

Book writing 101



By [Nokwazi Mzobe](#)

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I've always wanted to write a book, I even attended one of those free book writing seminars. I was thinking seriously about putting pen to paper when I mentioned my plan to a client and she suggested I create a book for the project we were working on.

While I envisaged myself as an author of a book, I'd never actually done anything like this project before. The learning curves over the 16 months that followed were steep and numerous, but ultimately very rewarding. Here's a summary of my book writing story for anyone who's thinking of doing something similar.

Concept

My vision was of a simple yet informative book that start-ups or small business owners could have access to. Something that they can refer to as and when they needed to. Because I had relative clarity on the concept and content, I began the work on my own. The process started in January 2015 as I outlined the different chapters and began the research.



Freelance writers

Halfway through the process, I realised I was crazy doing this alone. (I was working on other things as well). I decided to outsource some of the chapters to freelance writers. This helped a lot, but it still took about eight months for us to get all the content written up.

Editor

It hadn't occurred to me to include an editor from the very beginning. When I realized we needed one, and found the right person, they took our first draft and gave a lot and I mean a lot, of valuable feedback. This added an additional eight weeks to our project timeline.

Graphic design

With hindsight we needed more than a graphic designer for this job as it involved issues with regard to trademarks –

particularly around the legalities of using artwork and graphics. On top of this, our original designer left us, and we had to start over with a new person. This delayed the project by another six weeks.

Software

Something that wasn't budgeted for was the software needed. We had to invest in Adobe Indesign for the layout as well as Unplag – a plagiarism and content checking programme, which I now know is a must-have for any managing editor.

Focus

As I was writing the book I almost became consumed by the process. I had initially planned and budgeted for it to be 50 pages but it ended up being 162 pages long. There's so much information out there, I eventually got to a point where I stopped and forced myself to focus on the most important information.

Structure and flexibility

I believe that if I'd had a more structured plan when I started, we'd have saved some time and money. That said, flexibility is also key, especially when you're working with external people or resources. Things happen and if you're not open to doing things differently, you won't get anywhere.

Teamwork

Once I found the right team, everything was a breeze! Even when there were hiccups they rallied on. The final team was behind us all the way. Even when their work was done, they continued to follow-up and give moral support.

Looking back, this was a resource and time heavy project. All in all, the book took 16 months to complete. If we include freelancers, there were nine people working on it at one time. But the team spirit, the laughter and the excitement at the end - when we shared the actual book with everyone - was priceless. Will I do it again? Absolutely.

ABOUT NOKWAZI MZUBE

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