

If you can talk, you can write a book

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You may think you can't write a book. Think again. If you have an uncanny ability to speak eloquently (or at least semi-intelligently) off the top of your head, then you can write a book. In this article, you'll learn the seven simple steps to "speaking" your book.

I frequently receive calls from consultants and professional speakers who want to write a book, but have neither the time nor the writing skills (sometimes one, sometimes both). The most frequent comment is, "I get stuck almost as soon as I sit down to write."

"That's your problem," I say.

"What?"

"Sitting down to write - that's your problem."

"Well, then how am I supposed to write a book?"

I say: "If you can talk, you can write."

I'm about to reveal to you a technique that will help you to get your book written in record time. Here are the seven steps to "speaking" your book.

Step one - the planning phase

Most people will get an idea and start writing. They might complete one, maybe two chapters before getting bogged down in the details. The details should be the easy part, not the roadblock. The planning phase is actually the most critical part of writing a book. This harkens back to my project management days, when I discovered that a failed project could always be traced back to a lack of planning.

This is one place where, if you're strapped for cash, hiring a book writing consultant can be the best thing you ever did for yourself. A good writing consultant will "talk" you through the plan. He or she will ask a number of questions and have a pleasant conversation with you about your target market, the purpose for your book, and the subject matter. By the time you're done with your conversation, the consultant will have helped you to create a writing project plan AND a general outline.

Step two - the outline phase

If you're working with a coach or consultant, he or she will talk you through the creation of a very detailed outline of your book. Spending a few extra hours in this phase will cut your writing time by as much as 10 times. Seriously - it's that important.

Your speaking skills will come in handy here. If you don't have a coach or consultant, and you're not an experienced writer, then you'll want to call on a friend or two. You will (for each chapter):

- Take the outline you created in the planning phase, and divide each chapter into a "conversation" you'll have with one or more people (no more than two at a time, please).

- Sit down with your friends, colleagues, or intelligent child, and "talk" about the chapter. What are the most important points you want to make in the chapter? What stories do you remember or would like to tell? And, most importantly, what are the biggest emotional needs of your target market that can be addressed in this chapter? Record your entire conversation, and make notes as you go along. You won't remember what was said - trust me.

- Have the call transcribed, then simply construct a detailed outline from what was said. You may have to rearrange a few things, but all the main points will be there.

Step three: preparing for the first draft

You've got a detailed outline. Now is the time to start filling in the pieces. Go through each item on your outline list and determine whether or not you need additional information or data. You might need to find a story or gather research data to back up your main point. Go get the information and insert it into the right place on the outline. This is the ultimate version of plug and play.

As you review the outline you'll naturally see things you want to add, change, remove, or move. Go ahead - this is the perfect time to do a little cleaning and organizing.

Step four: writing the first draft

Now comes the easy part. You'll sit down with your recorder (or with a friend/colleague if you're better with people), your detailed outline, any additional notes or information, and a fresh mind. You know your material inside and out, so this won't be hard.

Talk through each item on your outline. That's it. No writing is required.

Have your recording transcribed and put into a word processing document (and printed).

Step five: editing the first draft

Congratulations. You already have a first draft of your new book. Read through the entire book, chapter by chapter. Does it flow? Are your

points clear? Is it interesting to read? Read it as if you are your target market. How does it feel?

Make notes, and either talk through the changes, or write them down. You can have someone else make the changes to the document; or, you can make the changes yourself. At this point, do what is most effective and that will ensure PROMPT completion of the second draft.

Step six: let go

Send your second draft to a professional editor; or, if you're really strapped for cash, a friend with an editor's eye who might trade you for a yummy dinner or massage. You MUST have someone else read the book for consistency, flow, and for general editing. We all leave out words, sentences, and even complete paragraphs because we "see" it in our minds, even when it's not there. Your editor will see your minor omissions as blaring errors.

Step seven: final review

Now all you have to do is a final review of your book. Read it through again, even though by this time you're sick and tired of the thing and probably don't like a word you've written.

Not to worry - this is common. Few authors actually like what they've written when it's done. There can always be improvements. So what? You're done now!

Go get your book printed!

Oh, and don't forget to sell thousands of copies