

The Author Business Plan: step-by-step

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<http://greatstorybook.com/author-business-plan-step-step/>

This entry is part 1 of 2 in the series [Author Business Plan](#)

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This is the first article in a series about how to create an Author Business Plan, step-by-step.

In teaching creative writing for several years and now in helping even more writers online, I've come to realize something a little bit surprising about writing. It's actually really important to approach your writing in a businesslike way.

If you want to be a professional author, you need to do the things any sort of professional would do: starting with a business plan.

Artwork by Unsplash.

Being an author does mean you need to think of yourself as an entrepreneur. Because that's exactly what you are if you want to make a living from your writing.

Can you pitch the story right?

Maybe you've heard the cringe-worthy story pitch that too often comes from a novice writer who hasn't learned to whittle their story into a 2-sentence (yes, seriously) summary. Many writers cannot do it, but I feel very strongly that they simply can't do it *yet* because they don't know how.

(If you're wondering, yes - I have made a cringe-worthy pitch. I learned the hard way how to do it right.)

Anyone can learn to summarize a story in 2 sentences. Yes, even an epic tale of epic proportions with lots of blood and guts and stuff. Any story can be expressed in 2 sentences.

Can you pitch the storyteller right?

Can you clearly and succinctly explain to people what kind of writer you are? Do you know who would be interested in your stories? Are you aware enough of what publishers do to know who might be interested in publishing your work?

Can you pitch YOU to an agent or an editor?

Most writers cannot. But just as with anything else we need to learn about writing – everything from commas to building plot and more – we can learn to present who we are as writers. Now, I understand that doing so might make you feel like running to the hills – or sticking your head under a blanket.

But I also know that you can overcome your doubts and fears and just do this. I'm going to help you get from ACK-Oh-No to Sure-No-Problem.

This is going to be a step-by-step process, which means you'll be getting what you need in small portions each week until we're through it.

The Author Business Plan

If you want to be a successful writer and make a living from your writing, you absolutely need to write up an author business plan. Why? This is where you decide and detail exactly what it is you are doing with your career, what you want to be doing and how you'll get there.

Your author business plan is your roadmap for the next 3-5 years of your writing life.

But not only that, it's going to make it possible for you to pitch YOU, the storyteller, to anyone in the business. It will prepare you for an elevator pitch, or a meeting or a fundraising campaign - because you'll know exactly what to say and what not to say.

Any entrepreneur knows from *Business 101* that the first order of business is writing up a business plan. You're a writer. This is about more writing. So it's doable.

What a "normal" business plan requires and what an Author Business Plan should have are not entirely dissimilar. There are differences, and they're primarily because a business plan for an author is way more fun than one for a fence-building business.

An Author Business Plan is way more fun and involves 9 Sections.

1. Author Snapshot

If you have a background in business, you might recognize this as a sort of Executive Summary. The Author Snapshot is everything about you and your business – where you are, what you're doing and where you plan to be as an author in 3-5 years.

In your business plan, the author snapshot is the most important thing and it's listed first. However, **it's always written last, after you've outlined everything else.** For more detail about this section and the

others in your Author Business Plan, just check back here - or sign up for my weekly newsletter, and I'll send it all directly to your inbox.

2. Author Niche

This is where you consider very seriously what kinds of stories you love to tell, how you fit into the publishing market, and what makes you different from other authors in your niche. If you write for [more than one genre](#) or perhaps [more than one age demographic](#), then that's where you list all that.

Your Author Niche is about knowing where you fit in along the rest of the authors out there. This is where you define your specific market and how you fulfill it.

For details on the [4 steps to creating your Author Niche](#), go [HERE](#).

3. Market Analysis

Don't let the term put you off. For authors, this simply means you get to read a ton of stuff, and then you find out how those books did on the market. That's pretty much it.

Many new writers start writing because they cannot find the types of stories they want to read – anywhere. They feel there is a gap to fill and they are inspired to fill it.

But it's absolutely [essential that you know as much as you possibly can about what books are actually out there](#) – even if they're perhaps just outside your niche. If your niche isn't covered, what are the next-door niches like? You've got to know.

Why? *You cannot become part of a community if you're entirely ignorant of it.* The community you want to join is that of the publishing industry and other creative people. You cannot do that in a cultural vacuum. Read. Read everything.

In your market analysis, you'll know and outline the authors and publishers who are potentially connected with you in your story niche.

4. Who Does What?

This is about how you're going to organize and manage your authorship business. Every business requires more than one person to get things off the ground. The same is true of authorship.

The deeper you get into being an author, the more you'll realize that you need more help from other people. Test readers. Editors. Bloggers. That's just the beginning.

For example, I am not a technically minded person. Steffan Berk is my tech expert, and he created this website for me. I just create the content and come up with new ideas. Steffan does all the behind-the-scenes crunching that I don't understand.

You do not have to have a WordPress website like mine. It can be done simpler. But this is where you'll make that decision and also note down what sort of help you want to be able to get in the coming years (3-5).

5. Service or Product Line

What sorts of stories do you write right now? What do you plan to write over the course of your career? Make a list of everything and then decide what your timeline should be.

In this section, you should also write down how your stories benefit people. Is it just pure entertainment or is there more to it than that? If you haven't really thought about that before, this is where you make that decision and write it down.

Sometimes, taking this step helps writers realize what sorts of writing they really want to do.

6. Marketing and Sales

Whether you are traditionally published or self published, you will need to [market your work](#) and have a sales strategy. It's really important to have this in mind and grow upon it.

Again, don't let the term get in your way. Part of your marketing strategy might be posting around on Facebook. Many savvy writers have built their entire careers on doing just that and nothing else.

Whatever you think you should do, write that down and then you'll be able to tackle how to approach each point better.

7. Funding Request

This might be about a fundraising campaign, or perhaps winning a grant. If you plan to raise money for your writing, this is where you'll specify that and start making more detailed plans to move forward with it.

8. Sales Projections

You really cannot do this step if you don't have any book on the market right now. Without anything selling, it's just a wild guess.

We all dream of making it big (read: millionaire) and having fans of our writing nearly pass out in a frenzy of excitement when they meet us. But that isn't the right type of projection here.

This is where you track your sales in a simple table and draw a line to show where your sales are headed.

If you have a sequel coming, that will boost the line upwards again – for your new book of course, but also for the first book or books in the series.

If you are self published, you probably have a better grasp on how many books you actually sell in a week or a month than an author who is traditionally published. Regardless, just do the best you can with your projections.

9. Authorship Appendix

An appendix is where you include the basic information about you, things like your tax ID papers, your writing or publishing permits (if applicable) and any awards your writing has garnered.

This is also where you keep contact information of the others you work with, like publishers, book reviewers, and bloggers.

The Big Plan

If you don't want to create an Author Business Plan, then don't. I'm certainly not going to press this upon you! But if you're serious about making more money as an author and aren't sure how to make that happen, this is really your first step.

Your focus should of course be on the quality of your writing.

I don't want anyone to think otherwise! Great stories are absolutely what I hope you will write. *But you can indeed write great stories and find that no one at all knows about them.*

Getting word out is the toggle-switch to success, but you've got to first learn how to get the word out. Learn by doing, and get cracking on your business plan. Next week, I'll have a follow-up article about this process for you.

Keep creating, no matter what.

This entry is part of the series

[Author Business Plan](#)

Be sure to check out the other posts:

[Author Niche: a 4-step definition >>](#)
