

THE
INFLUENTIAL
— AUTHOR —

**How and Why to Write,
Publish, and Sell Nonfiction
Books that Matter**

By Gregory V. Diehl

Foreword by Tom Morke



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Dedicated to every exceptional mind that has ever feared
it would not be able to express its full ability to perceive
the world beyond the limitations of its time.

“The whole Earth is the Sepulchre of famous men; and their story is not graven only on Stone over their native earth, but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men’s lives.”

—**Pericles (495 BC – 429 BC)**

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the sholders [*sic*] of Giants.”

—**Isaac Newton (1676)**

“The survival or preservation of certain favoured words in the struggle for existence is natural selection.”

—**Charles Darwin (1871)**

“A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on. Ideas have endurance without death.”

—**John F. Kennedy (1963)**

“The word is now a virus.”

—**William S. Burroughs (1998)**

“An idea: a theory or an equation, might sit around unnoticed for decades, centuries, even, before it’s rediscovered and put to some use. That’s how it works: it makes connections with other ideas, other knowledge, gathering momentum all the time, growing exponentially if it’s strong enough.”

—**K. Valisumbra (2015)**

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Foreword

By Tom Morkes

There is no better medium for spreading an idea than a book.

I would typically explain my reasoning behind such a claim, but thanks to Gregory Diehl's *The Influential Author* I can save you time (and the pain of redundancy) by simply pointing you to his book.

Instead, I want to focus on a simple question:

If a book can be such a powerful tool for change in the world, why don't more people write and publish?

Having worked with hundreds of authors (and aspiring authors) in various capacities over the years, it seems to me "failure to launch" comes down to three myths:

Myth #1: You Don't Believe You Have Anything Worth Sharing

Or you don't believe you have the skills to share it properly... or you don't believe it's worth the time, money, and effort... or you don't believe, even if you do publish, that anyone will care.

When you don't believe in the work you do, you will necessarily lack the faith to bring your ideas into being. Everything in life will present itself as a great idea... for someone else.

So if you're waiting for a pat on the back or an "attaboy" from the crowd before you dive headfirst into your creative pursuit, I have unfortunate news for you: no one will believe in you if you don't—nobody bets on the fighter who talks about his forthcoming defeat.

The only way to inspire others is to be the source of inspiration.

If you're not there yet, don't lose hope. Picking up and reading a book like this is a practical demonstration that there is a spark within you. Your next step is to kindle that into a flame that you (and others) can believe in and follow. That takes time and practice. Don't quit.

Myth #2: You Don't Know Where to Start

So you search "how to write a book" on DuckDuckGo and, instead of having the precise path illuminated and prepared for you, you're sucked into the infinite abyss that is the internet: a thousand contradictory ideas that all claim the same perfect outcome, each with a compelling narrative of its viability.

So, instead of moving with a purpose—picking a path and taking the next step—you get sucked into the world of the amateur critic, whose predominant concern is squabbling with others to determine the "right" path. Can you guess what happens next?

Nothing.

Hop onto any Facebook group for self-publishers and you'll see what I mean: thousands of aspiring writers talking about writing, thinking about writing, and criticizing every resource, book, course, coach, or program that's out there to help them start writing... but never actually writing. Here's the thing. There is no "right" path. That's a myth. There are best practices (you'll find them in this book), but besides that the "right" path is nothing more than doing the hard work that's right in front of you.

This takes focus. It's not easy. It is worth it.

Myth #3: You Don't Have Time

You've found a way to believe in yourself—enough to get started, at least—and you've demonstrated the desire and discipline to make progress on your book. You found your focus. Things are going great. So great, in fact, that you decide to give yourself a break. Just this week for the holidays. Then for the month because of an urgent matter at work. Then for the next quarter because your family needs you.

Then for years, because life is full of plug-and-play excuses.

Here's the deal: nothing worthwhile is easy. Worth is manifested through work. And writing a book that's worth reading is some of the hardest intellectual work anyone can undertake. So don't be surprised if you want to take a break or extend your break (indefinitely). You're human.

Here's the solution:

First, remember: you've come this far. You owe it to yourself to finish and ship what you started. You owe it to others, too.

Second, if you're considering taking a break, don't. In fact, do the opposite. Write twice as many words today; finish an extra chapter this week; rewrite the entire thing one more time this month. Whatever your tired, uninspired self wants to do, do the opposite (unless it's writing, then do that).

Third, if you took a decade-long hiatus but still have a whisper of a desire left inside you, sit down for an afternoon and read what you've written and do nothing more. Do this every afternoon—don't stop. The human brain is a goal-oriented, organizational machine that seeks to reduce pain and increase pleasure. If you're fighting your own nature, unless you have the will of a saint you will lose. So stop trying to fight yourself by saying "I need to write" or "I need to finish this." You'll lose. Instead, put yourself in

a position where the primary (or better yet, only) thing you're consuming is the book you're writing. Eventually, you'll grow so tired of reading your half-baked ideas you'll find it easier to write than not.

Now it's your turn.

Your mission right now is to read this book. Take it in, take notes, and enjoy. No need to rush.

But when you do finish, you have an even more important mission: sit down and write the book you've been inspired to write. Nobody will tell you twice. So get after it.

Tom Morkes

Author of *The Art of Instigating*

www.TomMorkes.com

Questions to Help You Get the Most from This Book

Many books on self-publishing proclaim that everyone has a book in them. They promote the false notion that anyone can become a successful author with hardly any effort. Such all-inclusive declarations are nonsense.

To write a book, one must invest hundreds of hours into strategizing, writing, and rewriting. To write a good book, one must become an exemplary communicator, using words as tools for a purpose. To become a respected author, one must have a purpose worth fulfilling and not be shy about promoting it.

To write a book is not the path for everyone... but it may be the path for you. The process is a challenge, but if you are determined to put in the necessary work, it is possible to find success as an independently published nonfiction author.

A nonfiction book with a valuable message can feed a specific type of hunger held by thousands of readers for generations to come. It can be a medium of information that adds longevity to the most valuable products of its author's life, even long after they are gone.

If you think you desire to write and publish, you must ask yourself what your book will do that no other book already does. You must inquire about your reasons behind your desire and whether they are strong enough to bring order out of the chaos of your still-unprocessed thoughts.

Is the content of your book unique?

Few people come up with wholly original ideas of any worth. Most just rework and popularize earlier ideas, connecting them in ways few before them have done. Much of what you intend to say, others have already said

in some form. What novelty will you add to humanity's encyclopedia of wisdom? If you know the standards set by the other books on your subject, you can improve on them or combine them into an emergent structure.

Are your tone and presentation more effective than other authors'?

Delivery can count for more than complexity or profundity. Many authors can convey the same information in many distinct ways. Each approach will influence minds differently, as no two readers have the same background or goals. Some minds prefer numbers and diagrams, while others may learn best through humor, drama, or long-winded diatribes. Superior arrangement and style improve upon the works of giants before you. Through better framing, you will make the past more accessible to a wider range of readers.

Why are you inspired to bring your message to the world?

You will need the wherewithal to see the writing and publishing processes to completion. If your heart isn't in it, you will grow to resent your book for the enormous demands it places on your time, mind, and finances. You may lose the strength to finish. An inspired message will be worth the effort it requires.

Who needs to read your message and why?

A great book is one that answers questions aching for resolution. The inability to find these answers can lead to everyday practical problems or lifelong existential struggles. Your book can offer a permanent end to someone's malaise. The goal should not be to have everyone on Earth read your book. It should be to reach those readers who will receive the full intended value of your message because they need its insight.

Will you still want to write your book if it makes no money?

Effective marketplace positioning can turn a decent book into sustainable passive income for its creator, but a book written with revenue as its only goal will sacrifice a portion of its integrity. Decide where your priority lies and what your purpose in writing is so you will not sacrifice one for the other. Commercial success will then be only a supplement to the existential reward of communicating your knowledge and ideals.

How will your book change people?

The worth of all creative endeavors can be measured by their influence on living people. Some authors set out to overhaul the way a reader perceives a topic. Some books plant seeds of thought that take time to germinate in new minds. Your book might outline a method by which to change the reader's physical actions, offering a series of gentle suggestions for improvement. It may also continue to affect readers' lives long after they've put it back on their shelf.

How will your book entertain readers?

Even if you think your message is strictly informative, its transmission depends on engagement. No one can absorb information perfectly; you must make it easy for your readers to consume hundreds of pages without losing interest. Each word represents a moment that a reader could have spent in another activity, so work to earn every ounce of your readers' attention by stoking curiosity, evoking empathy, and infusing wit and passion.

Are you prepared to earnestly promote your book?

To find success in self-publishing, you will need to be more than a writer. It doesn't require experience in sales or marketing (though it helps). What you need is an honest willingness to tell people why your book is worth

buying and reading. You need to believe this proposition at your core. Do not be content to put the message out there and hope for the best. Own its presentation and promotion. Know there are people who need to read it, as it cures a specific ailment they carry.

I hope the directness of my approach has not scared you off the prospect of becoming a nonfiction author. If you continue, you may have what it takes to rise above the vanity seekers who give self-publishing a poor reputation and enjoy yourself along the way. The conviction to complete your book and bring it to market may change your personal and professional life in ways you cannot imagine. Most importantly, it may grant you a lasting sense of purpose that stays with you all the rest of your life.

If you are ready, destiny awaits you.

Introduction to This Book's Structure and Purpose

We live in a world with access to more information than any generation before. Most of these ideas, once expressed, soon evaporate. Beyond the minor impressions retained by individuals, information tends to wither out of human consciousness, fading from memory as soon as it is transmitted. Both the content of ideas and their mediums are not well-suited for long-term retention. Rarely will an idea come along that is so potent and so well expressed that it rearranges the ideological framework of its time. Only the right conversation, structured in just the right way for the right listener, can achieve any form of permanence in society.

All thinkers, beginning with our earliest intelligent ancestors, have contributed unique pieces to the human story with their ideas. The contributions that accumulate across cultures enable people to live differently than people before them. You need not consider yourself a Shakespeare or a Galileo to influence others with your original ideas. You need only have the patience to arrange your knowledge in a structure some portion of humanity can appreciate.

By connecting to the internet or visiting a library, people today can study human customs and discoveries from the farthest corners of the Earth. They can adopt the wisdom and experiences of bygone eras. The smartest philosophers, scientists, and kings of any previous era would never have believed the volume of stored communication now accessible to common people.

Collective knowledge can also inhibit the spread of new ideas. It can stifle any thoughts that reach too far beyond the norms of their environments. Appropriately, the most influential people in history have been those who were not afraid to speak their minds and focus on their passions, not surrender to established wisdom. We have many brave, untethered individuals, such as the philosophers and inventors of centuries past, to thank for today's developed world.

When you've processed enough of the information from before your time, you may develop the desire to contribute your own ideas to the human story. The same writing technology that brought about the modern world makes it easy to spread new ideas into the unknown future. That is what you can contribute if you are ready to master the communication conventions of your time. You will curate the best of your ideas and share what you know.

Today, due to blogging, vlogging, podcasting, and (most pertinent to our purposes) self-publishing, it is easier than ever to communicate your ideas to the people most desperate to hear them. However, you may never have pondered what your message is, the forms it could take, or its influence upon those who will receive it. You might not yet appreciate the power of your influence over the thoughts and emotions of other people.

As a self-published author, you will be the master of your own destiny. You will need to ask yourself many questions about what you are trying to say. Even if you think you know what you are talking about, do you have a detailed idea of the type of people you are trying to say it to? Do you understand how they should change after having read your words and assimilated your ideas? Without a specific purpose to your actions, your communication will fall flat.

Ideas accomplish nothing without viable presentation. You will need to convince strangers, in moments, that the contents of your book constitute a worthwhile claim on their time and money. Your ideas will need to keep the reader's attention throughout the text, so they will feel compelled to keep the pages turning. An influential author must wear many hats: as the creator, presenter, promoter, and consumer of valuable ideas.

Understanding how human knowledge has been passed on throughout the generations and the importance some books have had for how we think and live pushed me into nonfiction writing and self-publishing. When I realized I had stumbled onto a relatively undiscovered and untapped outlet for meaningful human expression, I started my own publishing company

to help people who know they have something important to say write and sell their own influential books. Now, I wish to share with the world what I have learned so far writing my own books, running Identity Publications, and experimenting with countless interesting ways to educate about complex ideas.

The Influential Author examines seven aspects of the relationship between an author and their nonfiction book.

Part I: Philosophy

Your philosophy about your book is your internal understanding of what you want to say, why it matters, and the social and historical context of your message. Although it may seem obvious that developing your philosophy—or your “why”—is foundational to everything that follows in writing, editing, publishing, and promoting your book, it is the most often overlooked part of the creative process.

Part one of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- What it means to communicate meaningful ideas.
- How communication has evolved since prehistoric and preindustrial times.
- Why books are still the best way to communicate with long-form depth, personality, and precision.
- The many ways self-publishing is better and worse than traditional publishing.
- Why uniqueness and influence matter when choosing what to write about.
- Introspecting about what you care enough to write about and become known for.

Part 2: Strategy

Strategy consists of developing a viable plan for the form the meaning of your message will take. To make a plan for your book, you'll need to understand the modern dynamics of self-publishing so that you'll know what is possible. You'll need to study the marketplace to learn how books similar to and different than yours are received by their readers. Good strategy requires you to think like an entrepreneur on a mission, not solely an artist filled with inspiration.

Part two of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- The angle, style, and unique value of your book.
- The ideal readers and target audience for your unique message.
- Structuring your communication for the ideal scope, length, and focus of your message.
- Comparing the framing of your book's purpose and structure to its marketplace competition.
- Opportunities in your market where reader demand has yet to be fulfilled by other authors.
- The search functionality, subcategory breakdown, and bestseller ranking systems of Amazon and other online book retailers.

Part 3: Creation

Creation, more accurately perceived as transmutation, is the process of turning thoughts into words and capturing them as static writing. The symbols of your writing represent the intangible meaning of your thoughts. You will need to become the kind of person who can achieve this transmutation regularly without losing inspiration, sacrificing the clarity of your message, or succumbing to fatigue.

Part three of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- The importance of cultivating the ideal writing environment and internal state to suit your unique creative nature.

- Arriving at a large word count at a pace that makes sense for your lifestyle and material.
- The functions of a nonfiction book's traditional structure.
- How to craft an outline that captures the essential parts of your message and keeps you focused until you've finished your first draft.
- Keeping your voice authentically yours and avoiding redundancies or omissions.
- Ghostwriters, pre-written content, dictation, and other nontraditional drafting tactics to ease the writing burden.

Part 4: Refinement

Refinement is how you will optimize what you've written to fulfill its purpose. It is the act of improving your message through better structure, style, and presentation and creating more powerful influence for your readers. Getting feedback from external sources and reassessing what you've done so far will help you overcome tunnel vision and self-bias.

Part four of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- The functions of developmental editing, line editing, and copyediting for nonfiction books.
- Learning to love the destruction of your creations for the sake of optimizing your message.
- Rearranging the order of the content of your message for optimal cohesion and retention.
- Working with beta readers and using their feedback to rectify your book's shortcomings and enhance its strengths.
- Reconsidering the focus, scope, and purpose of what you have written.
- Why the pedantic parts of language and proofreading matter for every message.

Part 5: Presentation

Presentation is the impression your message makes when its receivers are first exposed to it. The elements of your book's presentation are the doorway to becoming fully invested in the message within. The way you package your message must capture a specific, actionable kind of attention from the right kind of minds. Your book's title, cover, description, and formatting must all contribute to a complementary and accurate impression.

Part five of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- Avoiding the many pitfalls that make your book look poor quality, cheap, or amateurish at first glance.
- Choosing a title, subtitle, and description that contain the most relevant search terms and entice sales from your target audience without misrepresenting your message.
- Designing a cover that is conventional enough to be recognized for the type of book it is but unconventional enough to stand out from the crowd.
- Formatting the text of your book in paperback, hardcover, and e-book formats.
- Narrating your audiobook or hiring a professional to do it for you.

Part 6: Promotion

Promotion is how you spread your complete and attractive message. It will require you to position your book where it will get attention from the people who can most appreciate it. Today, there are countless ways to build exposure for products online, but only some of them will provide an equitable return of revenue and attention. If your book's outreach is successful, readers will even begin to promote it on their own, creating a sustainable cycle of interest.

Part six of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- Crafting your personal brand and bio as the author of your book.

- Preparing your book's launch date and getting the word out by sharing guest content on the platforms your audience frequents.
- How to determine the ideal retail price of each format of your book with real market data.
- Getting verified, positive online book reviews from readers during and after launch.
- Generating ongoing traffic for your book by running profitable ads where qualified buyers will actually see them.
- Preparing your book for foreign markets through translation and working with foreign publishers.

Part 7: Reward

Your reward is the positive change your book's publication will bring to your life. As a published author, you will come to think of yourself differently than you did before. As well, the world will begin to treat you differently, both challenging and respecting your opinions. Leveraging your book will create many new opportunities in business and in life. Sustainable passive income from your book royalties will liberate your time and labor.

Part seven of *The Influential Author* addresses:

- Dealing productively with results that aren't as good as you'd hoped and understanding the many forms success can take.
- Reframing your self-conception and social narrative as an *authority* on your subject.
- Recognizing the new levels of personal meaning that come with being the face and voice behind important ideas.
- How professional life changes with reliable passive income and the other opportunities a book makes possible.
- Repurposing your book's content for videos, courses, and other mediums to expand your influence.
- Planning your next publications without letting your initial success or lack thereof become a creative trap.
- The unknown but optimistic future of self-publishing and spreading important ideas.

This book's purpose is to help you see the value of your ideas from the perspective of your readers. In addition to honing your ability to communicate through the written word, you will learn about the practical economics of self-publishing and promoting yourself as an originator of a message that really matters. Though they may seem foreign and overwhelming to you now, the knowledge and skills required to complete the task of writing and publishing will seem easy once you are ready.

Best of all, you will not have to surrender creative or monetary control of your work to an outside party. Your expression and its rewards will be yours alone to reap and manage.