



# Turning a One Sheet into a Proposal

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## I. The Content

This includes:

- **Unique selling proposition-** This info should be bulleted and include this sentence:
  - "If consumers in the target market purchase and read XX" then they will...
  - Three or four bullets
  - Because they will...
  - Three or four bullets
- Publishers want to know what is unique about your book. Terry Behimer Cook, who served as Acquisitions Editor for David C. Cook Publishing said, " Publishers don't want books that have never been written. They want to know what unique spin you can put on a topic already written about."

**Felt need and book mission-** what is your heart behind this book? What do you want people to feel or do as a result of reading it?

**Overview-** this gives the publisher the general info and themes of your book. Manuscripts are divided into parts. How many sections can you divide your manuscript into?

Give two to three sentences on each section to give the publisher enough of an idea of what your book is about. Just like at a conference you need an elevator pitch or a way to describe your book in thirty seconds or less. Your elevator pitch should be included in the overview.

### Manuscript

This is where you give the info about your actual book. This includes:

- Manuscript status- How much is actually completed?
- Special features- What does it have that may make your book stand out from the rest? Ex. Bulleted info, sidebars, illustrations, charts or graphs, photos, etc.
- Manuscript length- This is about word count.
- Completion date- The amount of time you need to complete the entire book.

## II. Market

- **Characteristics**- Who is your primary audience for the book? Be specific. Ex. My primary audience is Christian teen girls ages 13-19.
- Do you have a secondary or tertiary audience?
  
- **Motivations**-
  - Why does your audience want to read your book? Ex. If your book is a devotional on prayer, it can be for people who are tired or not praying to God with their whole hearts and who want to experience a deeper, more authentic prayer life.
  
- **Affinity Groups**- These are the people who want to purchase your book. Ex. for a book on prayer, groups might include pastors in the ministry ten years or more, subscribers to Our Daily Bread Magazine, etc.
  
- **The Competition**- This is perhaps one of the most important pieces of your proposal. I've had many publishers thank me for the thorough work in this area. Publishers want to know what books are out there (preferably ones that sell well) that they can compare it to. It helps then get an idea if it's a book they want to take on at their publishing house.
  - Ex. book on prayer-
  - Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller
  - The Power of a Praying Woman by Stormie Omartian
  - Praying Through Every Emotion by Linda Evans Shepherd
  - You don't have to buy each book. Looking inside the book can help give you a basic understanding of what the book is about.
  - You must tell what makes your book similar and different than the book you are comparing it to.

### **III. Author**

This is where you brag about yourself. What skills, abilities, previous experience, awards, etc. can you tell publishers that help you to establish yourself as an expert on this topic? This is where the buzzword "platform" comes into play. This includes:

- College degree
- Previous jobs
- Previous writing (Articles you've written and your blog)
- Your website
- Speaking engagements
- Radio and TV opportunities
- Internet promotion (social media sites)

### **IV. Market**

Here is your marketing plan. I require a one to two page, single spaced marketing section for my clients. The fuller you can make this, the better. Although publishers help a bit with marketing, the majority of marketing falls on the author. Anywhere you can put your book will help spread the word about your book. This includes:

- Speaking engagements you have done
- Speaking engagements you plan to solicit
- Radio and TV opportunities you have done
- Speaking opportunities you plan to do
- Newspapers you can write press releases for
- Websites where you can advertise your book
- Ways to use social media for promotional purposes

## V. Chapter-by- Chapter Synopsis


This for me is most difficult to write. I don't always know where my book is headed until I start writing it. But this is a place or you to write one to two sentences of each chapter. Where is the book going in terms of story arc? Publishers need to know what your plan is for the book, so they know if they want to take a chance on it.

### **For fiction:**

- The "Hook"— A concise summary, 50 words or less, of the story and why a reader should buy the book.
- The Synopsis: A summary of the story, 1-2 pages, single-spaced. Editors want a clear presentation of the plot outline and action. It's OK to leave out some minor characters.
- The Market: Who will buy this book? How can you contribute to the marketing effort beyond your circle of friends? Do you have a blog or website where you can post a teaser chapter?
- The Competition: what makes this story different from other novels out there? Name 3-4 similar titles.
- The Author: What qualifies you to write this novel? Education, journalism or writer training, specialized fiction study, research, reading patterns.
- The Characters: Make a list of the key characters, with brief descriptions.
- Expanded Table of Contents: Provide a two to three-sentence summary of each chapter.

### **Five ways you can beef up your proposal** (if it's looking a little thin)

1. **Biblical Foundation**- What Bible verses will you be using in your book? List them here (with the verse). Tell how you plan to use the verse in your book.
2. **Endorsements**- This will turn a publisher's eye if you have some celebrities who are willing to partner with you. This also helps establish platform.

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3. **Reviews**- What are people saying about your writing and/or speaking? Have people write a one to two sentence review of you as a writer or speaker. If you have enough for both, include them in two separate categories.
  4. **Specific reader benefits**- What will the reader gain from reading your book?
  5. **History of the manuscript**- Have you shown this proposal to any other publishers, agents, etc. Let the publisher know this. This will help them to know if it is a simultaneous submission.

#### **Paid Resources:**

- Mary Demuth's Non-fiction proposal template <http://www.marydemuth.com/the-first-step-to-published-a-book-proposal/>
- Her fiction template <http://www.marydemuth.com/store/>
- Michael Hyatt's template <http://michaelhyatt.com/writing-a-winning-book-proposal>

#### **Free Resources:**

- Rob Eagar's marketing plan (you have to sign up for his free newsletter) <http://www.startawildfire.com/>
  - Eight Elements of a Winning Book Proposal <http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/the-8-essential-elements-of-a-nonfiction-book-proposal>
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