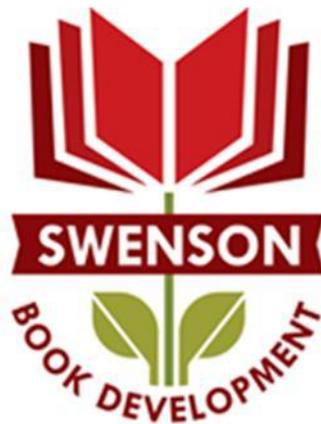


Questions Every Author Must Answer



A Swenson Book Development LLC Workbook



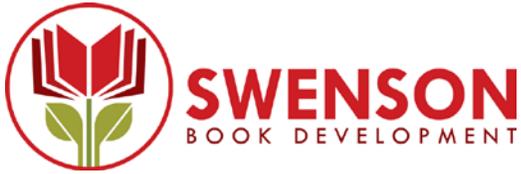
Questions Every Author Must Answer

Authors might be surprised to learn that before an agent or publisher reads a word of their manuscript, they make judgments based on the query letter or proposal. They read your materials to assess the potential for successful publications based on the information they gather about the book, about the audience, and yes, about the author.

There are simple questions and prompts that can help you discover that information and successfully see your book to publication. We've prepared a list of these important questions to help you discover your book, audience, and your author persona. We hope they inspire you to discover deeper connections to your material and audience!

Questions about Your Book

Although your book should be original, if your book can't be described in conventional terms you are going to have a difficult – if not impossible – time finding a publisher. Pinning down what makes your book special and salable can be a daunting task. Luckily, by answering several simple questions and taking time to discover deeper aspects of your book, you can take great leaps towards publication. Although your book is fully formed in your head or on paper, have you taken the time to ask yourself some big questions about your manuscript and its market?



What is your book about?

What is the genre of the book? Is it humor, history, memoir, travel, how-to, etc?

What is the main subject of your book? What subject headings would a library assign your book?

What topics will be covered? What keywords could describe your book?

What related or sub-topics will NOT be included in your book?

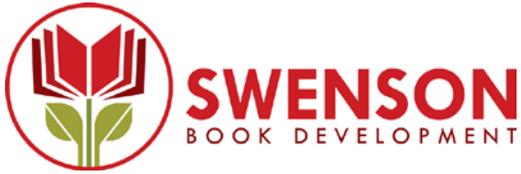
What makes your book idea different from what is already available on the bookstore shelves about this subject? What makes your approach to the subject special?

In a bookstore, in what section or subject area would your new book be shelved? Which books are on the shelf next to yours? Be specific about the current competition for your reading audience, from the titles to the authors and their approach.

On the back cover of any book you often find blurbs about the book. What do you want blurbs to say about your book? Who do you imagine would provide a testimonial or endorsement?

What do you envision on the front cover of your book? Describe what your book looks like in aesthetic terms.

Will there be illustrations, diagrams, tables, figures, photographs, or other non-textual materials?



Questions about Your Audience

We write for many reasons, but if you are writing for publication keep in mind there is an audience out there, waiting to be entertained, informed, or enraptured by your manuscript.

Identifying your audience and how to reach them will be the core of your book proposal.

Remember that your book is a product meant to be read, loved, and enjoyed by living, breathing people. Finding those people is key to your book's success. But before you find them, mull over these questions and prompts to discover who the people in your audience are.



What audience is your book intended for?

Describe your readers in demographic detail.

Where do your readers live? Work? Play? Learn? Socialize? Worship?

Where do they shop and what for?

Where do they vacation? What do they do for entertainment?

What are their media consumption habits? What media outlets target your audience?

What are the beliefs, values, attitudes of your readers?

Describe situations in which your reader would select your book. At the airport? As a gift? As a self-help guide? When would somebody want to read your book and why? What would that reader be looking for?

Describe where and how your readers will find your book.

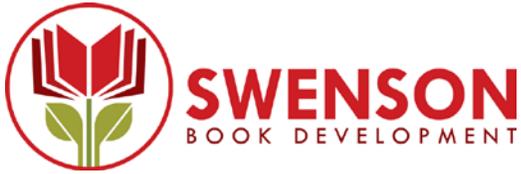
What expectations will your readers have when they open your book?

Draw up at least a dozen character sketches (100 words each) of your reader-customers.

Are there associations, organizations, clubs, guilds, unions, or other groups that bring together members of your audience? Also, government agencies, non-profits, businesses?

Do you have an audience platform? Website? Blog? Facebook Page? Twitter? LinkedIn?

What ideas do you have for marketing your book?

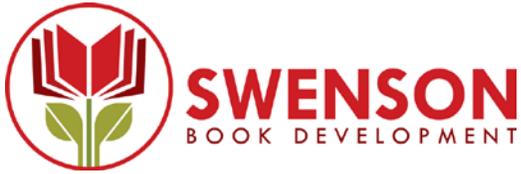


Questions about Your Author Identity

There is a product bigger than your book – it's you as a brand.

Authors are no longer just the writer of words. You are marketer, evangelist, and the face of a specific world view. When seeking publication, you are just as much being considered as is your book.

While you are crafting your book, take time to craft your identity as an author.



What makes you the best person to write this book?

What personal or professional experiences make you an authority on the subject?

What is your writing background?

List all previous publications, if any.

Do you have a resume or brief bio? If not, create one.

Briefly describe how your education prepares you to be the author of this book.

Briefly describe how your professional experiences prepare you to be the author of this book.

Briefly describe how your volunteer/social/personal experiences prepare you to be the author of this book.

What do you bring to this writing project that other experts in this subject area do not?

What motivates you to write this book? What are your intentions?

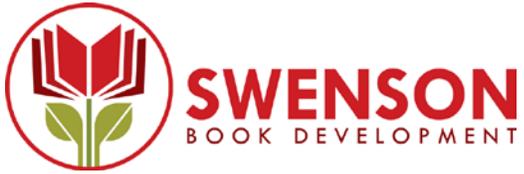
Who are your favorite authors?

When and where do you like to read?

When and where do you like to write?

How would you describe yourself as an author?

On the jacket of most book titles there is a blurb about the author. How would the blurb read about you?



Feeling inspired? Sign up for [Swenson Book Development's blog](#) to receive more free information!