LK PUBLISHERS
making a difference

How To Write A Book

By Hilda de la Rosa

There is much material about how to write a book. For me though, I write what I feel passionate about. I write about stuff that I have implemented in my life. And I write about stuff that I believe will make a difference in the lives of others. Therefore, what I write has a specific genre. Some of us are great story tellers and have the ability to weave together complex characters with an exciting story line. I have no idea how to write a fictional thriller, for example.

Many of us dream of writing a book, yet very few of us ever do. Writing a book is fairly simple if a few things are in place. Like any other project, if it is broken down into smaller, bite-sized chunks, it is quite simple, really. I believe there are two kinds of writers. Those who are methodical and do vast amounts of research and those who are natural orators and could fly by the seat of their pants. Both types of writers have a certain ability with words.

I would imagine that it would be very difficult for someone to write a book if words are not their thing. If you are the kind of person that finds it easy to articulate an idea and if it is effortless for you to describe and relate ideas to others, the chances are that you will be able to write a fairly decent book.

And even then, it is quite a daunting task and like any other task, it will never come to fruition if you do not START! But start at the beginning. I have spoken to a few people who would like to write a book and they have spoken to me about the book cover design and the title of the book. Long before you start thinking about the cover design or the title, the book has to be written first. This is a classic horse before the cart syndrome. And in any even, we are authors not marketing masters – leave the cover to the marketing professionals. They will know how to create a cover that will attract the shopper – it's their job.

Where do you begin?

1. **What Will Your Book Be About?**
   Are you an expert in the field about which you would like to write? Are you knowledgeable about the subject matter? I know that for many people, they want to read what others write and how others put something together. I have a different point of view – simply because I want my subject matter to be a unique take or interpretation of how I see the world and how it makes me feel. If my view of the world and my take on things is inspirational for the reader, then I will have achieved my goal. Be clear about your subject matter.

2. **Write From Your Heart.**
   Write about things that make you feel – deeply. I'm not talking just about warm fuzzy feelings. I'm talking about those deep wrenching aching feelings as well. We learn from others and we feel a kinship to others, especially if they are able to relate a personal

experience emotively and if their experience is uplifting and inspiring for us. But each and every one of us has an uplifting or inspiring story. Most of us have had to overcome a deeply painful tragedy. It is our ability to tell our story in such a way that we can engage another and keep their attention.

3. **Keep The Attention Of The Reader**
   We keep the attention of others if we are interesting, funny, intense, genuine, and real. It is completely pointless if we write something and no-one can relate to it. And every one of us is different. I will never be able to write a book that will relate to every other person on the planet. But my book will appeal to others who may have a similar mind-set to me, or to those who have had a similar experience. I will never be able to write a book that most engineers will want to read. Write about *your* passion and *your* experiences without worrying too much about your audience. Your audience will be defined by the professionals you engage AFTER your book has been written. Worrying about the opinions of others is one of the biggest detractors – our fear about the opinions of others often stops us from writing.

4. **Write An Outline**
   Once you have decided on the subject matter it will be time to write an outline. Writing an outline is like writing a business plan. If there is a plan for you to follow, it will ensure that you create a bit of structure for yourself. If you are a creatively expressive individual, structure will help you to focus and do each thing once step at a time. For me, this means I write a title and a few bullet points about each chapter Make sure the chapter outlines flow from one to the next. I find that if I do not have an outline, I try to cover too much material in one chapter and I lose focus about what this particular chapter should be dealing with. Writing an outline with bullet points keeps me focused and stops me from repeating myself. Although – sometimes repetition is required – we learn by repeatedly encountering the same thing. Be careful not to become boringly repetitive. Once you have completed your outline – read through it and decide if this book is dealing with all the topics you wish to discuss and if you think YOU will find such a book interesting. One of the things I battle with is that I want to say too much and I want to include so much information that it becomes much too complicated. If what you write is to complicated the reader will lose interest.

5. **Stick To the Outline.**
   Just stick to the outline. It is very easy for a writer to get side tracked because we have so many ideas floating about in our mind. When we write, other topics swim into our consciousness and we think, “Oh yes, I can write about this as well.” Don’t allow yourself to get distracted from the outline. If you have spent enough time outlining the book only write about what you have outlined – leave the other ideas that float into your awareness for the next book. Rather create another document and write your invading idea down as a chapter idea for your next book. But do make a note of it – if it was exciting enough for you to think about including it then it will be exciting enough to put in the next book. But write it down and then let it go and stick to your plan and outline.

6. **Make Sure You Are Not Interrupted**
   It is very difficult for me to write with constant interruptions. Once I am in the flow of writing, interruptions are my enemy. This may be quite different for you but I have had to explain to the people that I love that when I am writing, any interruption creates chaos in my mind. When I am in the "flow" of writing, it feels as if the paragraphs or sentences line themselves up to be written and as I write one sentence, the next sentence is lining itself up. If someone walks into the room and even says something like, "Would you like some coffee", it interrupts that flow. I have learned to ask people not to interrupt me with words. It may be different for you. For me, a person can walk into the room and even do things in the room that I am working in, as long as they do not speak to me. If someone I care about wants my attention when I am writing I have respectfully asked them just to come into the room and wait for me to finish writing the piece of sentence flow that is already lined up in my head. I can see that they want my attention, I am aware that they are in the room but I don't like interrupting that "flow". It normally does not take me long to finish typing the sting of words that are already lined up. You will find your own rhythm. Trust that you know what will work for you.

7. **Dedicate A Certain Amount Of Time To Write Every Day.**
   Few of us are lucky enough to just be writers. Most of us have a day job or business we have to run and cannot focus all our attention on writing. I was lucky, when I finally really wrote my first book, I had nothing else to do. I could just write and write and write until it was finished. Diarise the time if you need to – but write every day. If you do not write every day, the book will stay unfinished.

8. **You May Not Use What You Write**
   I made several attempts to write my first book. I think the fourth or fifth attempt yielded a book. There were quite a few factors that influenced this. The book did not get completed for a variety of reasons - mostly it was fear. I stopped writing half way through because I had a subliminal fear of being judged. Whilst I was trying to write my first book, I did not acknowledge this fear – I just stated many other reasons for failing to complete the book. But more often than not, we stop writing because, if we actually finish the book, we have to put it "out there" and people will read it and judge us. This fear can be quite paralysing. Don't try to deny this fear. Acknowledge the fear and do it anyway. Just write. Once you have finished writing your book, professionals will help you with your insecurities.

9. **Do Not Obsessively Reread What You Write.**
   Going back all the time and rereading what you have written, is a distraction. I do this if I do not feel like writing, and it never serves me. It is "busy" work. You are at your desk as per your diarised allocated writing time but you kid yourself that you have dedicated the time to your book and you are reading and rewriting what you have written before – you are not actually writing, you are buggering about. Once it is written, leave it written. The time for editing is later – once the book is complete. Leave what you have written alone and get on with the act of writing more. Try not to worry too much about those irritating red or blue

underlines where Word shows spelling or grammatical errors. It irritates the crap out of me and can be a great distraction.

10. Don't Avoid The Difficult Parts.

When writing Love Versus Fear, the last chapter was really difficult to write. This chapter dealt with the death of my beloved. I was so distraught whilst trying to write it that I rushed through it as quickly as possible. When I finished the chapter, I was astounded to see it was only 300 words long. It felt like I had been at it for hours. Normally a chapter in my book is about 2 or 3000 words. It was really difficult to write and I had to go back about five times to get the chapter written in more detail. Because the subject was so very difficult for me, I wanted to get it over very quickly. But… once to book was published it was exactly this chapter that helped others whose partners had died. We find comfort in knowing that others understand our pain because they have been through it themselves.

11. Stick To Your Guns

It does not matter if others do not agree with your opinion. Let them write their own book and state their opinions in their book. No matter what you write there will be people who will be critical and disparaging. This is unavoidable. Try not to get caught up in the opinions of others and try not to let that change what you write to suit someone else. Stick to your guns and write passionately about what you feel is right. History has shown us that some philosophers were killed for their opinions only to be venerated post-mortem. Be aware though not to criticize or point out errors of other authors in your book. There is a difference to sticking to your guns and being belligerent about the work of another. Try not to compare yourself to others.

12. Make Sure That You Are Consistent In Your Work.

You cannot write one chapter with 200 words and another chapter with 2000 words. If every chapter covers a subject or idea, ensure that you give it as much attention as you have given your other subjects or ideas. Readers very quickly pick up if you are unsure of a subject or idea. Rather leave the chapter out if you do not have the confidence to write about it passionately.

13. Be Consistent In Your Format.

If a chapter has a heading – then all chapters must have a heading. I have found that within any chapter sometimes we have a section change. These section changes should be shown. I use something like this

-oOo-

To show a section change within a chapter. A section change is when you are addressing a slightly different topic that still has relevance to the chapter outline or if you are finished discussing one example and you are moving on to the next.

Keep the same font throughout your manuscript and just put the headings and chapter headings in bold. If your chapters do not have headings make sure you state “Chapter One” or “Chapter Two” to clearly separate your chapters

14. Chapter Endings Are Important

Make sure that you end your chapter with something that will entice your reader to go immediately to the next chapter. Leave them wondering what you will talk about next. The end of the chapter should not “feel” like the end of the book.

15. Avoid Elaborate Formatting Within Your Manuscript.

Most publishers use different software to design your book to get it ready for publication. Elaborate formatting will always be the first thing a potential publisher will ask you to change before they will even read your manuscript. Save time and avoid doing it in the first place.

16. Your Last Chapter Should Leave An Indelible Imprint On Your Reader.

If you are planning to write another book make sure your reader knows you have this in mind be subtly inferring that they will find out more in your next book. For instance, Love Versus Fear ended with me, “Wondering where life would lead me next and where in the world I would find myself writing my next book?” Since I wrote Love Versus Fear in India.

17. Once You’re Done

Read your book again and correct errors and elaborate where you feel you have not made yourself clear or remove the bits where you have waffled. THIS IS NOT A REWRITE. Do not reinvent the wheel and do not second guess yourself. Just tidy it up and make sure that chapter breaks are in place and the section breaks are clear – anywhere that you have changed subject or sighted examples should be delineated.

18. Do A Test Run

Give your manuscript to a friend or five to see if they like the book. Try not to sweat too much and try not to phone them every five minutes to see what they think. These should be trusted friend who will be brave enough to tell you if it is crap. Remember the publisher will not hesitate to tell you it’s crap.

19. Grow A Thick Skin

Not everybody is going to like your book no matter how spectacular it is. Always remember a record company told the Beatles that they would never amount to anything. And JK Rawlings was turned down by many publishers. If you know in your heart that you have produced a great body of work, do not let any body’s opinion distract you from your goal – to be a published author. A few months after Love Versus Fear was published a Facebook “friend” said, “Don’t think you’re God because you’ve written one book.” I agonised over that for a while until I realised that the person had no idea who I am, had never, in fact, met me and they are saying what they are saying because of who they are – and that their opinion had nothing to do with me.

Just enjoy writing your book. Unless you write a New York Times bestseller, you are not likely to get rich from the sales of your book. But… A strange thing happens when people hear you are an "author". Being a published author brings a certain amount or prestige – it sets you apart from the masses. Not everyone has published a book – even a bad book – and that makes it an achievement. How many people have you met who have written and published a book?

Look out for me next teaser, "So. You have written a book. Now what?"