

The Publishing X Factor



The 9 Things You Must Do If You Hope to Sell Your
Nonfiction Book to a Traditional Publisher

Do you have a goal of traditionally publishing your nonfiction book?

If so, then you probably already know that *selling a book idea to a traditional publisher is not easy*. Any hopeful author is going to face many hurdles as they try to make their project stand out in a sea of submissions and find a home in an increasingly challenging, risk-averse publishing industry.

Yet, it's not impossible. Publishers still need books to publish. Barnes & Noble still needs books to fill their shelves. And despite the odds, new authors are being published every single day.

So, what exactly does it take to sell a book idea to a

traditional publisher? There are the obvious things, of course:

- **A powerful idea**
- **A professional proposal**
- **Strong writing**
- **A literary agent**

These ingredients are critical, yet in today's über-competitive publishing world, they're not enough.

Today, getting an offer from a traditional publisher requires an almost feverish dedication, both to yourself and the book you're hoping to publish. Today, you've got to have the **Publishing X Factor**.

I break down the Publishing X Factor into nine things you must do in order to make your dream of traditionally publishing a reality:

#1: Get clear on your personal "why" and believe in your idea, no matter what.

Taking the time to clarify your personal “why” and hone in on your deepest connection to your book is like fueling up before running a marathon. That’s because it’s your personal “why” that will get you through the “wall” of book writing, including those times when you lose confidence, struggle with writer’s block, and sift through rejections.

"Never give up trying to build the world you can see, even if others don't see it. Listen to your drum, and your drum only. It's the one that makes the sweetest sound." — Simon Sinek

MUST-TAKE ONLINE COURSE

[The Book in You](#)

#2: Go into it knowing that it's going to be difficult to both find an agent and for your agent to sell your book.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. Getting a traditional publishing deal is tough. The odds are not in your favor, and the road to publication can be fraught with many rejections and low points, not to mention the periodic existential crisis. (Or maybe that's just me.)

The key is to go into the whole process bearing this reality in mind. Better yet, take a stab at being detached from the outcome, approaching the publishing journey with a sense of *curiosity* instead of *expectation*.

“Rejection is part of the creative life. Anyone who creates will experience it. But it’s not altogether bad. It’s what pushes us forward, if we let it.” — Jeff Goins

MUST-READ BLOG POST

[*8 Ways to Survive the Waiting Game*](#)

#3: Intimately know your book's "competitors" and be able to articulate how your book is different.

If you're looking to convince a publisher to take a chance on your book, they're going to need to feel absolutely confident that your book has what it takes to be successful.

To do this, you've got to be able to **a)** prove there's a thriving market for the type of book you are writing, and **b)** powerfully convey to a publisher how your book fills an important gap in the market.

“Your book should seek to fill a clearly identified need in the market and have a unique selling proposition that other titles cannot match.” – Nina Amir

MUST-READ BLOG POST

[Why You Should Explore Competitive Books When You're Writing Nonfiction \(and How to Do It\)](#)

#4: Have a platform (or a clear vision for building one) that will enable you to connect directly with your tribe.

Not too long ago, the very word “platform” was likely to induce copious eye-rolling amongst serious authors, the belief being that an author’s focus should be to write books, not fritter away their precious time developing an online presence or cultivating a loyal tribe of readers.

Today, “platform” isn’t a dirty word. It’s proof that a writer has visibility and clout among potential readers, and it shows publishers that you are

well-positioned to move books.

“If you want to build your platform, it is going to require courage. Are you willing to be brave?” — Michael Hyatt

MUST-LISTEN-TO PODCAST

*Learn to Build Your Platform,
Connect With Readers and Sell More
Books with Tim Grahl*

#5: Be willing to MARKET and SELL the hell out of your book.

Gone are the days of publishers sending their authors out on multi-city book tours and pouring money into promotional efforts while the writer primarily focuses on penning his or her prose. Today, the onus for marketing and promotion falls almost entirely on authors themselves.

Publishers will want to know your exact plans in the form of a promotional plan and be assured that you are fully committed to hustling your butt off to sell books before they extend an offer of publication. Make sure you're willing to do just that.

“Marketing is not a one-time thing. It is an ongoing process that you must keep doing to continue selling books.” – Sarah Bolme

FAVORITE BOOK MARKETING RESOURCE

[Tim Grah, author of *Your First 1000 Copies* and authority on building author platforms](#)

#6: Be willing to put in the time to write a substantial, polished book proposal.

A book proposal is essentially a “business plan” for your book. Comprised of 50-80 pages of highly-shaped content all aimed at selling a book, it’s the way any would-be author pitches his or her idea to publishers. It’s also something many authors absolutely *dread* writing.

I get it... I really do. After all — we want to write a *book*, not some business document where we have to explain and brag and convince.

But if traditionally publishing your nonfiction book

is the goal, a solid solid, professional book proposal is the ticket to the ball. Don’t fight it — just start writing.

“An irresistible book proposal is the single most important part of selling book ideas to publishers. The bonus? Once you’ve written your proposal, the actual writing of the book will be a smooth process because you’ll have already worked out your ideas about content, structure, and flow.” — Debbie Reber

MUST-TAKE ONLINE COURSE

[Write Your Irresistible Book Proposal](#)

#7: Don't cut any corners. Flawless writing and professionalism is critical.

Once you've gone through the hard work of crafting a book proposal, penning the perfect query letter, and finalizing several chapters of your would-be published book, take the time to proof, double-proof, and triple-check your output to ensure it's not only error-free, but absolutely flawless.

If you get the audience of an agent or editor, you want to ensure what you're presenting is your absolutely very best product. You may not get another shot.

"Quality is the best business plan." — John Lasseter

MUST-READ BOOK

The Accidental Creative: How to be Brilliant at a Moment's Notice
by Todd Henry

#8: Find an agent who believes in you and your vision.

To sell your book to a traditional publisher, you'll need a literary agent, but not just *any* agent. You want one who fully “gets” who you are and what you're trying to do, because she's going to be championing your book to the editors she has relationships with (and beyond).

An agent's passion for your project is a tremendous asset — take the time to vet potential agents to find out if their philosophy and approach is aligned with yours and ensure that they're committed to going the distance to find a home for your book.

“When I finally find that one willing agent, I'll have found my prize in the Cracker Jack box.”

— *Richelle E. Goodrich*

MUST-WATCH VIDEO

[How Can I Find a Literary Agent?](#)

#9: LOVE your subject matter. You could be working on your book for YEARS.

If writing a book were an Olympic sport, it would be much closer to the marathon than the hundred-meter dash.

Planning, outlining, and writing the book is an endurance event in and of itself. Add to that the time it takes to find an agent and have the agent sell the book, and then the time during which an author works with a publisher before it's released, and we're talking anywhere from two to six years from start to finish. (And once it's published, you'll spend the next year or more promoting it.)

Make sure you love your topic enough to be willing to focus, write, and talk about it for years to come.

“It takes a long time to write a book... the reason I do it is because I want to understand something myself. It's not a delivery device, it's an inquiry device.” - Ruth Ozeki

MUST-READ BOOK

[The War of Art, by Steven Pressfield](#)