

Non-Fiction Proposals that Pop

Your book proposal presents your book to industry professionals, including literary agents, and acquisition editors and marketing teams at publishing houses. It is the document that influences and informs the person reviewing it that your book is worthy to be published, and that it is a product that can be marketed and sold. Think of it as your business plan for your book that clearly communicates:

1. What question will you answer? What problem will you solve for the reader?
2. How will you unpack the message of the book
3. You are qualified to write this book
4. How the audience/reader will be reached

Proposal format:

- Times New Roman, 12pt font
- 1” margins
- Single spaced
- Sample chapters double spaced

Basic Proposal Structure

Proposal for

Title of Your Book

Author’s Name

If agented, use agent’s contact info ONLY

Name

Company

Email address

Phone number

Proposal Table of Contents

I.	One-page sell sheet	3
	A. Title, genre, and word count	
	B. Tagline	
	C. Back book cover paragraph	
	D. Abbreviated bio with author photo	
II.	Biographical sketch	4
III.	Description of the book	4
	A. Detailed description	
	B. Questions the reader wants the book to answer	
	C. What the reader wants the book to provide	
	D. How the reader will be inspired (reader take away)	

IV.	Chapter outline	5
V.	Market analysis	7
VI.	Competitive analysis	7
VII.	Marketing plan.	8
VIII.	History of the manuscript	10
IX.	Three sample chapters	
	A. Chapter 1.	11
	B. Chapter 2.	17
	C. Chapter 6.	33

Proposal Outline/Format:

I. One-page sell sheet

A. Title, genre, and word count

B. Tagline One sentence that explains the book and/or its benefit to the reader

C. Back book cover paragraph One or two SHORT paragraphs

- What to expect
- What to take away
- How this is done

D. Abbreviated bio with author photo Short information:

- Current profession
- Education/qualifications
- Affiliations
- Prior publishing

II. Biographical sketch

- Elaborate on brief bio sketch. Publishing history, affiliations, awards and achievements, publishing history, other qualifications
- Links to web page, blog, social media
- Few, if any, personal details

III. Description of the book

- Three or four paragraphs
- Present the overall topic and how it is approached
- Not a play by play, but the big picture of the story – *this comes in the chapter synopsis*
- Will there be photos, diagrams, discussion questions, space to journal, etc.?

A. (Title of Your Book) readers are asking (several bullet points):

-
-

B. (Title of Book) readers want a book to provide (several bullet points):

-
-

C. (*Title of Your Book*) will inspire its readers to (several bullet points):

-
-

IV. Chapter outline

Two or three sentence synopsis of each chapter. Spend a lot of time on this.

V. Market analysis

A deeper look at your audience and how they are reached. What are your readers lifestyle and habits?

It helps reveal that there is a market is for the new book, helps describe the potential audience, and helps the publisher think through how they could market and sell the new title. Could be bullet points.

A. Whom do you see as the audience for the book (bullet point list)?

-
-

B. Why would somebody buy this book (bullet point list)?

-
-

C. How is this audience reached (bullet point list)?

Know how and where your audience consumes information and content!

-
-

D. What magazines does this audience already read (bullet point list)?

-
-

E. What blogs, podcast do they turn to; events they attend; and communities they are attracted to/involved with (bullet point list)?

-
-

F. Do you have special relationships to the market (bullet point list)?

-
-

G. Comparable Titles to *Title of Your Book*

- From the past five years. Not just competing books, but also comparable books that show the potential audience for your book.
- Author, Title, Publisher, Pub Date
- Brief statement on how your book is similar
- Brief explanation on how you book is different

VII. Marketing Strategies This is how the audience is going to be reached. **SHOW ENGAGEMENT**

Not just what you plan to do, but 1) what you currently have in place 2) what you know you can guarantee you'll be able to accomplish.

Weak: I plan to make a web page for my book

Strong: My web page and blog currently attract over 500 unique visits a month

What you have in place now:

-
-

What you actively pursuing

-
-

Launch Plan (more bullet points!):

-
-

VIII. History of the manuscript People and places you have previously submitted your manuscript to: people to endorse, publishers, literary agents.

IX. Three sample chapters If there is an introduction include it. Include first chapter. And then one or two other chapters within the book that you feel are strong.

Compelling Cover Letters

1. Start with a single short paragraph that introduces the proposed book.

- It could be the hook / logline.
- Think about starting with a question in which your book would provide the answer.
- Brief info: your name, title of book, if its fiction or non-fiction, the genre, and the word count.

2. An "overview" of the intended work, including a brief description of the target audience. Make sure that the concept is specific and not too broad.

3. Two or three paragraph synopsis. Expand on the hook.

- What problem will be solved
- What question will be answered

4. Brief bio

- A few sentences about the writer that highlights your *pertinent* credentials and explains why you are a credible author of the book.
- Brief previous publishing history.
- Include a link to your web page or blog.

5. Acknowledge the publisher or agent – either at beginning or end – and why you think they specifically would have an interest in your book.

Knowing When to Stop

Applies to both the cover letter and the proposal

1. Use an economy of words

2. Concise Bio

- Personal information should be pertinent and kept to a minimum.
- If you don't have a great bio, don't elaborate on nothing. (yes – I used a double negative)

3. Do not include incomplete or non-existent platform components

4. Don't sound desperate