



Dream of Travel Writing

The Parts of Your Book Proposal About You and Your Book

This week we're gonna talk about the final parts of the book proposal, not necessarily in order, but in terms of what we've covered so far. And I think several of you who are on here have probably caught most of the ones that we've done in this series already. So if you have not, I'm gonna go back through, just so you know what the other sections are and which webinars you can find them with.

So, today we're gonna cover what I have termed the parts of your book proposal about you and your book and why they're actually much less important. So specifically, as we go through, obviously, we're gonna talk about these particular parts of the book proposal that are about you and about your book. But I'm gonna begin by explaining why it is that these are the least important and what I mean by that.

And what I really mean is that they should be the least of your worries, as in these are the parts that people tend to spend quite a bit of time obsessing about, for lack of a better word, but these will not sink you in the same way that not spending due time and doing it first, spending the time on finding where you are in the marketplace, figuring out the target audience for your book, and thinking of how you could possibly market this book could potentially sink you. Those ones have a much larger effect. So those are things that you need to get clarified first.

And then what we're gonna talk about today is kind of the gravy at the end. Those are the things that you've probably already been thinking quite a bit about, about what goes into your book and all that, but those come much easier. And to be honest, with a nonfiction book, as we talked about in the first webinar in this series, you're not writing the whole thing before you're getting paid. You're getting an advance from a publisher before you actually dive into most of the writing of the book.

So if you're spending too much time thinking about... whether it's your author bio or your sample chapters, then you are doing yourself a disservice because that time might be wasted if you can't get a buyer for your book. So I'm gonna go back through, like I said, and look at the different sections and tell you where in the webinar series you can find the ones that we have discussed in the past. And then we're gonna move through the following four. We're gonna look at your author bio. We're gonna look at your chapter summaries. We're gonna look at your sample chapters and how to put together your overview, which is actually the very first thing in your proposal.

So I've actually had several chats with people recently who are very much in this market. I have, about two weeks ago, been at a really lovely writer's conference. And then I met with a friend who runs the DIY MFA program recently. So I'm also gonna loop in a couple other thought leaders, if you will, during the talk today, because that's one of the things that I like



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to do in general, is to loop in perspectives of what's going on in the industry overall. And I spend quite a bit of time in the book industry. I don't talk about it quite so much.

So one of the great things about this series is that I'm bringing to you not just my own experience, but those of editors, agents. I had a two-hour long chat with a very, very significant agent the other day. And I recently sat down with somebody who used to be a book editor and now he's on the agenting side, and he also helps people with their book proposals. So I'm bringing all of that together for you guys in this webinar. But we've got four different sections of your proposal to talk about today.

So let's dive in. But first, how is it that the parts of your book proposal...so your book proposal, right, that are about your book and about you as the author can possibly be less important than everything else? It just seems silly, and that's why so many authors spend so much time obsessing about their...particularly fiction authors, it will be character and plot, right. But with nonfiction authors, they'll obsess about, you know, getting it done, writing the chapters, doing the research. But the problem is if that you haven't lined up your idea, if you're not very clear in your idea, if you're not very clear that that idea has resonance in the marketplace... What that means is that there's books that are similar but different, right?

So you want to make sure... Editors hate it when you say that there's no other book out like this out there. That's their least favorite thing to hear. In fact, they basically write you off immediately, editors or agents, when they see such words. Because if you think that there is no other books like this, then it either means that you haven't done enough research and that there's probably...in the agent or editor's mind, they're envisioning that there is 12 other books just like this and they probably haven't sold very well. Or, if there is truly no other book like this out here that not even comparable... So let's say you were the first person to do one of these meditative coloring books. I can't imagine how hard of a sell that was.

Not only is there truly not any coloring book for adults in the market, but it's also a weird size of a book. It's a weird type of printing. They usually tend to have different covers. They have colors. I can't imagine how hard of a sell that was. And I bet that book only came out because that person already had an existing online platform, or maybe because there had been self-published books that were similar beforehand. Because if there is truly no book that bears any resemblance, however remote, however tangential, however sort of cross-genre, cross-industry, or in the case of travel writing, that there's not been a similar story in another country, or a similar story told in fiction but not nonfiction...

These are usually more the cases for us as travel writers. If that is truly the case, then publishing houses won't touch you. And by proxy, neither will agents because they know



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they can't sell your book. And that's because if it hasn't been done, there's no proof that people will pay for it. And so no publishing house is gonna take on that gamble. Because it's not just that \$20,000 or \$50,000 that they're paying you upfront. It's also the salaries of the publicist, the marketing team, the sales team, and of course, your editor and the copy editors and other people involved in editing that are also on the line for that book.

So that's the idea. You have to have an idea that will be purchased. But you also have to know who is out there that will buy this book and if there are enough of them that it makes sense for the publisher to invest all of that money, because they will have the potential to get back later. And once you know that there are enough of those people, you also have to show the publisher that you have a plan for reaching them. Because if none of those things are there, you can have the most delightful writing, the most lovely and compelling idea, but an agent, and then by proxy, again, a publishing house won't touch it because they don't know how to sell it. They don't know how to earn money on it. And at the end of the day, all of the people in this industry are in it for some amount of passion, but it is also their job. They work for somebody who is paying them to do these things.

So even though, obviously, the writing, what goes into your book, even though all of these things matter, the way to think about it is that they matter later. They matter after your book has been sold. So you need to concentrate, as we did in the earlier three webinars in this series, on the business case of your book before you have the luxury as well of thinking about all of those things. And what you'll actually find, the really beautiful thing about working in this seemingly backwards kind of way, is that as you've been familiarizing yourself with the larger market of books, and what's being published, and what that looks like, and how different authors have presented these ideas, the more specific market of who you want to reach, and what they are interested in, and where they hang out, and what else they're interested in besides your book, and what kind of groups they congregate in, and where they live online, and then the types of places that you can find them, how you can get out in front of them, what blogs they read, what podcasts they listen to, you will have such a great and clear idea of how to present...the lens through which to present the idea for your book that you originally had, that all of these sections that we're gonna go through today are gonna be so much easier.

So the most important thing is to remember that this is a business deal to get your book out into the market, and that in a business deal, the business case is always going ultimately be the deciding factor, okay? And that's why as, you know, mercenary or... As I was chatting with somebody the other day, the origin of the word mercenary is actually freelance. Freelance has the same origin as mercenary in terms of being a free lance, so a lance or a knight that was not attached to a particular allegiance or liege. So it might sound a bit mercenary, but this is the way that everyone else who touches your book will work.



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So if you are not also shrewdly thinking about your book's business case and how best to position for a business deal, then you're doing your idea a disservice because it won't get out in the world, and it will never have the opportunity to impact other people.

So enough doom and gloom. Let's talk about how to finish up your proposal. So these, again, are the seven sections of the book proposal. The overview, or you can think of it in a way as the introduction, as what comes first. It positions your idea. And that's followed by the comparative titles, which position your idea in the market. And that's followed by the target market or target audience. That speaks about the people who will be reading your book. And the marketing plan, which is the way in which you will reach them, which is followed by your author bio, which talks about where you already are, as opposed to where you're planning to go with this book, followed by the table of contents, or the chapter summaries is another thing that people often call, and the sample chapters.

So as you'll see here, even the way that the nonfiction book proposal is put together is, in many ways except that we skipped the overview, following what we talked about, because these are the first things that people need to read. And so as I mentioned, we skipped the overview because you wanna write this last. Comparative titles, we already talked about. We talked that in the first webinar in the series. The target market or target audience, we talked about in the second webinar in the series. And the marketing plan, we just talked about in the last webinar, which feels like it was last week. I think it was last week, the last webinar that we did in the series, so the third webinar.

So that means that this week we're gonna be talking about the overview. But since you write this last, we're gonna do it last today as well, and you'll see why when we get there. And the author bio, the table of contents, and the sample chapters, so these are gonna be the things that we're diving into today. So starting with the author bio, now, I've seen some very similar things to what happens with the author bio happening when you guys are writing pitches for magazine articles.

You fret quite a bit about what needs to be in there in the vein of, "Am I good enough? Is this clip important enough? Do I have enough to say here?" And when I teach you to write the about you paragraph, as we call it, for pitches, I talk about hewing very specifically to the information that is important for the particular piece at hand. So even when you're talking about what you've written before, you wanna either talk about the magazines that are most relatable to the current magazine and you can throw a big one in there if you have a whopping, very impressive title in your repertoire. But most importantly you want to show the editor that you've written for other magazines that are similar, that you can do the work that is set out.



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Then you're gonna talk about your relationship to the particular topic. If you're pitching a piece about throat singing in Mongolia, then it would be very beneficial if you had in fact witnessed throat singing in Mongolia, and even more so if you already talked to experts about it. So those are the kind of things that you would put in the about you portion of your author bio...or, sorry, of your pitch for a magazine. And it's not all that different for your author bio. It's not so much about you as a person as it is about you as a potential business partner in this potential business deal.

So what does that mean? How are you showing yourself as a potential business partner in this potential business deal? I'm gonna show you a couple dos and don't dos from somebody who has been on both the editor and agent side of things. But the important framework to remember here is that, even as you are talking about you, you are talking about the parts of you, the aspects of you, the characteristics of you, the past history of you, the past jobs of you, the past publication credits of you that are most relevant to this specific business deal. So just like with magazines, you wanna talk about the writing that you've done that is most relevant to this. Not very important here, all of the writing, or writing education, or MFAs, or whatever it is that you have ever done. This is not a kitchen-sink author bio, okay. This is very important.

Now, I mentioned I had met with a friend recently who was previously an agent...or, sorry, an editor for a quite major publishing house that publishes quite big authors. And he's recently struck out on his own and is now doing book proposal reviews for authors, and he is also agenting. So he's also representing authors in the capacity of an agent connected with an agency. So this is something that he said on his blog that I thought was really interesting. Because, remember, I told you before that we started with all of this marketing information, the marketing plan, the competitive titles, all of these things, that we did all of that first for all these different reasons. And yet, Chad says, "Regardless of where it's located in the proposal, I usually flip to it," being the author bio, "right after I read the cover page, and I doubt I'm the only one."

You know, this is so interesting because if there's all this great information showing the business case for the book, and I'm telling you that the business case for the book is the most important part, then why is he reading the author bio first? It is absolutely not the reason that you think. It's not because you and who you are and whatnot is the single most important thing, and that if you don't have enough this or enough that, that he won't read the rest of your proposal. The interesting thing here is that it's because the author bio is typically gonna be the most poorly-written part of the book proposal in terms of showing that you are a good business partner, in terms of showing the business case for you and your book. And it sounds weird when I say it like that, and so I really wanna make sure that you guys understand this.



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The author bio, even though it's about you, says so much in this subconscious psychological way to an agent or the person who intercepts it first before you ever make it to an agent...or, sorry, to an editor or to an agent, who is who you would work with before you would ever get to an agent. The author bio says so much about how you think, how you work, how you view your work, how you understand the marketplace, how you understand your position within the marketplace, how you understand how to position yourself within the marketplace, and how you understand how you present yourself as a business case.

And this is really important because if an agent and then an editor is gonna take you on, there is quite a bit, as we talked about last week in the webinar on the marketing plan, there's quite a bit of work that comes to you that falls to you to present yourself appropriately in the world, whether it's speaking, or taking on yourself, organizing events, or being partners with people to do such things. So if you are not able to market yourself and you're not able to understand how to describe something that you know much better than your book, something that's complete and already exists in the world, unlike your book, if you are not able to describe yourself, how will you represent your book?

Now, this is not to say that where you exist in the larger market is not also important to an editor, an agent. And so this is really important because I've seen a lot of folks.. I just have been talking with somebody about this recently, who try to get their books going when they aren't ready, when they would be better-served by building up what book publishing folks love to call platform. And working on your author bio last, after you've worked on all these other marketing materials, you will already understand where you are currently not showing up in what your platform will need to be for your book.

So if you did this first, it's very easy to write where you are now and not see the gap, and not see how you might need to change what you do or don't put in your bio to reflect the space between where you are now and where you will need to be, for lack of a better word, exhibiting yourself and your work down the line. So quote from same person here but from a different source, so he says, "As a publisher, I want to know that you've written some things that have been published." Now, this is very vague intentionally on many levels.

So he wrote, "Some things." He didn't say how important the things are. He didn't say what type of things they needed to be. He didn't say how many, how long, what scale, what scope, what type. He didn't say any of that. And he said, "That have been published." He very clearly and specifically... He's an editor, right. He cares about word choice. Did not say that you need to have been published X, Y, Z places, or that you need to have been published regularly, or that you need to have been published for a certain period of time. So this is really important to remember, that as you are writing your author bio, you are not needing to be in thousands of places.



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Just like when we write our about me paragraph for a magazine editor, we are showing them that we've been published before, and preferably in magazines similar to theirs, simply to show them that we understand how it works and to provide this sort of, you know, what we all go to Yelp for, right, the sort of peer review of other people's social trust to show that other people have trusted us to publish things that we have actually turned in that have come out in the marketplace before. Now, he continues to say, "I want to know where to place you within the marketplace." And he says, "Affiliations and networks and what your platform is like."

Now, when people in publishing say, "What your platform is like," a few years ago, this meant how many Twitter followers you had. And in recent years, the publishing industry has realized that, A, Twitter is not the most valuable of all the social networks in the world, but, B, that engagement is more important, and even more than that, serious relationships are more important. Because the number of blog readers, or of Twitter followers you have, or of Instagram followers you have, does not directly translate into book sales. And so when Chad here says he wants to know what your platform is like, it's not by accident that right above that he mentions your affiliations and network.

So let's say, for instance, that you went to a university that has a very, very strong alumni culture, that has book clubs in many of its alumni chapters. This would be a network and affiliation that you can mention that is part of your platform, that you are a member of this thing, that it has a book club, and you plan to pursue promotion of your book within that book club, okay? So this is where all that work that we did with the marketing plan is important because it's helping you to know what connections you already have that you need to be mentioning that you are a member of when you write up your bio. And these things, they change so much over time, right? So it might now be that you're a moderator of an influential Facebook group. It might be that one of the things that you do for work besides your own writing is that you do some sort of operations admin stuff for another business owner who has a big podcast.

There are affiliations and networks that you can put in here that you might not necessarily think of until you went through all that marketing rigmarole that can be very important, because I see a really unfortunate thing happen time and time again. Sometimes it's in article pitches, and sometimes it's when people are, say, at conferences pitching in a speed-dating type capacity to DMOs or brands or things like that. And what happens is that there's an interaction, and the writer comes away, and they talk about all of the reasons why the person was wrong to reject them or to not be interested in their idea or whatever it is.

In that moment is when they say all of these things about themselves. For instance, perhaps they actually have a PhD in the subject related to this idea. And during their dissertation, they



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talked to top specialists in this field, and so they've actually been studying it for six years, and it's very close to their heart, and all these things. But they didn't say a lick of that in their pitch or when they were talking to the person during speed dating.

Now, these are places where we're tight on space. We're tight on time. If it's in-person pitching, you might be stressed out. But these are the things that you need to lead with. And so that's why as you do your author bio, it doesn't matter overall the size of your platform compared to the Kim Kardashians or the George R.R. Martins of the world, okay? It matters how adept your current affiliations and networks are from marketing the book that you wanna propose, and that stuff doesn't just go in your marketing plan. It also shows up here in your bio. So when I say, "Shows up here in your bio," what does that actually look like?

So this is something that I pulled from Chad as well. You'll hear from him later. We're gonna be doing a partner webinar with him on book proposals for our whole email list as well. And here are his do-not-dos for your author bio. He has quite a bit to say on this. As I mentioned, he's quite passionate about the topic of author bios. So he does not want it to be more than 250 words, so that's basically one page. So he doesn't want to see anything more than one page of about you in your entire book proposal, which with your sample chapters will usually be somewhere between 20 and 60 pages, depending on what type of book it is.

Now, a bad author bio doesn't say anything about why the author is a credible source for the book's content. This is what I was just mentioning to you about those people who pitch something, and then when they get rejected, say all of the reasons why it was a bad idea to reject them. But they didn't say any of those reasons in that pitch. This happens in the author bio all the time. After the length, it's one of the very first thing that Chad harps upon. Now, this next one is really interesting. He says that, "The bio should not hide the author's main vocational role." And what he means by this is an author who has a day job doing something else who's also doing this book and sort of tries to make themselves sound like they are full-time when they are actually doing something else, that looks disingenuous. And that is why it's a no, no. It seems like, "Well, should I really put it there? It doesn't matter. There's only a certain amount of words." But it's not that hard to just say, "I'm a such and such at place and place." And if you don't put it in there, then it looks like you are hiding something. That's Chad's point.

Now, Chad also has another point in here about how he really wants you to also come across in your bio as a person. So he wants you to mention what you are passionate about, but not in more than one sentence, and not in a way that is confusing. So this ties into something he has lowered down, which is not to overdo the humor. And so the way all these things fit together is that he wants you to have a sentence in there where, as I read in one bio I was looking up when I was/ doing some research for this webinar today, you might say, for instance, that



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when you're not writing, you might be found trying to make it through the 17 open tabs in your Firefox browser or walking your dog on the beach, or something like that, okay? Now, the 17 open tabs in your Firefox browser is an appropriate amount of humor. If you said that and then said or walking your dog through the swamp because you live in the bayou and there's really no appropriate place to walk your dog, you've lost, like, that little chuckle, and now you're kind of going down a different track, okay?

So a little bit of humor, a little bit of personality, a little bit of what you're passionate about that might not be this book is important for showing that you are a well-rounded, interesting person that your agent and editor want to interact with, but you do not wanna go overboard. That's kind of the one place where you go outside of the scope of your book, and that's it. Now, you'll see two more in here. "A bad bio does not refer to relevant accomplishments, and it does not refer to the author's ability to reach readers." And these two tie back into what we were talking about before. But it's interesting that he has them separate.

So he says, "A bad bio says nothing about why the author is a credible source," but then he later goes on to say, "It also doesn't share relevant accomplishments or refer to the author's ability to reach readers." So this means that all of these things that we talked about in the marketing plan, like I said, you need to show how the networks and affiliations that you already have...you need to put that in the bio as well. There is no end to the number of times that you should be mentioning your ability to get your book in front of readers in this proposal. You'll see when we talk later about the overview, every part of your proposal basically is showing how this book will be gotten to readers by you, by not just the power of your words, but also the power of your ability to market your own book and to take advantage of the network and affiliations that you already have.

Now, the last one here, I think, is quite important. And he said this in a different blog post, but I thought it was relevant here. He says that, "Your bio should not be arrogant or otherwise off-putting." And how many of us have read those bios, whether it's of a speaker, or of a professor, or, I don't know, like, a president of a country, I don't know, somebody who is quite important, and there's something in the bio that's just not... It's not that it's not fun, but it just kind of makes you not like the person, right?

There is something in the bio that just makes them seem, like, you know, they're chiseled out of marble and they're some figure out of history rather than a real flesh and blood actual person. They become more of an abstract. And that's why he has these things in here about talking about your passions and about humor and things like that as well., because when you go too far with...I don't wanna say the pomposity, but when you go too far with your accomplishments, there's kind of an automatic psychological thing that happens where the reader is gonna want to think less of you to compensate for how well you are thinking of



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yourself.

So that's something to keep in mind, but that I don't want you guys to stress about overly. Because when he is saying, "To be arrogant or otherwise off-putting," it's the kind of thing where if you're having anybody read your proposal, they will point this out to you. I would think it would be very rare for anybody that I know, anybody who follows us to be in the position where they're sounding too arrogant or off-putting.

So on the flip side about what to do, that means we wanna spend less than a page, less than 250 words, and begin with the role that is relevant to your book. So what does that mean? It means begin with some sort of job function or life function that you have had that is relevant to your book. So it means don't move in chronological order through everything you've ever done. It means launch into the thing most relevant to what's happening with your book. You wanna make sure to also say what you do now, but then reference accomplishments that are relevant, reference your ability to reach readers, reference your affiliations and networks, and then at the end, briefly tell the agent and publisher what you're passionate about with a tad of humor.

Or if you feel like you can't quite nail that, you can always go with more sort of vulnerability, personability about your family. I see this come off really well with a lot of people who would otherwise come off as very...to go back to last slide, come off as rather arrogant or otherwise off-putting. I see them wrap up their very impressive-sounding bios by talking about their family and their kids in a way that really brings them down to earth.

So if that's your bio, that's your author part, then after... I'm not going all the way back, but if you remember when we had...or maybe I will just go back. So the structure of your book proposal, again, it's gonna start with that overview, which we're gonna skip and come back to last. It's then going through the comparative titles, which is positioning in the market, your target market, your marketing plan, and then the author bio, which we just talked about. And now only finally at the very end of the proposal do we talk about the actual content of your book, okay? So the table of contents comes next, followed by the sample chapter. And as I mentioned earlier, the table of contents is also frequently what's referred to as the chapter summaries.

Now, the chapter summaries are something that, again, you can spend so very much time laboring over. You really can. I've seen people do this. And it comes most often, I've seen, when people spend a lot of time laboring over their chapter summaries, it comes from a lack of clarity about what should be in the book in the first place. Because here again, we're talking about nonfiction, where you have not written the book in advance, which means that you don't yet know what's gonna go in the book. If you're writing fiction, you're not putting



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together a book proposal in this way, and your book is already finished. So I hope you know how the book ends. But in nonfiction, you don't have to know yet.

So what that means is you can just have this idea and have this loose framework for what can go in there, and then write up this proposal. But what that means is that if you aren't okay with the looseness of your framework of what's gonna go in there, you can just kill yourself with questioning and self-doubt as you work on these chapter summaries. So a good way to think about your chapter summaries, particularly if you're already working on something and you're trying to outline your book or you're trying to think about, you know, how you would write it or where you would start doing research or whatever... I heard a really nice methodology for this at the conference the other day.

So the gentleman said... basically did... it's so old school. It's mind mapping. And he said, "There is nothing new about mind mapping except you actually sitting down and doing it," which got quite a chuckle, but it's so true. When was the last time that you sat down with a blank sheet of paper and a pen and made yourself some lines and circles and made a proper actual free-form mind map rather than doing something on your computer? And if you have a mind map app that you actually use, bless you. But I find that trying to do a mind map on the computer, you just, as you're having idea after idea, you just get limited with, "How do I add a new thing here? Oh, no, I'm out of lines here." And it's so much better to do it on a piece of paper.

So like he said, "There is nothing new about mind mapping except for doing it." And yet, this guy uses mind mapping like this to write books in entire weekends regularly, which sounds bonkers. But what he basically said is the average person speaks about a 100 words a minute. So if you think about it, that's 600 words in an hour and... sorry, that's 6,000 words an hour. Sorry, sorry, pardon my math. Six thousand words in an hour, which is actually about... let me tell you how many pages that is. It is about 24 pages. And I can tell you for a fact that when we get the transcription back for these webinars, they're pretty much always between, say, like, absolute low-end if, God forbid, or rather unusually, I'm talking slowly, they might be 18 pages. But they're usually up around 20, 24, 27, maybe 32 pages. So if you are talking, for instance, you can get 32 pages out in one hour, which just means it's a matter of hours of sitting there and dictating your book.

So this guy is able to write entire books in one weekend by doing mind mapping. And here's how it works, is that at the center of his mind map sheet, he writes a topic of his book. And then he has the different things coming off, and he just writes down everything. He writes down everything he can think of that's important to his book. He just writes, and writes, and writes, and he just fills out everything he can think of. And then he looks at that. Now that the brainstorming faucet has emptied, he looks back at it with a pattern recognition, kind of



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organizational viewpoint. And he looks at it and he says “Okay, what are 7 to 14 big things here?” Now, if you already have a bunch of different ones that surpass seven, you can take those and then you just have your chapters right there, and you can go from there.

But an easier way to do it that he said is to take seven of them and think of those as more like sections, and then think of three to five rallying points underneath each of those. Again, you can mind map those, or you probably already have them on your first mind map. And then, now you have, you know, somewhere between 20 and 40 different chapters. And those chapters aren't gonna be terribly long. They're gonna be 1,000 or 2,000 words, which for most of us these days is a blog post or a magazine article. And then what he does is he sits down and he minds map each of those chapters, and he gets a list of points. And he organizes those into a way that make sense, and those are his subheads and then he just sits down and writes those chapters.

So this is the way he mind maps out a whole book. And the way that this relates to our chapter summaries is that if you've got your book idea, if you've done your market research, if you've been doing research on your book, and you know how the research you've done for your book intersects with what the people who would read your book want to be reading about, and what they're interested in, and the way that they want to see information, then you sit down and you make a little mind map. Because now somewhere in your subconscious is hidden that perfect combination of what the people will want to read and what you already know about the topic, what you can write about, and you see what comes out on the page.

And from there, you will look for what are the most important things. What did you write the most things about, so and so forth, and those are your chapters. And if you're writing the kind of book which is more prescriptive...so that means you're teaching somebody something, or in the case of somebody actually who's on this webinar today, hi, Tanya, if you're writing something which is more akin to a collection of interesting places, you'll have spilled out a bunch of names. And you can look and see what rallies there. How would you group those places together? What are the main different types of interesting places you have? And then you have your chapters.

Because one of the things about the chapter summaries is people will agonize about what to write in the summary part, but it's the chapter titles and subtitles that matter much, much more, okay? Chapter titles and subtitles matter much more. Am I saying that you need to have clever chapters and subtitles? No. I'm not saying that they need to be clever. What really matters is the selection of them, that they...because they're not gonna be permanent. They will change as you're working with an editor on your book. But that they give a representation quickly, easily, succinctly, and in a way that an agent can nod their head along, whether an editor can nod their head along with to what the book will cover, which starts to



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fill in the picture for the agent or the editor of how your book comes to market, of who will read this book, of who will be interested in it.

So the particular things that you choose for your chapters to be about, in many ways, are much, much more important than what you write in the summary. And as you're working on the summaries, there are some certain characteristics that, as long as you do this way, you're fine. They should be written in present tense. They should use active voice. They should not run more than 200 words per chapter. And if you have a lot of chapters, then they should obviously be fewer words per chapter summary. And the words that you use should also be quite pithy, okay? You should use the fewest possible words. This is really important because I find that in chapter summaries tend to be the place where people lose the thread.

And when I say lose the thread here, what I mean is that it's the place where they start to put too much information about what will happen in the eventual book in such a way that someone who's doing sort of a skimming or a quick read job of your proposal will start to get confused. And we don't want to confuse them. We don't want them to think that we're trying to do too many things in one place, because that's where we lose that buy-in of the agent and editor that we're a good business partner for them, because they think that we don't have clarity of purpose and that, "If it's like this in the short setting of the chapter summaries, what will it look like in the chapters and how difficult will it be to unravel that mess?" So you want to write them and then chop them, chop them, chop them ruthlessly until they are really just the most succinct way of saying what you're gonna cover.

So two other tips here, one is to highlight the marketable aspects of the chapter. What do I mean by that? If you were to write sort of a bit of marketing bullets about your book and what it covers, what would those things be? What would be the big takeaways for people from reading your book? What are the most shining examples? Whatever those things are, whatever would be in the marketing takeaway of bullets from your book, those should be, for sure, in the chapter summary. And the same way that when we're talking about the author bios people tend to leave out those things that are the best examples for their case.

Now, the thing that I had on here first but I'm actually mentioning last, oddly, is reference one narrative per chapter. And I saved that for the end because it's kind of a hard thing, I think, sometimes to grasp when you're working on a nonfiction book or a nonfiction book proposal that is not of a narrative nature. Now, if you're writing a narrative book, I hope that you've taken some time on the side to read a bit about story arcs and creating scenes and different things like that. Paula Munier has a great book called "Plot Perfect." And Jordan... gosh, I always blank on her last name, but she is so easy to find online. Jordan has this book, "Make a Scene," which is all about scenes. And she's super, super active about sharing words



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of wisdom on Twitter and stuff. So if you're interested in scene work, you can follow her. But Paula has a really wonderful book about plot as well, Paula Munier, "Plot Perfect."

So if you are writing a narrative book and you have questions about narrative, that's a whole other topic for a much longer sort of diversion into that. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't apply to you if you are writing a not-narrative travel book. So what do I mean by that? That would be... We've got a gentleman who's in the coaching program who's got this numeric, kind of analytical way to decide what country you're gonna go to next. He's developed an index around this. We've got somebody else in coaching who's working on a book about interesting quirky things to do. I believe it's just in Tokyo but it might be in all of Japan. And she's got a collection, almost, like, a guide book of interesting things that she's working on. Now, both of these not being narrative in nature, how do you translate that in these chapter summaries to give one narrative per chapter?

What that means is that you need to think about in each chapter that you have how...like we talk about when we're talking about narratives for feature articles of a narrative nature, how do you want the reader to be transformed at the end of this chapter? What do you want them to have learned? What do you want them to have understood? That is really the narrative arc for each chapter. So if the arc that you're building in a particular point is, "A certain place isn't as dangerous as people think it is," or, "A certain place is really the most welcoming place on earth, and it will change your view of humanity to go there," or, "If a certain place is..." I'm trying to think. "If a certain place is over-hyped but there are places in that country you can go where you will have exactly the experience you've always dreamed about," whatever that is, that is your arc. That is what, over the course of a chapter, you're trying to convince people of.

If you're doing a book that's really a collection-y in nature, then what you're trying to convince people of might be something more in that same horizon-expanding vein, but about each individual thing. So if you have one chapter that's about one thing, it might be that, "This is something that you should explore that you hadn't thought about before," or that, "This is a new trend that you wanna take advantage of before it's big," whatever that is, but it's important even with these less-narrative nonfiction books to think about that.

Now, if you do have a narrative nonfiction book, you wanna think about, for the chapter summaries, thinking about one arc. So what that means is kind of one...they call it long line and short line in fiction writing. And so what that means is kind of the length of a narrative arc that's happening. So a short line is a narrative that has a beginning and a middle and end which is shorter than the length of a book. And a long line is a narrative that has a beginning, middle, and an end that transcends the whole book, okay?



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So if you're writing a narrative book, then you wanna think about which piece of tension gets resolved in each chapter, or what...if it's not a piece of tension getting resolved, what movement does the character have, what realization, what transformation, what resolution does the character have in this chapter? How does this wrap up with a nice bow for them to move on to what's next? And that's the one narrative per chapter that you wanna talk about in your chapter summaries. And those are things that you should be able to express without going...like I said, don't be confusing, without going into too much detail about how that thing wraps up, by just saying, you know, "This is a chapter in which I, the protagonist, whoever the protagonist is, you know, find my place and my guides for understanding the society that I'm in and begin to feel comfortable in my own skin again," whatever that is, okay, but it doesn't have to go on for multiple sentences of place setting and actions and explanations. It should just be explaining the narrative arc in that particular chapter.

So speaking of chapters, we've got these chapter summaries, but what about the chapters you have to include in your book? Now, if you've gotten far enough along with your book idea and you're not such a ballsy person that you're like, "I have a book idea. Let me write a proposal," which I don't think that most of you who follow me who are super, super... considered very thoughtful and typically self-doubt-inflicted folks would have done. But your sample chapters that you might already have might still not be the ones that you want to include with your book proposal. This is really important. Even if you have done some work on your book already, you might be wanting to write a different sample chapter for your proposal, and here's why.

If you are writing a narrative book, then you need to use the beginning chapters. If your book is not narrative, and so that's usually in the book publishing world called prescriptive, so you're telling people how to do something, then you do not want to use the intro, because the intro in those kind of books tends to be much more scene setting. If you're writing a book that's prescriptive in nature, you wanna use the strongest, meatiest chapter that will best show off of what you wanna do with this book, what you wanna include, and the types of things that you wanna showcase. So it's a very simple binary decision. Now, unfortunately for all of those of us working on narrative books, the beginning, next to the end, is just about the hardest freaking thing to do. So I apologize for you that that's the case.

And if you are in that position and you haven't already thought so much about the beginning of your piece, there's a lot of resources out there about best first pages, and good first pages, and how to bring people in, and how to do the scene setting, and how to get the action moving. There's a lot of resources on the fiction side that are really helpful if you're writing a narrative work. And so I apologize profusely if you are writing a narrative book of travel writing, but you do have to start with a beginning. And unfortunately the beginning is very hard, but you'll be very happy to have a beautiful polish beginning already ready by the time



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you then have to sit down and write the rest your book. Because then the only thing to stress out about is the ending. But if you're writing a prescriptive book, if you're writing a more how-to or helpful or guide-oriented book, then you want to choose your strongest chapter.

Now, I told you it comes last and also that we were gonna talk about last, and that's for many of reasons. The overview, you simply cannot write an overview that will serve you well if you have not done all of this other work, including the chapter summaries, including the sample chapters, including your author bio, including the marketing plan, including researching your target audience, and including doing your competitive research. You simply cannot write the overview that your book proposal needs to do it justice until you have done those things. It's not possible, and it's not possible because your overview needs to be the executive summary of your whole proposal. It needs to be, in brief, your entire proposal.

So if you haven't yet done some parts of your proposal, you simply have no business doing the summary of it. So please, please, please, I left this till the absolute end of this whole proposal series because I don't want any of you to sit there, staring at the blank page of the first page of your proposal, and thinking that you have no idea what to write, because then you will never write the proposal because you won't know what to write in that overview on that first page of your book proposal until you've written the rest of it, unfortunately. So what does that mean? Let me give you a formula for what your overview needs to weave in.

First and foremost, you need to be exquisitely careful that you are not making any assumptions here about the knowledge of your reader. Now, after you have spent all of this time immersing yourself in all of this on your book proposal, that can be very difficult. So the overview is the part of your book proposal that I most recommend that you get several different pairs of eyes on to make sure that you're not being confusing and that you're not making assumptions. And some people will be very polite and not point out to you the things that they don't understand, so make sure that you ask specifically, "Is there anything here where you weren't sure what I meant or where it seems like I assumed that you knew something?" Okay?

Now, at the beginning, the beginning of the beginning, the beginning of your overview, you want to introduce not your topic. You don't want to introduce your story. You don't want to introduce your characters or your places or whatever. You wanna introduce your book through the lens of the relevance of your book's topic to the world. So this can be including the numbers that we found when we were looking up our target market. This can be including sort of the positioning between other competitive books. It can take into account so many different pieces of the research that we've already done already. But it's very important to introduce your book and your overview through the lens of establishing the relevance of your book's topic to the world.



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You can do this in all of the classic ways that we do leads in writing. You can do it with statistics. You can do it with shocking facts. You can do it with anecdotes. You can even do it in media res of a story if you really, really want, but I wouldn't necessarily recommend that one here. But those are all the typical leads.

And then you want to migrate into why people will pay to read about this. So you're continuing to establish the relevance to the world by establishing the size of the paying readership by discussing their need, by showing why people need this book, by showing that there isn't a book like this in the marketplace. So that goes back to competitive research. So this is where, for sure, you're gonna be positioning yourself between other books that are popular and other books that have done well that are already out, and pointing out what is the gap in that space and how your book will fill it.

And then that's a natural segue into what your book will cover, because this is where we're talking about how your book will fill it. Now, you should not talk on a chapter-by-chapter level. This is where it's really beneficial to have thought as you're writing your chapter summaries, "What are the bullet points that would go from marketing this book?" You can literally go back through your chapter summaries and pull what were those bullet points, what were the highlights, what were the most exciting things you mentioned are the most helpful tips, and include that here. And you can literally even do it in bullet points in that overview, just like you would do in a marketing document, okay?

And you need to say what your book is gonna cover, oriented towards marketability, oriented towards getting someone who has interest in this topic to say "Oh, I do really wanna know that." That is what you wanna have in your overview. And then you wanna close with the expected length of the book in words, in tens of thousands of words, and how long you expect that it will take to write it. And then you will launch right into the next page, which, again, is gonna be the comparative titles, which we talked about in the first webinar, then target market and our target audience, which we talked about in the second webinar, the marketing plan, which we talked about last week, and then wrapping up with the other materials that we talked about today.

So that is what I've got for you for your nonfiction book proposal. Those are all of different sections that you're ever gonna have to write. That is everything that you're gonna need. And that means that you are ready to go on your merry way, if you haven't already started, which I hope you have, and work on your nonfiction book proposal.

So like I said, if you're doing in narrative piece and you don't have experience with narrative, that's gonna be a skill thing that you might want to scale up with first. If you are



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doing a prescriptive book, like a how-to book and you don't have any publications whatsoever or any life experience whatsoever, which I doubt would be the case, but if that is the case, you're gonna wanna do that beforehand, because otherwise your author bio will be thin.

But other than that... And if those two things are the case and you feel stuck, just get yourself a new book idea. There are so many different books that you can write. So if you get through this and you feel stuck with a particular idea that you have, you just don't see exactly how an agent or an editor is gonna bite on it, go back to step one. Go back to finding the market. And find a new book that's a better fit for you where you already are, where you don't have to jump through a bunch of hoops just to be ready to be able to sell that book.

So for those of you guys that are on the call today, thank you so much for going through this journey of book publishing with me. I'm really excited to have shared with you guys all the stuff that I've been learning over the last three or four years or so about book publishing. And I hope that some of you guys are already working on your proposals or that you'll use this to put together a proposal sometime soon. And then I can have more folks in our little community that have had books come out of working with us.

So thank all of you guys so much. It's now completely dark here because of daylight savings time, so I'm gonna wish those of you on the East Coast or Europe a good evening, and a good rest of your day to those of you on the West Coast, and I will talk to you next week. Bye.