



Ten Things Rookie Authors Do to Mess Up Their Nonfiction Book Success

First time authors just don't know what they don't know. Learn and be better prepared to maximize your potential for book sales and publishing success. Here are the top ten things we find that are most likely to sabotage that first book effort:

1. No book development, publishing and market planning – Rookie authors believe they must run when the creative muse calls and ignore the reality of what it really takes to successfully write, publish and market a book. If you want to write a journal or a blog, then keep going down that path. But if you want to write a book that sells more copies than to ten to your family and friends, learn all the steps to the journey to successful author. Besides your time, it takes money, and it takes focus, so to keep from wasting time and money, set out a plan, stick to it, and you will be rewarded for your efforts.

2. Writing for themselves, not their audiences – There is virtually no other industry which tries out so many new products each year without any idea of whether they will work or not, no focus groups, no beta testing, just poor sales results as market research. Rookie authors write what they want to write and not what their audiences need and want. There are ways now to research topics, and one of the simplest ways to start is by checking out the bookstore and Amazon.com to see what is out there now, and what should be.

3. Confusing us with an unclear message – Again, the muse strikes and authors take off running in every direction at once, generally trying to cover as many random ideas as they can in writing a book. Savvy authors create one, two or three core messages and stick to them, building a case with statistics, stories and examples to prove their points. Knowing what your point is makes it a lot easier to get media interviews, too.

4. Inadequate editing and not bothering with a peer review – If you've never written a book before, you need a lot more help than you may think to create a polished manuscript. Are there non-fiction books you just love? They have all been generously edited, and your masterpiece should be, too. And after a thorough edit, you must throw yourself to the mercy of your colleagues and ask them to have their way with your book. You need professional feedback, and if you pass muster, then you have a book worth publishing.

5. No index – Why would anyone leave an index out of a non-fiction book? Rookie authors get so tired by the time they finish that first manuscript that they just want it

out. They forget the reader will need to find what you've covered in the book without having to read their pithy sentences from cover to cover. An index is the mark of a pro, and you will reveal your amateur status if you don't provide one.

6. No clear positioning and not even the beginnings of an author platform – Unfamiliar with these terms? A positioning statement helps you see what your audience wants to read on your subject and what else is out there so that you come up with something new and right on target. The author platform is the breadth of your network to sell books, and you should start working on both before you write word one of your book.

7. An amateur book cover – Pros can tell a self-published book a mile away. Rookie authors don't hire real cover designer, but have the neighbor or their best friend do the cover on the cheap. You may save money here, but it will be an expensive lesson when you have hundreds of books boxed in your garage because the lack of professionalism of the cover lead people to the same conclusion about what was in the book.

8. No testimonials or endorsements – Books are sold by personal recommendations, and testimonials are your way of proving you have them. Put your testimonials on the top of the back cover where they can't be missed by potential customers. The only reason a rookie author doesn't have testimonials is because he or she couldn't find anyone who was willing to vouch for the book, or because he or she didn't know enough to ask someone to write one before the book is published. Either way, a serious mistake.

9. No database of potential customers – If you want to be published by a traditional publishing house, or want to self-publish successfully you must develop a large (2,000 minimum and 5,000 better) database of people who might be interested in doing business with you and are likely to be the target audience for your book. If you start collecting names on your website a month before your book is to come out, then your book will be old by the time you have a personal way to sell it.

10. No online media kit – *The New York Times* called and wants to review your book in tomorrow's paper because the subject is exactly the same as their over-the-fold story. But you haven't figured out that opportunities knock when they knock, not when you've had time to plan for them. If your media kit isn't available online, and packed with just what they need, they will find an author who hasn't made another rookie mistake.

Don't make any of these rookie mistakes and you will have set the groundwork for long-term sales success with your book.