

TARKENTON

IDEAS AT WORK

Take Your Business to the Next Level by Writing a Book

Takeaways

- Writing a book provides a kind of authority nothing else can
- Identify your goal and audience before writing a word
- Stay focused on what you want to say

People like to do business with people they know, like, and trust. So much of business is about building relationships. Help people get to know you and eventually earn their trust.

One of the best ways I've been able to get my story out is through books. Becoming an author gave me a way to share my story and my mission with interested people. It's a fast way for people to get to know more about me, find out if they like me and what I'm about, and earn some initial level of trust.

This article's author, Marji Ross, has been one of the central players in my experience as an author. She was the publisher for many of my books, including *The Power of Failure* and *Safe and Secure*. Today, she is a great resource for our teams and partners in thinking about content and navigating the publishing world. Don't miss these insights!



Jon Tarkenton

Take Your Business to the Next Level by Writing a Book



Last year, Americans bought more than 80 million copies of business books. Is it time to consider writing a book?

Writing a book can pay off in a lot of different ways for a business leader. It establishes you as a thought leader and exposes your ideas and expertise to a much larger audience than you might otherwise reach.

But to get there, you actually have to write a book. It's a lot of work, and it's not like there's a guaranteed payout at the end of it. Why bother, in the age of podcasts and TikTok? Aren't books passé? Worse yet, couldn't it be seen as a vanity project? That's not a good look.

Why Books Still Matter

Here's the thing: If you're a business leader, chances are you've turned problem into opportunity, probably more than once. You have years of experience and wisdom, some of it learned the hard way.

In other words, you have something to say. Something that could help struggling CEOs, or perhaps the next generation of leaders, succeed. That's not a bad legacy to leave behind.



What to Do Before You Begin Writing

So where do you start? Not, as it happens, by writing. In fact, to dramatically increase your chances of success (and drastically cut your chances of wasting a lot of time), do these two things before you write a single word:

1. Clarify your goal, and
2. Identify your audience.

You wouldn't develop a new product without knowing who it's for or what you want to get out of it. Approach your book the same way and define your goals at the start:

- Do you want to attract new clients?
- Improve customer retention?
- Transition to the speaking circuit?
- Help the next generation of business leaders succeed?

Identifying your goal right from the start will help cut through the noise later.

Next, determine who your readers are. Clients? Prospects? Family and friends? Other business leaders? Young professionals hoping to lead a company some day?

What do these readers want? What can they learn from you that they can't learn from anyone else? Understanding your readers will drive what you'll write, how you'll approach publishers, and how you'll repackage your ideas to build a platform across multiple different channels.



Once you have a solid understanding of your readers, it's time to start gathering ideas for content. Collect material that sparks something in you – including newspaper articles, blog posts, and podcasts, among others – and start putting an outline together. Along the way, look for ways to build a platform. Think of it as sending out trial balloons of your ideas. You could start a blog or build your LinkedIn following with frequent posts and thoughtful commentary. Look for publications that cover what you're interested in and start pitching articles to them. Even if it's doing a niche business vlog or writing a "Business of the Week" column for your local newspaper, getting original content out there can help you refine your ideas, gather feedback, and build a platform – all strategies that will help you sell your book when you're ready.

How to Write Your Book

Once you're ready to start writing, here are a few tried-and-true strategies that can help you get past the finish line:

- **Stay focused.** Don't worry about getting everything in that first book. A lot of authors set out to write a book and never finish, because they always want to cover *one more thing*. Having an outline helps you focus on what you want to say.
- **Leave something to say in Book 2.** The success of your first book will dictate how much a publisher pays for your next book. Publishers want to work with authors who have multiple books in them. That sort of year-over-year success builds name recognition, and sales naturally follow.
- **Work with a partner who knows writing.** You don't have to do it all. For most business leaders, it makes sense to partner with a professional writer or editor. Start by looking close to home: a communications director or a PR director in your own firm. Working with a partner who knows writing can help you avoid frustration and lengthy delays while you determine the scope of your book and then start drafting it.
- **Look at what the competition is doing, and then do it better.** Look for four to five books that are similar to yours to see what they offer readers. How is each one structured? What's its scope? What did the reader learn from that book? And more important, what *didn't* they learn that you can teach them? Make a list of several things you can offer readers that they can't get from those other books. Sometimes that's as simple as looking at a problem in a different way, taking a different approach. It could be a new way to run a process; it could be getting rid of the overhead of process altogether.
- **Don't shy away from tough topics.** One of the most powerful things you can do is share a mistake you've made or a failure you've experienced. Building a platform is building a relationship with your readers, and who wants to be in a relationship with someone who's had a perfect career? They've never risked anything, and so they've never learned the hard lessons that come along with that.
- **Remember that people learn more from failure than they do from success.** The reader is coming to you because they need something: because they have questions, or challenges, or they're going through something difficult. If you share your experience with hardship, they're going to relate to you and see you as credible. What was the last business book you read that made an impact on you? Think about how forthcoming that author was with his or her own story. And always give people a heads-up if you're going to use them as an example, even if you don't identify them by name.

Writing a book can be a long and solitary affair, but the good news is that you don't have to work without a net – and you don't have to have a finished book before you start shopping it around to publishers. All you need is a compelling outline, a few well-written chapters, and an understanding of what will make readers buy your book.

Tarkenton and its strategic partners work together to help clients develop communication strategies that grow their business. If you're interested in talking about whether a book makes sense for you, [we can help.](#)



By: Marji Ross

Publisher

Marjory Ross (Marji) is a seasoned and successful leader in the publishing industry. For nearly two decades, she served as President and Publisher of Regnery Publishing, one of the nation's leading independent book publishers. During her tenure, Regnery placed more than 85 books on national bestseller lists, including 14 titles at #1. In 2020, Marji founded Marji Ross Consulting, a consulting firm dedicated to helping authors, publishers, and businesses communicate more effectively, reach larger audiences, and have a greater impact on our future.