



**HOW TO WRITE  
A SUCCESSFUL  
PUBLISHER  
SUBMISSIONS  
DOCUMENT-**

That gets noticed!



WRITE BUSINESS RESULTS

At Write Business Results, **we love hooking authors up with their dream publishers**, and a big part of that success is in a well-crafted submissions document.

This guide walks you through everything you need to know about writing a knock-out submissions document that will get your publishers seeing pound signs, and chomping at the bit to sign you up.

## **What is a publisher's submission document?**

In the publishing world, a submission document is something that most of the big publishing houses ask for in order to sign up an author.

Its purpose is to **present the business case for your book in a simple, clear and impactful way**. It is there to show how and why your book will sell copies and what makes it different from the thousands of other books in your category whose authors are asking for a publishing contract.

If you have read any of our other guides on finding a publisher, you will remember that the main goal of the publisher is to produce books that sell lots of copies. Book sales is where they make their money, so when putting a submission document together for your preferred publishers, **you need to think of it as a sales pitch**.

It needs to be **engaging**, and **deliver the information quickly**.

This is not a time for lengthy, elaborate descriptions of what the book is about, or some deep narrative on the details of your message.

This form is all about **building the commercial case for the book and convincing the publisher that it will make them money**. If you can't answer that question, then say goodbye to your dream deal!

To help you put together a high-quality submissions document that gets noticed by the commissioning editor, and gets their board seeing pound signs, I have broken it down into four steps to follow.

Bear in mind that each publishing house will have its own special requirements for submissions, but **these 4 steps will cover the majority of what most publishers will ask for:**

1. **The Book**
2. **The Market**
3. **The Marketing Plan**
4. **Selling**



**WARNING** - *Before creating a publisher submissions document using the below steps it's important that you investigate the submission requirements for the publishers you want to sign with in depth. Some may want a selection of these steps and some don't need any at all! Most of the time these requirements can be found on their website.*

# ① The Book

## **Authors/Co-authors**

If you are having someone else collaborate with you on this book, or it is being co-authored with a business partner or colleague, **you must make this known off the bat.**

Your publisher wants to know who has a say in the content of this book and may need to agree on terms with that other person too, so make sure they are included in this document. A simple name, email address, job title and role in the project will do fine here.

## **The one-line elevator pitch**

Most publishers do not want a full synopsis of your book. They usually want to start off with a brief, one-line sentence which promotes the overall message of your book in an engaging and unique way.

A good place to start with your elevator pitch **is in the subtitle of your book if you have one.** The subtitle of a book usually does a great job condensing the message of the manuscript into a quick, one-sentence promise or statement that creates an emotional response.

Take Tim Ferris' The 4-Hour Work Week as an example. It has the subtitle:

## ***“Escape the 9-5, live anywhere and join the new rich”***

This is a fantastic one-line elevator pitch for a book. It makes a compelling promise to the reader without being too wordy.

Your pitch doesn't have to explain what the book is about, it's more about what the book will do for the readers. Let's look at another example, this time from the book ***Atomic Habits*** by James Clear:

## ***“An easy and proven way to build good habits and break bad ones”***

In one line it tells us exactly what the book is about and the benefits it's going to provide the reader if they read on.

Whatever your book is about, **have a think about your one liner**. You may already have a subtitle for your book, and if so then great! Just make sure that if you are going to use it, it does a similar job to the examples above.

- **Does it spark curiosity?**
- **Is it disruptive?**
- **Does it make a compelling promise?**

If so, then you're off to a great start.

## **Who will want to read the book, and why will they buy it?**

The next phase is to really think about your ideal reader group. Your publisher will want to know exactly who is going to benefit from your book and why they will want to part with their cash to read it.

This part comes down to **knowing your audience inside out**. You need to put some demographics around your ideal audience and start building out a picture of their challenges, desires, hopes, fears, etc.

Here are some things to think about when creating your ideal audience for your submissions:

- **What information do they need/want but are lacking?**
- **What do they want that you can help them get?**
- **What are the challenges that you can solve for them?**
- **Why would they buy your book vs someone else's in your category?**
- **What value is this book adding to your ideal reader?**

Knowing the answers to these questions will give you a much better understanding of who you are targeting, and you will start to show your publisher that there is a potential market for your book.

## A 200-word description of the book

This is the opportunity to provide your publisher with a small taste of what the book is about. It should focus on the **purpose, scope** and **basic approach you have in mind**.

Think of these 200 words as a sales piece for the book. You need to highlight the unique features of your message that are most likely to appeal to a buyer.

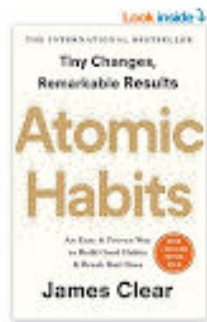
Remember, at this stage, the publisher is far more interested in hearing about the bits that will sell the book, rather than the story or the narrative so make sure you focus on the money.

A good place to start crafting this description is to look at some blurbs from successful books that have already been released by the publisher you want to sign with. In many cases, **these blurbs act as the sales copy for the book and are the bits most people read before making a buying decision**. By taking a look at other books in your category you may be able to get some great ideas.

Try going on Amazon.co.uk, **having a look at successful books in your category, reading the blurbs on their sales pages and see if you can spot any patterns**.



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## Atomic Habits: the life-changing million-copy #1 bestseller

Paperback – 18 Oct. 2018

by James Clear (Author)

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WBR TIP: Remember to keep it to the word count! This may differ depending on the publisher, but if they ask for 200 words, give them 200. No more, no less.

## The chapters/structure of the book

You may not have the book written yet, but many publishers will want to see at least a basic version of your book contents page with your chapter titles mapped out.



This will give them an understanding of the flow of the book and how your argument will be laid out.

👉 Will you separate the book into various parts and have a few chapters in each part?

👉 Do you have a step-by-step framework you are teaching and want each chapter to be one step of the methodology?

👉 Perhaps you are going for a more story-driven approach and want each chapter to be an episode/scene of the story?

Whatever structure you decide, you need to be able to show the publisher **how it will all come together, so that your argument is seen to flow in a logical and readable way.**

WBR TIP: Don't overwhelm your editor with detail here. Keep it simple with short and clear chapter titles, and perhaps one or two bullets on the general talking point of each chapter you have.

## **The business context of the book**

One of the most important questions a publisher will want to be answered is why NOW is the best time for your book to enter the market.

You need to be able to show **why your book is important today**, and **why the world needs its message**.

Book trends are tricky and constantly shifting and you need to show that you have put a lot of thought into why your book will sell copies in the current market.

This is a great chance for you to collect some stats, facts and figures to quote.

- Do you have stats about the popularity of the topic of your book?
- How many books of a similar nature have sold in the last 12 months?
- How many have become bestsellers?

You need to be able to present a case to your publisher that your topic is needed/popular, but your message/delivery is not stale and overdone.

COVID is a great example of this. 18 months ago it was one of the hottest topics amongst business books and everyone made special mention of the pandemic. But if you were to try making that the main focus for your topic today it may have passed its relevance.

In this game, **timing is key** and you need to be able to convince your publisher that you are entering a world hungry for what you have to say.

Books that are outdated or “ahead of their time” unfortunately won't do much for your success today.

## **Examples of the cases and stories you'll use to illustrate the book.**

Not all great books have tons of case studies in them, but if you are planning to add in-depth studies on other organisations you may want to consider including them here. This will show that you have done your research and that a lot of your arguments can be backed up with facts and examples rather than just theory.

Also, if you have any important stories in the book that are going to form an important part of the narrative, it's worth explaining that briefly here too.

Stories can do wonders to sell a business book and **if you have some compelling personal/researched stories to add to the book, it could end up making it a more attractive sell** when your editor takes it to their board for funding.

## **Special features your book might need**

Depending on the nature of your content, your book may require some special features as opposed to just ordinary text.

For example, a lot of heavy, data-driven books like to use graphs, charts and infographics to support their arguments and to break up the text into more engaging pieces for the reader.

Other more artistic/creative authors may want to have beautiful images or visual representations of their message incorporated into the book.

Anything like this, which is a “must-have” for the reader, needs to be outlined here as it may provide you with a **powerful selling point**. It will also help set your design expectations for the publisher, who can work this into their production schedules.

Other examples of special features include things like:

- Exercises, templates and scorecards inside the book.
- QR codes or any interactive technology features embedded.
- Text boxes or unique page layouts.

Whatever special features you are including in your book, you need to be able to prove how these will benefit the readers and add value to the book as a whole, otherwise a publisher is unlikely to want to agree to the extra design work involved.

## Complimentary online material

Many business book authors are entrepreneurs or thought leaders who have a lot of other content online.

This is great for a publisher as it shows them that you have already started building a following in this area. Make sure you link any blogs, websites, worksheets, videos, etc to your submission if you are planning to reference them in the book. You need to explain why you think they are important to the book's success and how they will improve the reader's overall experience.

A great example of this would be an **online scorecard** which calculates what strengths and weaknesses your readers have in your topic. If you are planning on sending readers to this scorecard, perhaps at the end of the book as part of your call to action, you need to let the publisher know and prove why it's needed.

## Endorsements

One of the biggest selling points going for a submission document is in the endorsements the book has, or is capable of getting.

If you are a business owner or thought leader with a big network and have access to other well-known leaders, influencers or thought leaders in your field, this is a great place to list them out and explain your relationship with them.

Are you close colleagues, friends or business partners? What is the likelihood of these people contributing to you in a positive way – whether that be a foreword or book review?

Are you connected with any icons or celebrities who will be willing to put their name to your work?

The more endorsements you can receive from people like this, the more attractive you will look to your publisher. These endorsements make for fantastic marketing messages, social media campaigns and book-launch content so make sure you list them out.

👉 For authors who are still yet to create these connections, now may be a good time to start thinking about who you would like to contribute to this book. Then, you can start making a plan to connect with them.

WBR TIP: The earlier you start building this network the better your chances are of having some strong endorsements when the time comes.

## **Book Length**

This doesn't have to be set in stone and may change as you start producing the book, but most publishers have a good idea of the maximum length a book on a certain topic needs to be to sell well.

Most traditionally published business books tend to be around the **200-300 page** marker - between **50,000 to 70,000** words - so unless you have a compelling reason why your book needs to be much longer, it will be worth sticking around to that marker to start off with.

Trying to pitch a 500-page book on a broad topic like leadership or finance may well scare your publishers (on behalf of your readers) off!

### **First-draft deadline**

The next thing a publisher will want to know is **how long it's going to take you to deliver the draft.**

It might be the best submission document out there, but if you are unable to deliver your draft on time you are going to put the success of the project at serious **risk.**

Remember that some publishers have hundreds of books moving through their company at any one time, and their marketing plans and resources need to be carefully assigned to each one.

Late submissions mean you may not get all the distribution support you need, as their team will be frantically trying to get your book designed, edited, proofread and distributed on time.

So, make sure you are setting realistic deadlines that you can commit to.

In some cases, the publisher may be the one setting the deadline, too. In that case, there is no choice but to work to their schedule.

The good news here is that you don't have to do this on your own. Most authors out there will need some kind of help during this creation process whether it be planning, writing, editing or proofreading to ensure that your work meets the publisher's standards.

For more information on how WBR can help you with this, feel free to [get in touch](#).



## ② The Market

This section is all about the wider market for your book. It needs to demonstrate that you have a firm understanding of your book's market, and how it will be positioned against the competition.

### **The gap in the market**

This is where you need to identify the gap in the marketplace that your book is going to fill.

- What makes it different from what people have read before?
- What need is it fulfilling?
- What unanswered questions is it answering?

Here is a great place to show off your knowledge of the market. Use stats, facts and figures to prove your point and drive home why this book will sell copies today.

Once you have identified the gap and provided evidence to support your ideas, it's time to focus on your book's Unique Selling Point.

### **Creating a big idea**

A good way to think about communicating your book's USP is to think about it as a Big Idea.

**The Big Idea** is a term used to symbolise the foundation for a major undertaking in marketing or advertising.

It's an attempt to communicate a brand, product or concept to the general public by creating a strong message – usually in one line – that pushes brand boundaries and resonates with the consumers.

Big ideas are hard to come by – they require a fair bit of research, industry knowledge and a spark of creativity, but when you get one it's a very powerful thing.

A great little tip is to use the tactic from Evaldo Albuquerque and his masterful marketing book, [The 16-Word Sales Letter: A proven method of writing multi-million-dollar copy faster than you ever thought possible.](#)

Evaldo breaks down the big idea into the following template that can be used for any business book (with a little tweaking):

***“This new opportunity is the key to their desire and it’s only attainable through my new mechanism.”***

Let’s break this down, and look at how we can apply it to a book:

**The New Opportunity** is something exciting, unique and eye-catching. Have a think about what that might be for your book.

What is it promising or offering the reader **that they haven't seen before**? What do they need to get them **excited, or curious**?

- Is it the chance to ditch the 9-5 and earn six figures working four hours a week?
- Is it the chance to unlock the secrets of the top performers in the world?
- Is it a new way of thinking which liberates you to live a richer, more fulfilling life?

Perhaps it's a simplified, easier way to understand your customers and generate more sales.

Whatever it is, it's important you can communicate this to your publisher in a simple, effective way.

**Their Desire.** If you know your reader well enough, you should know what they really want. If not, have a look back at the work you did in the earlier section on **Who will want to read the book, and why will they buy it?**

The main thing you are looking for here is the top desire of your reader, that is made possible from this new opportunity.

**My New Mechanism.** This is your unique solution. The thing that we need to follow in order to seize this new opportunity and reach the readers' desire.

Many authors have frameworks, processes or systems that they use which are unique to them. These can work great as a new mechanism, but a well-thought-out philosophy or unique argument can work just as well.

Maybe it's "Ten reasons we're wrong about the world – and why things are better than you think" like Hans Rosling's *Factfulness*.

Another example is Mark Manson's tremendously successful book, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*\*K*. That one line is certainly a new mechanism for looking at the world.

Try having a go at this and see if you can come up with your own big idea. Do some research and list out some ideas for:

- Your **New Opportunity**. What does your solution, process or product offer that others don't?
- **The Desire** of your ideal reader. What do they really want more than anything that you can help them get?
- Your **New Mechanism** by which they can attain that desire. What is your process, thesis, theory or main argument?

At Write Business Results, we have developed our very own process for generating big ideas for our authors. It normally shows itself during our Business Book Brief™, which is specifically designed to tease out all of your best book ideas.

To find out more about how it works and how to develop your very own big idea for your book, feel free to [book in a call today](#).

## **Your vision for the book**

This is where you set your ambitions for the book.

- How will it be received in the marketplace?
- Will it be part of a series of books you have planned out?
- Will it be the definitive guide in your field that people will be referring back to for years to come?

Is it a timely piece which is super important now, but may need to be updated in the future? Or is it evergreen and able to stand the test of time?

Will it challenge the status quo, and disrupt the way people think about a particular topic? Or will it be a new, more entertaining way to look at common problems?

There are no real right and wrong answers here, but your ambitions are important to the publisher. **They want to know you have really given this a lot of thought, and have a specific vision/goal set up for the book and its wider impact in the world.** This will give them a clearer picture of **where to distribute it and how to promote you.**

## **Further information on your readers**

If you have any other information about your ideal readers that is important for marketing the book, this is the place to get them down.

Will you be targeting readers on an international level or just in your own country? This will make a big difference to the kind of distribution and language you use in your marketing so it's worth knowing early on.

If you haven't already done this earlier in this guide, this is a good place to jot down the demographics of your ideal reader.

### **Here are a few good places to start:**

- Age range.
- Gender (if important).
- Job titles.
- Average salary.
- Passions.
- Challenges.
- Likes and dislikes.
- Hobbies.

The more work you can do for your publisher here, the more confident they will feel about being able to distribute your book to the right audience and get in the right retailers.

## Main Competition

Doing your research on the competition is another useful piece of information for your publisher. Bear in mind that a competing book doesn't have to be on the exact same topic as the one you are publishing. The book might be one in the same category that could be picked up instead of yours on a bookshelf or in your category online.

These are the books that will potentially distract someone from buying yours, so it's important that each one is listed out. With this information, you can plan out how to set yourself apart from other authors in your space.

Amazon's website is a great place to start for this. **Just look at the categories your book might fit into and list the top five of each, along with a brief line or two explaining why you think they will compete.**

## ③ The Marketing Plan

When you've finished writing the book, the work of making it a success is only half done.

If you can market the book aggressively, it's likely to have a much stronger chance of succeeding and meeting the goals you have set out with your publisher.

The thing to remember, though, is that **your publisher isn't responsible for doing the day-to-day marketing needed to meet these goals.**

They may be able to reach a national and international audience and achieve fantastic online and retail distribution for your book, but you will need to drive people towards purchasing it on a day-to-day basis.

This is why **publishers look for authors who have a pre-existing audience** that knows and respect their work and are likely to buy their book. This reassures the publisher that there is already a lot of low-hanging fruit in your network ready to buy, but you will need to do the work to get them buying.

In order to make your publisher feel confident that you have this part under control, you will need to draft up a basic marketing plan for the book, showing how you will generate these sales.

These plans are typically one or two pages long and should describe your contribution to getting the word out about your book. The more detail you can give, the better.



If you have promoted previous books, please give details of how you've done this, and your experience of what works and what doesn't. If you haven't already, you need to think about what activities are needed, how you are going to execute them, and who is going to help you.

To get you thinking about the activities needed, **here is a list of all the areas you need to focus on to create a successful book launch campaign.**

Please note that this is a BIG list with all the possible actions you can take to market a book successfully. Feel free to move through it and pick out the ones that are most important/relevant to your goals/skill set and build out your plan from there.

Email Sequences	Social Media Schedule	Amazon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome sequence (3-5 emails)</li> <li>• Pre-launch (3 emails)</li> <li>• Go-live (1 email)</li> <li>• Post-launch (3 emails)</li> <li>• General promo 3 (emails)</li> <li>• Hyperlinked signature</li> <li>• Newsletter</li> <li>• Automatic meeting scheduler (to collect book leads)</li> <li>• CRM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media schedule</li> <li>• Weekly posts, fortnightly blogs on LinkedIn</li> <li>• Book topic hashtags</li> <li>• Keywords research for SEO</li> <li>• Calls to action on posts</li> <li>• Repurpose core content (turning book content into social posts)</li> <li>• Branded imagery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amazon ads</li> <li>• Amazon A+ Content</li> <li>• Author Central</li> <li>• Category research</li> <li>• Kindle version</li> <li>• Hardback version</li> <li>• Audiobook version</li> </ul>

<b>Website/ Landing Page</b>	<b>Downloads</b>	<b>PR/ Media</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent visuals</li> <li>• Personal branding statement</li> <li>• Showcases core content</li> <li>• Lead capture forms</li> <li>• Ecommerce site for book sales</li> <li>• Link to core content</li> <li>• Consistent messaging</li> <li>• Publish regular blog</li> <li>• Embed podcast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-cost/free products (lead magnets)</li> <li>• Available everywhere via form</li> <li>• Guides, cheat sheets, ebooks, calendar, template(s) or scorecards (related to the book)</li> <li>• Hyperlink to complementary core content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press release</li> <li>• Speaker Pack - QR code link to download. Books to be printed</li> <li>• JV Pack</li> <li>• Award submissions</li> </ul>
<b>Funnels/ Retargeting</b>	<b>JVs/ Partnerships</b>	<b>Complementary Products/ Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid ads. <i>If so, which platform(s):</i></li> <li>• Lookalike lists</li> <li>• Retargeting</li> <li>• Chatbots</li> <li>• Branded webinar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who do you know who has a similar target audience with reach and could help you promote your content? Specify:</li> <li>• JV Pack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2-1 paid &amp; branded Strategy Sessions</li> <li>• Group paid &amp; branded Strategy Workshops</li> <li>• Branded mini-course(s)</li> <li>• Bespoke online trainings</li> <li>• In-person branded trainings</li> <li>• Coaching methodology/branded system</li> </ul>

<b>Blogs</b>	<b>Podcasts</b>	<b>Videos &amp; Lives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly</li> <li>• RSS feed on aggregate sites</li> <li>• Repurposed content</li> <li>• SEO-optimised</li> <li>• Analytics</li> <li>• Keywords</li> <li>• Backlinks</li> <li>• Headers and paragraphs</li> <li>• White space</li> <li>• Branded images</li> <li>• Clear CTA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly</li> <li>• RSS feed on aggregate sites</li> <li>• Repurposed content</li> <li>• SEO-optimised</li> <li>• Analytics</li> <li>• Keywords</li> <li>• Shownotes</li> <li>• Links for lead capture</li> <li>• Added transcript</li> <li>• Clear CTA</li> <li>• Chartable account</li> <li>• Guest sharing kit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos from podcast</li> <li>• Social lives</li> <li>• YouTube/TikTok channels</li> <li>• Video testimonials</li> <li>• Video snippets</li> </ul>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>Audio</b>	<b>Within The Book</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written up case studies from customers on website</li> <li>• Reviews on Google page and social</li> <li>• Testimonials on website</li> <li>• Video case studies from customers on website and social</li> <li>• Snippets from case studies repurposed into branded social posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audiobook</li> <li>• Audiograms</li> <li>• Influential guests/voiceover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreword</li> <li>• Social proof</li> <li>• Front cover quote</li> <li>• 1-page ad for services/giveaways</li> <li>• QR codes to site &amp; resources</li> </ul>

Team/ Company Culture	Events	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive email signatures for whole team with book</li> <li>• Branded social accounts</li> <li>• Speak the book's language in trainings and meetings</li> <li>• Train the team in the key concepts so they can work it into their client conversations and marketing</li> <li>• Team incentives program for sharing and creating relevant content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weave book content into talks</li> <li>• Take copies to sell or give away</li> <li>• Build copies into your speaker fee with a bulk buy discount on the rest the organisers will need</li> <li>• Brand your stand</li> <li>• QR code at event to capture leads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FB group for prospects</li> <li>• FB group for clients</li> <li>• Build your brand app</li> <li>• Add to Linktree, welcome email sequence, Calendly workflows, newsletter etc ie. "Join our community"</li> <li>• Run themed rooms on Clubhouse and feed people back into your funnels with your own club, regular 'room resets', calls to action, replays, pinned links</li> </ul>

For any extra help in putting this plan together, feel free to book a [Content Marketing Consultation](#) with us to create your marketing plan.

Once you have listed out all of the actions you will take to market the book, it's worth adding in some sales forecasts here too for your publisher.

How many books are you realistically capable of selling in the first 12 months of publication with this plan?

Where are most of these sales going to come from? Will you sell via Amazon or another online retailer? Will you create an e-commerce site and run sales via your website?

If you can provide a neat, realistic and well-thought-out plan like this your publisher will have very little choice but to seriously consider signing you up!

## **Conclusion**

After reading this guide you might be thinking that this is a lot of work – and you are right! Doing this well takes time. You will need to do your research and put some serious thinking into the steps outlined above.

The good news is that if you follow these steps carefully and put together a document like this, you will prove to any publisher out there that not only is there a market for your book, but that you also have a serious plan in place to ensure maximum success.

And that is exactly what they are looking for!

**For more information and further support on any of the steps mentioned in this guide, please contact the team with your question(s) on [info@writebusinessresults.com](mailto:info@writebusinessresults.com) OR book in your Clarity Call today.**

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