity publications varies from company to company and by how much you pay. Some of their products look like sales brochures on steroids. In most cases, books produced by vanity publishers are instantly recognizable. If you have a solid idea and a good promotional plan, you shouldn't have to pay a vanity publisher to print your book. You should consider one of the other publishing options.

► **E-Publishing**

The newest member of the self-publishing family is the e-book, which is a book that readers can download from an Internet site. E-books provide instant delivery to interested readers.

E-books are less expensive to produce than print books because you don't have printing or shipping costs. With e-books, you no longer have to wade through the laborious print publication process. You can simply sell the book on your own Web site or through e-book publishers. You can send your manuscript to e-book publishers electronically

and they can help you get it ready for publication. Most promote the book on their site and some offer POD and direct downloads of the book. You'll still have primary responsibility for promoting your book, and you can sell it on your site and in other venues such as conventions and speaking engagements.

The advantage of publishing an e-book is speed. Once you create your book, it's easy to get it prepared for distribution via the Web. The best companies selling e-books offer much higher royalties than any other publishing option. But like their traditional publishing brethren, they'll reject poorly written manuscripts. So, apply the same rigor to an e-book that you would to any other publication. E-books are also easy to revise and update.

With e-books, readers can review your book, pay for it online, download it, and begin reading without leaving their offices. Not surprisingly, many e-book readers print out the file they receive so they can read the book more easily.

But e-books have disadvantages. Your royalties will be higher, but you will receive no advance. It can be more difficult to use an e-book to promote your expertise because you can't just lay the book down on the client's desk. Since your book won't appear in bookstores or in hard copies, it may be harder to use it to promote your practice with some clients.

As a publishing option, e-books are ideal for shorter works, chapter-length pieces, and speeches. Guerrilla author Seth Godin supplemented his book, *Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable*, with the e-book *99 Cows*, which provides 99 examples of the points he raised in *Purple Cow*.⁵

GUERRILLA TACTIC: INCLUDE REAL CONTENT IN FREE EXCERPTS

Some consultants offer excerpts of their e-books or other work on their sites to encourage visitors to sign up for a zine or to make a purchase. If you offer such excerpts, be sure they provide real value. Don't frustrate potential clients by holding back helpful content. If you do, they may decide not to buy your book or cancel their subscription to your zine. Include some substance in a free excerpt because it can convince readers to buy the e-book.

■ PROMOTION

So many books are published each year that it's hard to distinguish your book and get it noticed, so guerrilla marketing tactics will come in handy. Most publishers have in-house publicity departments to promote your book. However, the reality is that in-house publicists are so overworked that they can't satisfy all their authors' needs. Besides, you should be eager to promote your own work. After all, it's your passion, and no one is going to sell your book better and more enthusiastically than you.

Most in-house publicists include your book in the publisher's catalog, take it to book fairs and expos, and send press releases about it to the media. Unless you are a big-name author or have negotiated a special deal, which is difficult to get, that's all you'll receive. In-house publicists have little time or funds to sufficiently promote your book. If you go with a large publisher, expect the publisher to assign your book to an overworked publicist.

■ THE GUERRILLA CONSULTANT'S RULES FOR PROMOTING A BOOK

- *Your book is a means, not an end:* Remember you have two objectives when promoting your book. First, you want the book to attract clients to your practice so your business will profit from your efforts. And second, you want to sell enough copies to earn back your advance, attract lots of readers, and make some money.
- *Promote early:* Begin a concerted, well-designed promotional campaign for your book long before the publication date. Your original book proposal included a promotional plan; so start

GUERRILLA TACTIC: GET HELP

Hire your own publicist. Invest a portion of your advance on publicity for your book. Many public relations firms specialize in book publicity and do outstanding jobs. They can plan and coordinate publicity campaigns with your publisher. And, they can usually get more from your publisher's publicity department than you can alone.

executing that plan early. Don't wait until your book is just about to hit the stores. If you do, it will be too late. Hire a publicist, begin working with the media, and alert your clients long before the book is scheduled for publication.

► *Do something daily to promote your book:* Bring attention to your book in some way every day. Whether you're preparing articles, speeches, or just making telephone calls to clients, get in a word or two about your book.

■ TWENTY-FIVE WAYS TO BUILD YOUR CONSULTING BUSINESS WITH YOUR BOOK

1. Promote the book on your Web site, include an up-to-date media kit, and make it simple for visitors to purchase the book from your site.
2. Create and promote a Web site devoted specifically to the book with author information, a sample chapter or two, speaking schedules, media kit, and a feature allowing readers to submit feedback. Include a feature for ordering the book. Promote the existence of this site on your firm's Web site.
3. Add a blog to the promotional site for the book that gives readers additional ideas related to the topic of the book. Include the latest news, tools, and tips. Include a link for ordering the book.
4. Create a high-quality summary of the book's major themes and allow visitors to download it.
5. Target 25 to 50 specific clients to solicit bulk orders for the book. If a client orders enough copies, the publisher can create a customized cover featuring the client's logo.
6. Send review copies to the top 100 executives in your area of expertise. Follow up with a request to meet and discuss the topic of the book. Include a customized letter, a book summary, and your contact information.
7. Be sure your prepublication book, along with a cover letter and press release is sent to the major book reviewers such as KirkusReviews.com, Publishersweekly.com, *ALA Booklist*, the *Library Journal*, and Bookreporter.com. Each organization reviews hundreds of books monthly that are widely read by librarians, publishers, agents, readers, and booksellers.

8. Take a client book tour. Contact each of your major clients and offer a personalized session on the problems addressed in the book. While you're in town, coordinate your visit with one or more local book signings, either at local bookstores or in the lobby of your client's building.
9. Make sure every person in your practice has a copy of the book, has read it, and understands how its content can benefit clients. Offer to give your colleagues briefings and Q&A sessions. Sign each of their copies with a personal note.
10. Create a postcard with an image of the book cover on one side and a summary of the book on the other. Mail these to key clients, but also keep a supply for leave-behinds at speeches, conventions, and bookstores. Keep a stack of the cards in your car—they will come in handy.
11. Contact every relevant trade and business magazine and discuss excerpting the book for readers in an upcoming issue.
12. Contact major newspapers and broadcast media to request media interviews on the book's subject.
13. Write articles for trade publications, client-based intranets, and relevant Web sites.
14. Create three presentations of the book's content—a one-hour keynote speech, a half-day workshop, and a full-day seminar. Promote the events through your Web sites, press releases, and to your clients. Include a copy of the book as part of the price of the session.
15. Send advance copies of the book to top industry association executives, university professors, civic organization leaders, and other consultants.

GUERRILLA TACTIC: DON'T FORGET THE OLD SCHOOL TIES

Notify your alma mater. In fact, notify all alumni organizations and publications for your high school, college, and graduate school. Former teachers, professors, and classmates can be your staunchest supporters.

16. Include a reference to your book in every marketing communication you produce, especially proposals.

17. Include a tidbit of information about your book in the signature file of your e-mails.
18. Attend the major conventions that focus on the issues in your book. If you cannot get booked as a speaker, use the event for networking purposes.
19. Instead of flying all over the country on a traditional book tour, consider reaching viewers via a satellite media tour.
20. Consider a press conference by telephone with a select group of reporters from around the country. Some publicists can arrange such conferences with members of the media who have audiences interested in the subject of your book.
21. Send press releases and notifications to library wholesalers like Baker & Taylor. They supply books to libraries and retailers worldwide.
22. Try to have your book stocked in both traditional and non-traditional book outlets. Many executives find their books in airport, hotel, and convention site bookstores. Don't ignore these retailers.
23. Submit your book to clubs like the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild. These organizations reach millions of readers who may be interested in your book.
24. Attend book fairs. Each year, Book Expo America attracts thousands of booksellers, agents, publishers, and authors. It's an opportunity to plug your book and network with others in the industry.
25. Get a few high-profile testimonials. Send advance copies of the book to get prepublication blurbs that you can use for promotion. Once your book is published, solicit testimonials from some highly respected executives in the field who can describe how your book helped their organizations work through the issue you wrote about. Publish the testimonials on your Web site and in all your marketing material, including your speeches and articles you write.

■ PUBLISHING REALITIES

Writing a book is like breaking into any new industry: You're constantly learning from your mistakes. Like all new endeavors, you'll master this one, too. As you start, remember the book publishing business is celebrity based. Publishers seek authors whose names

GUERRILLA TACTIC: WRITING WHILE MAKING A LIVING

As your writing progresses, you may find that you need help. If you do, you can hire freelance researchers, editors, proofreaders, indexers, book designers, ghostwriters, and publicists. Try to get recommendations from your friends, literary agents, and network members, or contact writers' organizations to find the help you need.

Another way to ease your load is through collaboration: Share writing or research responsibilities, or both, with others. Split the writing or research by chapters, sections, or subject areas. One of you could do all the interviewing, or you could write together. The approach you take will depend on how much writing and research you want to do, as well as each of your strengths and weaknesses, preferences, and time.

audiences will recognize. If you're not well known, but hope to use the book as a vehicle to become better known, expect an uphill climb. Work to build your name by speaking, writing articles, and gaining prominence within your industry. Build a following that can support you and promote your book, even if it's just in your local area.

Writing a book can bring immense publicity and many new clients to your practice, so consider the option carefully. Keep in mind, though, that book writing requires concentration. It can disrupt your business and your life. It can also steal precious time, resources, and energy from your clients, your family, your friends, and yourself. Be sure to factor that reality into your plans.

A book and the status it provides are permanent. You'll be listed in the Library of Congress and elsewhere. When prospects check you out on the Web, your book is always attached to you. When your book has been published, you're considered an author even if you never write another word. You will become an expert, which will bring innumerable benefits to your practice.