

YOU SHOULD WRITE A BOOK

Many well-known physicians have successfully used the power of print to effectively grow their practices and expand their visibility among the media and consumers. Wendy Lewis, author of 11 books in her own byline and countless more as a ghostwriter, explains the process

trends for books are constantly changing and publishers rarely accept cosmetic surgery titles or books about skin care and BOTOX® anymore because they have a backlog of proposals piling up in a drawer somewhere. It takes a long time to write and publish a book if you are working with a commercial publisher; from six months at a minimum to two years or more.

Determine your goals

To avoid disappointment, be clear about what you want to achieve before you start the book process. Do you want to attract more patients, generate awareness among a new segment of patients, get speaking engagements, achieve media coverage, or all of the above? Defining where you want to go and what you want the book to do for you will help you create a book that is tracking with your goals.

Before you jump into a book project, take a look at what other experts are writing about, and who else is publishing in your industry. Get a sense of what topics they are addressing, how they approach these topics, and consider how your book can be different and improve on the conversation.

Browse the health and beauty aisles of your local Barnes & Noble and you will find that the market has become saturated with books written by plastic surgeons and dermatologists about everything from natural skin care, acne, anti-aging treatments to cosmetic surgery. Therefore, for your book to be successful, it should be unique and stand out from all the others written on the same or similar subject matter.

If your plan is to write on one of these broad topics,



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A BOOK THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE author's special expertise can be a pivotal tactic for expanding an aesthetic practice and elevating the author's profile. Being published gives an individual instant recognition among consumers, the media, peers and industry colleagues, and adds an extra level of credibility. It also provides a way to get your personal message out to the public.

Although your goal may initially be to share your knowledge and explain your unique point of view on a particular topic, there can be many other benefits to your practice from writing a book. If you are in a crowded and competitive market, having a book may serve as a component of a comprehensive practice marketing program to help your business rise above the clutter.

Two of the right reasons to write a consumer book are to communicate something that hasn't been said a million times before, and to establish yourself as an expert on the subject. Among the wrong reasons to write one are to score a fat book advance, get rich, or get a movie deal. The

your point of view should be distinctive and personal and keep the topic more specific. For example, a book all about every cosmetic surgery technique from the face to the body can tend to be too broad and may not be able to offer the reader sufficient content on any one particular topic to be informative. If your topic is too narrow, such as a book that only covers body contouring, you may be limiting your potential audience. However, if you want to be known for your prowess in body contouring specifically, then writing a book about that topic may be a good strategy.

A good read

The basic rule of writing is to stick with what you know. Write about a topic that you are passionate about so that you can draw on your long-term experience and wealth of patients. Your book should also reflect your own personality and specialized approach, dispel some of the myths surrounding the topic, and offer new insights into what consumers want and need.

To prepare, scroll through Amazon.com to see what books are currently available in your area of specialty and how they are positioned. First go to Department, then Books, choose Health, Diet, Fitness, then Beauty, Grooming and Style. You will see thousands of books including textbooks on related topics. If you find that dozens of books like the one you want to write are already in print, you may want to rethink your subject or give it a new spin. On the other hand, a lack of books on your proposed topic may be an indicator that the idea is too limited or that your intended audience is too small. Your topic should be broad enough to appeal to a sufficient number of potential readers.

Book ideas and titles cannot be copyrighted. Copyright protection applies to the work as a whole, but you cannot protect your ideas. It is very likely that more than one author will have the same idea at the same time. For example, in 2003, I wrote a book called *Complexion Perfection* (Quadrille). In 2010, Kate Somerville penned a book entitled, *Complexion Perfection! Your Ultimate Guide to Beautiful Skin by Hollywood's Leading Skin Health Expert* (Hay House). Occasionally, series titles may be able to get some level of trademark protection, such as *The Complete Idiot's Guide®* or *Cosmetic Surgery For Dummies* series.

A book written for a consumer audience should be simple, informative, and educational. It should not be overly technical or complicated, or read like an anatomy textbook. The key is to establish a voice of authority while keeping the reader interested and engaged.

Working with a writer

Physicians often need some assistance in translating complex concepts into consumer-friendly terms and sometimes struggle with expressing their opinions in a simplified way. Also, most physicians do not have the time in their busy schedules to develop a book concept;

research, write, and fact-check the content, and then organize everything else needed to publish it.

It can be more efficient to find a professional publishing service that can help you with writing, editing, research, design, typesetting, artwork, print and production. You may need to assign someone on staff or hire a publicist to be a project manager to help get the book done and monitor quality control over the production process.

Working with an editor who understands the specialized needs of physicians and will be able to present your professional image in an appropriate manner is a critical success factor.

You may already have content in the form of blog posts, white papers, and articles that can be repurposed for a book. Pull this material together as it arises and keep copies in a file on your computer for future reference. If you have no content of your own and even less time to write, consider hiring a ghostwriter. An experienced ghostwriter can help do everything for you, including research and writing a draft of the content. It is important to find a ghostwriter who can mirror your voice. You may also need a copy editor when the



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manuscript is in the final stages. Copyediting is an important part of the book writing process to avoid putting your name on a book that is full of typos, grammatical errors, and misspelled words.

Think of a book as much more than just a website, blog or practice brochure. It should compliment your practice image and branding and have a long shelf life.

The book format

When it comes to consumer health and beauty books, short is the new long. Your minimum should be around 96 pages (think in multiples of 4 to account for printing 2 pages, both sides); anything less than that falls into the area of a brochure or white paper. Generally, health and beauty books in the shorter category range from 96 to 212 pages approximately. Within that page count, you will also need to account for front matter (acknowledgements, table of content, dedication, etc.) as well as the author bio, index, glossary if desired, references, appendix, and photos if you choose to include some.

In some cases, you may want to publish a lot of content. In that case, you may consider doing a group of shorter books to allow you to divide up your content across several volumes. As a general guide, 250 words per page is about right, but the content may be further divided into charts, tables, diagrams, illustrations, or photographs. A typical short book can be in the 25,000 word range, and a longer book format may be 50,000 to 60,000 words.

To determine what your ideal page count may be, >

▷ start with an outline. An outline forces you to think about how you will organize your content. Consider the most logical order for the reader to follow. Arrange your outline into chapters, and then further divide each chapter into subchapters. Generally, it is a good idea to keep chapters to a similar size in terms of pages or word count for consistency.

Book outlines are subject to many changes along the way, so it does not have to be set in stone. Your book may not end up following your outline exactly, which is perfectly fine. It is the author's prerogative, that is, if you are self-publishing. If you choose to go the route of working with an agent and submitting a formal book proposal to a commercial publisher in the hopes that someone will buy it, the process will be infinitely more restrictive and complex.

The final consideration is whether you want to include patient photographs in your book. If so, you will need to get bulletproof photo consents from every patient, and good quality high-resolution photography for print. Color photos will add considerably to the cost of producing the book, so the exact number of photos and where best to place them is a key consideration. Line drawings and illustrations are also helpful to explain key concepts in lay terms, and should be created by a professional medical artist or illustrator expressly for your use.

Choosing a title

The title should be attention grabbing and memorable, and it should concisely convey what the book is about. In general, the best titles are one to three words. For example, the last consumer beauty book I wrote was entitled; *Plastic Makes Perfect* (Orion 2008). Think of some of the best

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sellers in this category; *The Wrinkle Cure* by Nicholas Perricone broke the mould, followed by *South Beach Diet* by Arthur Agatston, MD.

Along with a catchy title, the book should also have a defining subtitle. The subtitle should explain the book's content in greater detail and entice the reader to dig in. Survey the market to see what other titles and subtitles are out there. Look for

your prospective title on booksinprint.com and search for the title you want to use online to determine its viability and avoid any potential copyright infringements.

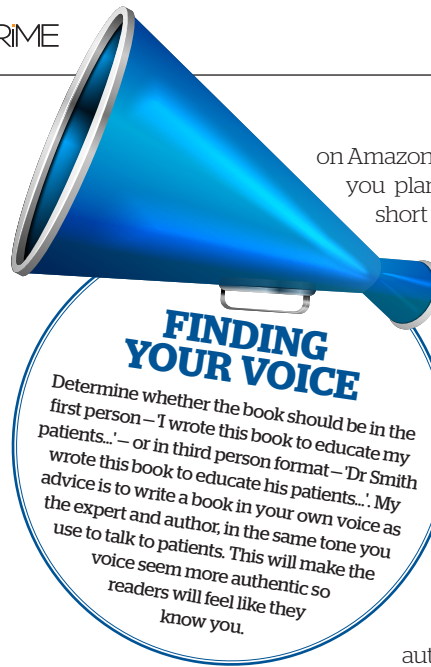
Next on the list is getting a well-designed front and back cover. This is what the reader will look at to determine whether they want to open the book. The spine is what people see when they are looking for a book in a library or bookstore shelves. Your book cover should tie into your practice or personal branding and will require a professional designer. Remember: A cover can make or break a book.

Self-publishing options

The self-publishing route is the natural choice for many physicians. The main advantages of self-publishing are that it allows the author to have complete control over the process; from

subject, title, tone, content, structure, design, length, and most importantly, timing.

To be a self-published author you will need to secure an ISBN, a unique bar code assigned to your specific book title. Seek out a publisher who can take your project from concept to a finished book in a timely and cost-effective manner. They can also assist you in getting your book



on Amazon and into book distributors. If you plan to self-publish, consider a short print run of 250 or 500 copies to avoid the book becoming out-dated or having to store them in your office. Another route is to just publish your manuscripts to eBooks.com, which is the least expensive way to do it. You can also create a short book as a PDF that can be downloaded from your website, but that tactic will only get you so far. Many authors opt for a combination

of both printed copies and a digital version. In general, it is a good idea to have a supply of printed copies to sign and hand out to patients and referral sources, sell through your practice website and social media platforms, and give to media. If you do a lot of speaking engagements and seminars, having a book in print is a big selling point and makes a perfect giveaway for guests.

Marketing your book

Long before your book is in print, your To Do list should include how to market the book and get the word out. Enlist your business manager or marketing consultant to develop a comprehensive book marketing plan before the book is completed. It is important to strike while the book is new and fresh, especially in terms of media outreach. Send out a press release on a professional newswire to launch the book for starters. Make a list of all the patients, colleagues, media contacts, and friends of the practice who you want to send a signed copy of your book to. A printed book or eBook can also be a great hook for getting people to sign up on your website, grow your mailing list, or like your Facebook page and more.

If you are eager to expand your market, attract more patients, and elevate your profile, writing a consumer book can be a worthwhile pursuit. Having a book can offer greater reach than an ad in a magazine that has a short shelf life or many other paid marketing activities.

Now let's talk about your writer's block?

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