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## 7 COMMON ROADBLOCKS TO WRITING A BOOK

### And How to Overcome Them

By Michael J. Dowling

#### About the Author

*Michael J. Dowling helps thought leaders and other professionals write and publish books that accomplish their goals and advance their careers.*

*Eighty-one percent of Americans feel that they have a book in them — and should write it.”*

That’s the observation of Joseph Epstein, former editor of *The American Scholar* magazine. Obviously, the great majority of these wannabe authors never pursue their dream.

What about you? Do you have a book idea percolating inside you? If so, what’s been holding you back? Below are seven commonly cited roadblocks. Do you resonate with any of them? Be honest with yourself. Are they real roadblocks or simply rationalizations?

This paper will help you discern the difference between valid reasons and mere excuses, so you can move forward with your dream, if that’s what you truly desire.

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### 7 Common Roadblocks

#### Roadblock #1: Not Enough Time

Like most other successful people, you are no doubt extremely busy. But interestingly, it's the busy people who somehow find time to write the books that bring them even more success. How do they do it?

*"No matter how busy you are, you can find the time to write a book, if you make that a priority."*

In the process of helping numerous busy professionals become successful first-time authors, I've noticed that most share the following two traits:

- 1. They prioritize important matters over urgent matters.** *Urgent* matters demand immediate attention. You can't ignore them. But it's the *important* matters that determine your long-term success.

A book falls into the *important* category. It can catapult you to the next higher professional level. However, writing that book is usually a non-urgent priority that can be easily postponed.

Successful authors make time for the important. They don't succumb to the tyranny of the urgent. No matter how busy you are, you can find the time to write a book, if you make that a priority.

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- 2. They leverage their strengths.** Successful leaders focus on doing what they do best, and they enlist the help of qualified specialists to handle the rest. Trying to write a book on your own is an uphill battle. I strongly suggest that you hire a ghostwriter to do the heavy lifting. That will free you up to work on your book without neglecting your day-to-day responsibilities.

*“Trying to write a book on your own is an uphill battle.”*

### Roadblock #2: Difficulty Picking a Subject

Theologian Frederick Buechner said, "Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world's greatest need." This is a useful perspective when picking the subject for your non-fiction book. Ask yourself, “What am I most qualified to say that my readers most need to hear?”

*“Ask yourself, ‘What am I most qualified to say that my readers most need to hear?’”*

### Answering the following questions may help to focus your thinking:

- What are you most passionate about? What drives you?
- What issue(s) make you most upset or angry? (Anger can be an indication of passion.)
- What problem(s) do you see that you would most like to help solve?
- If you were invited to give a presentation on a topic of your choice to an audience of your choice, what topic and what kind of audience would you choose?
- What specific skills and experiences do you have that you would most like to use for the benefit of others?

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*“Early on, begin thinking about what you’re going to do when the writing is done.”*

- When other people meet you, what do they seem to find most interesting from a professional standpoint? What questions do they ask you?
- What type of person or what group of people would you most like to influence? Describe this “target audience” as specifically as possible.
- What subject might you write about that would best serve the needs of your target audience?
- What kind of book would best accomplish your goals and give you the greatest satisfaction?
- Why would people in your target audience want to buy your book?
- If you do not write this book, who will suffer loss?
- What uniquely qualifies you to write this book?
- What platform do you have that will give you credibility and name recognition with your target audience?
- How will this book help you professionally?
- What doors could it open to new business, speaking opportunities, etc?
- How could it enhance your credibility and visibility?
- How could it advance your career?
- How could it increase your income?

Your answers to these questions should point you to one or more possible subjects for your book. If you don’t have clarity after completing this exercise, postpone writing your book until you do.

### **Roadblock #3: Insufficient Knowledge**

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You'll be more inclined to start writing your book if you understand how you're ultimately going to publish and distribute it. Early on, begin thinking about what you're going to do when the writing is done.

You might start by reading my white paper, "Publishing Options: How to Choose the Best Method for Publishing Your Book," which is available on the White Papers page of my website. It provides an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of traditional publishing, subsidy publishing, and self-publishing.

In the past several years, the publishing world has witnessed enormous changes. Advances in printing technology make it easy to self-publish a book. Meanwhile, the stigma that was once associated with self-publishing has largely disappeared. Today some authors actually turn down offers from traditional publishing houses so they can self-publish.

If you decide to self-publish, I recommend reading *Dan Poynter's Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book* and *The Publishing Game: Publish a Book in 30 Days!* by Fern Reiss.

Whether you self-publish or go with a traditional publisher, you will need to do much of the own marketing. To learn about book marketing, I recommend reading *1001 Ways to Market Your Books* by John Kremer and *The Well-Fed Self-Publisher: How to Turn One Book into a Full-Time Living* by Peter Bowerman.

### Roadblock #4: Lack of Confidence

You don't have to be a good writer to write a good book. A

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competent professional ghostwriter can effectively present your ideas in your voice, saving you considerable time and effort. If you want to do most of the writing, I recommend hiring a developmental editor.

You are so familiar with the subject matter of your book that it will be difficult for you to view it from a reader's perspective. A ghostwriter or editor will help you organize your book for maximum impact.

### Roadblock #5: Concerns about Costs

*“Don't count on getting rich from sales of your book.”*

Writing and self-publishing a book is not a trivial investment. Before you embark on the journey, you should realistically evaluate your expected ROI. Don't count on getting rich from sales of your book. In most cases, sales proceeds only help offset writing and publishing costs.

If you're writing a non-fiction, self-published book, you can realistically expect it to give you some of the following benefits:

#### **1. Sell your services and products**

If you're offering services or products that benefit from explanations, illustrations, testimonials, and stories, a well-written book can serve as an amazingly persuasive sales

tool. It will work for you 24/7/365. People will come to you predisposed to buy.

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*“The writing process will help you clarify your professional goals and focus your message. The publishing process will help you broadcast your message and establish your brand.”*

*“When you become an author, you will join a rather exclusive club. People will take notice, and your career will take off.”*

### **2. Communicate your ideas**

A well-written book is one of the very best ways to present your thoughts clearly and convincingly, so readers will be inclined to adopt your point of view.

### **3. Open doors to new opportunities**

When you become an author, people will look at you with increased respect. New opportunities will open up to you.

### **4. Multiply your speaking engagements**

A book will enhance your credibility as an expert in your field. Your speaking invitations will increase. If you charge fees, you'll be able to raise them.

### **5. Establish your brand**

When you write a book on your area of expertise, you'll establish your brand as a thought leader in your field. The *writing* process itself is a valuable branding tool, because it will help you clarify your professional goals and focus your message. The *publishing* process will help you broadcast your message and promote your brand.

### **6. Advance your career**

Numerous people say they want to write a book, but few actually do it. When you become an author, you will join a

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rather exclusive club. People will take notice, and your career will take off.

### **7. Get noticed by the media**

Media outlooks are always looking for interesting material. When you write a book, they will want to interview you. Depending on your subject, you could even become a go-to person for national media. For example, one of my ghostwriting clients has appeared on CNN, Fox News, ABC News, and other national media outlets. His book was the key that opened these doors.

*“Media outlooks are always looking for interesting material. When you write a book, they will want to interview you.”*

### **8. Further your favorite cause**

A book an ideal vehicle for promoting a cause. It allows you to convincingly present factual information, and to augment that information with stories and testimonies that appeal to the emotions.

One of my ghostwriting clients summarized several of the above benefits when she wrote me the following:

*Michael, writing a book with you has been the one of the best moves I've made at this stage in my career. The impact in terms of visibility and credibility has been huge. Now when I'm introduced to people, I'm not only a business coach and consultant, I'm also an author.*

*As a direct result of the book, my speaking engagements have increased almost 50 percent. Many of the organizations who invite me to speak buy my book and give it to the attendees. That, of course, brings in additional revenues and further promotes my*

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*services. On several occasions, it's opened doors to profitable new business. In fact, before the first copy of the book was in my hands, it had already brought in two new consulting contracts that more than paid for its cost.*

***Writing is a creative endeavor. It can be far more challenging than simply working on well-defined tasks to accomplish predetermined goals.***

### **Roadblock #6: Fear**

Uncertainty breeds anxiety. Reduce the fear factor by learning about the writing and publishing process. Read books and white papers like the ones I've mentioned above. Talk to professionals in the field. (I'm always available for a chat.) Think about possible subjects for your book. List the specific benefits you stand to gain from writing and publishing it. Once you've done your homework, you'll feel more comfortable with whatever decision you make.

### **Roadblock #7: Procrastination**

If you just can't seem to get out of the starting blocks, don't be too hard on yourself. Writing is a creative endeavor. It's far more challenging than simply working on well-defined tasks to accomplish predetermined goals. Your vision and motivation must come primarily from within. The process demands imagination, initiative, discipline, passion, perseverance, and even courage.

Begin by taking small steps. Do your research. If you decide your book idea has merit, get going and get published!

*Michael J. Dowling is an award-winning ghostwriter and publisher of non-fiction books for business leaders, executive coaches, professional*

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### About the Author



*Michael J. Dowling is an award-winning ghostwriter and publisher of non-fiction books for business leaders, executive coaches, professional consultants, entrepreneurs, and other professionals. He offers turnkey services that make the writing and publishing process understandable, cost-effective, time-efficient, and enjoyable for his clients.*

*Mike earned an MBA degree from Columbia Business School, where he was a Harriman Scholar, and a Bachelor of Science degree with honors from the University of Florida. Prior to founding Wool Street Publishing in 1999, he served as president of an educational publishing company, president of a national gift company, and administrator of a 1000-member church. He is the ghostwriter, author, or editor of numerous books and articles.*

*Learn more about Mike and his services at [www.michaeljdowling.com](http://www.michaeljdowling.com).*