



***Kickstart your Extraordinary
Business Book - the Workbook***

Alison Jones



The Extraordinary Business Book Kickstart

Your 5-step plan for getting started on the book that will change your life

Publishing a book is easier than ever before, but writing a good book is as hard as it ever was. It's my job to help people with something important to say articulate their message and get it out to the people who need to hear it, and a book is one of the most powerful tools out there for achieving that.

But where do you start?

Right here...

www.alisonjones.com

alison@alisonjones.com

[@bookstothesty](https://www.instagram.com/bookstothesty)

Why write a book?

“Great content is the best sales tool in the world.” – Marcus Sheridan

Creating content is an essential part of doing business these days, and a book is the ultimate expression of great content.

Getting clients is about communicating your expertise and building relationships, and if you're relying on talking to clients in person to do that your potential reach is a fraction of what it should be.

More than that, you're weakening the impact of those face-to-face encounters too; the first thing potential clients will do is check you out online. They want to know what you're saying, how convincingly you're saying it, whether other people are listening. They want to see who's connected to you. They need that social proof before they're comfortable spending money with you.

“A book is the ultimate expression of great content.”

ROCKET FUEL FOR YOUR BUSINESS

You don't need me to tell you that your book will be rocket fuel for your business. You know it will give you credibility and visibility, that it will help you reach new potential clients and open up a world of new opportunities such as paid speaking.

And beyond all those business benefits, you also know that it will just feel amazing to hold your own book, to know that you've achieved something so many people talk about but so few people actually achieve. I can tell you, opening a box of your own books for the first time, smelling that glorious print-on-paper smell, leafing through a copy, seeing your name on the cover, that's a moment you will never forget.

Just allow yourself a moment to really think about it – imagine that moment when you're holding the book you're dreaming about writing in your hands:

- *What will having that book mean to you, both personally and professionally?*
- *Can you imagine the sense of achievement and satisfaction?*
- *What will it mean to have done the work of articulating your message clearly and distinctively?*
- *What would that make possible for you?*
- *How would it change how you see your own business, and how others see you?*
- *How would you use that book, as a way of reaching people who don't know you and also as a way of supporting those who do?*
- *How would it feel to have clients reaching out to you, rather than the other way around?*

But where do you start?

Many people fall in love with the idea of writing a book but don't take the time to do the ground work. As a result, they write a couple of thousands of words then lose their way. They run out of steam, and their book sits sadly in a bottom drawer for months or years, making them feel bad every time they think of it.

Don't let that be you.

This 5-step kickstart plan will get those foundations in place to get your book off to a flying start: a clear, powerful expression of your message that resonates with exactly the people you want to reach and which works alongside your business, rather than competing with it for your time and attention.

NB: this book is for those with proven expertise and something distinctive to say: if that's not you, put this down and focus on building your business!

Take your time with this; you need space to let your thinking evolve. I suggest you spend at least an hour on each step over a week or so.

5 steps to kickstart your book:

Step 1: Strategy

Get clear on where your business is going and how the book fits in

Step 2: Segment

Identify exactly who you're writing for and what it is they need

Step 3: Select

Explore all the books you COULD write (and choose the right one!)

Step 4: Structure

Create a clear, compelling sequence and organizing principle

Step 5: Stages

Identify the first step: where will you start and how will you use it in your business today?

Ready? Let's do the work...

“Here's the thing: the book that will most change your life is the book you write.”

Seth Godin

Step 1 - Strategy

It's all about the big picture.

At its simplest, strategy is simply knowing where you're going and how you're going to get there.

WHY are you in business? What is most important to you about the business you're creating, and what does success mean to you?

Take at least an hour to work through these questions honestly and thoughtfully:

1. Why did you start your business in the first place?

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2. What words would you like others to use when describing your business?

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3. What are the 5 things you enjoy doing the most in your business?

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4. What gives you your distinctive competitive advantage?

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5. If you were to ask your customers, what would they say is the greatest value that you add?

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Reflect on what your answers tell you about where you should be focusing your time and energy in your business to make it successful – not just financially, but in terms of your values and building the life you want to live.

So with all that in mind, what's your vision for your business in 20 years? (You're about to write a book, after all, and books have a long shelf life.)

6. In 20 years, my business...

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Once you've articulated that 20-year goal, keep that end in mind, and focus on where you want to be in 3–5 years' time (choose the timeframe that works best for you). Now you can be specific: think about how you'll be spending your day, how many staff you'll have, what products and services you'll be offering and to whom, what turnover and profit you'll be making.

7. In 3–5 years, my business...

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So now let's get really real: what are your goals for the next 12 months? (If you've already set goals, do they still stand or do they need some adjustment in the light of the thinking you've just done?)

8. My goals for the next 12 months are:

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And finally, think about which strands of your business you need to focus on to get you there. You may need to drop some products or services that are no longer serving you, to allow to build up the others.

9. To achieve these goals, I'll develop my business in these ways:

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10. What have you learned about the book you will write?

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Step 2 - Segment

A key part of strategy is focusing on your customer, a key part of writing a book is focusing on your reader, and the aim of this kickstart programme is to ensure that your target readers are also your ideal clients – isn't that neat?

In general, the clearer you can be about who you're writing for, the easier the book will be to write and the more useful it will be for that reader. Often my clients are reluctant to narrow their focus: 'It's for women between 30 and 60', they say, or 'it's for anyone who cares about climate change'. But even if that's true, you'll have discovered from your work in Step 1 that there are certain types of people in that group you'd rather work with than others, so why not write for them first and foremost?

Another advantage of targeting a niche is that you can 'own' it: your book can become a 'must-have' read for the people you care about most.

There's one incredibly useful tool you can use when writing your book as well as more generally in your business, and

that's the **persona**, as used by software developers and website designers.

Instead of thinking of your ideal customer as a type, imagine them as a real person. And then whenever you have to make a business decision or as you write your book, check first: what would Jon/Lisa make of this?

Just as reading about one human tragedy can touch us so much more deeply than a news story reporting on a disaster in which thousands have died, so creating an emotional connection with an individual, even a fictional individual, will be a much more effective focal point as you write – they will stop you writing for yourself, and they will keep reminding you to stick to the point – what's in it for them?

You can create more than one persona if you have more than one core target market, but don't go crazy – the more you have, the less you can focus on any one.

1. If you could only have one reader for your book, who would it be and why? Get as clear as possible about what the book will do for that person, and what that person will do for you.



2. Define some of the characteristics of that person: consider location, age, job type/level, gender, family situation, hobbies, even what car they drive and where they go on holiday!

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3. Think about what motivates that person: what are their key fears?

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4. What are their daily frustrations?

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5. What are their desires: what is it they want to achieve?

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6. How can you help them most effectively? (Use their words, not yours.)

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7. Where are they currently trying to source the information or services they need, online and offline?

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8. How can you reach them, online and offline? What communities, groups, networks do they engage in?

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9. What more do you need to know about them? How can you find out?

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Persona

10. Once you have answered all these questions, including any research needed to fill in the gaps (hint: find someone in your target market and ask them!), create a persona like this one and stick it next to your screen to keep your reader front of mind as you write!

Melissa



“ It’s not about me.
it’s about my girls. ”

AT A GLANCE

AGE — 41

LOCATION — Chicago, IL

LIFE STAGE — Divorced with two kids

JOB — Corporate procurement manager

MOTIVATORS

FAMILY — Doing what’s right for her kids and looking after her parents are the most important things in her life.

BEING HELPFUL & APPRECIATED FOR IT — She gets a lot of pride from being productive, effective, and helpful. Being thanked and acknowledged for it is the motivator that keeps her going.

FEELING HAPPY & GRATEFUL — Melissa gets frustrated and frazzled because she’s always running, but really she values being happy and tries to appreciate all the good things in her life, particularly after a difficult divorce.

BEHAVIORS

TIGHTLY SCHEDULES THE DAY — The morning routine to get the kids off to school and herself off to work is locked in. She’s busy at work all day and tends to spend the majority of her day in meetings. The evening routine is equally structured. When her ex has the girls, she goes out with a friend for dinner or catches up on the phone.

VOLUNTEERS — At kids’ school and church.

SPENDS TIME WITH EXTENDED FAMILY — Parents live and sister’s family live nearby. Most weekends she visits their house or they visit hers.

TALKING ON THE PHONE AND “CATCHING” UP VIA FACEBOOK — Likes to talk on the phone with girls friends and her sister. Late at night after work she hops on FaceBook to achieve the same sense of connection.

NEEDS

- Social connection
- Would like to start dating again
- Exercise and “me” time
- Would like to just sit and unwind, but feels like she’s usually so amped up from her schedule that simply resting feels wrong

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(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/rosenfeldmedia/9203796918>)

Step 3 - Select

You can probably think of at least 5 books you COULD write – but which one is going to give you the best return on investment? Because this is a business activity like any other, and your time is precious. Not knowing which idea to choose can leave you in a state of paralysis: what if you choose the wrong one? What if a better idea comes along next week?

The best way to deal with all those shiny, slippery potential book ideas is to confront them head on, and get them all out of your head and onto paper – then you can not only evaluate them properly, but just as importantly you can free up some space in your head for creativity. So instead of immediately trying to choose one, find more. (I know. Stay with me.)

This process is great fun. I love helping my clients stay in a playful, creative, expansive mindset while they explore possibilities: often the best ideas come sideways, from unexpected or unfamiliar angles, and I use lots of different brainstorming techniques depending on the client and the topic.

Here's one particularly useful tool to get you thinking about possible game-changing books in your space: a three-part Venn diagram (see next page).

What to do

Alongside the circle entitled '**my expertise**', write down a list of the professional skills/areas that you could possibly write about. You might need to do some more research for some, that's fine. But the starting point is what you bring to the party. Many writers stop here: having identified a book topic on which they can speak with authority, they proceed to write it. That's not strategic thinking.

Secondly, alongside the '**customers' needs**' circle, write a list of the questions you are most frequently asked, the concerns and problems that bring clients to you, the needs – well articulated or barely understood – that they look to you to meet.

Finally, look ahead. The **future** circle has three inter-related parts:

1. *your industry* – what trends and technologies are emerging? How will these change your sector? What new opportunities are arising?
2. *your business* – in the light of these changes, and following the thinking you did in Step 1, where are you taking your business over the next five years? What are the areas of focus and growth, and are you planning to extend or develop into new areas?
3. *your customers* – what are they just beginning to ask? What might they be asking next year? Five years from now? What do they not even know they don't know yet?

Now look at where those three circles overlap. The sweet spot is where your expertise meets your customers' needs as both they and you look towards the future. You can probably map your existing ideas on this Venn diagram somewhere, and you'll almost certainly come up with new ideas.

Time to choose

Once you've identified at least 20 titles that you COULD write, it's time to decide which you WILL write: of the titles in that sweet spot, which fits best with the strategy you set out in Step 1? Which best serves the need of the target reader you identified in Step 2? Which can you do most easily with the resources you have? Which excites you most (because, frankly, that's the best measure of whether you'll do the work). Put the others aside in a swipe file for the future, and let's get to work on the title you've selected.

What skills/areas could you write about?

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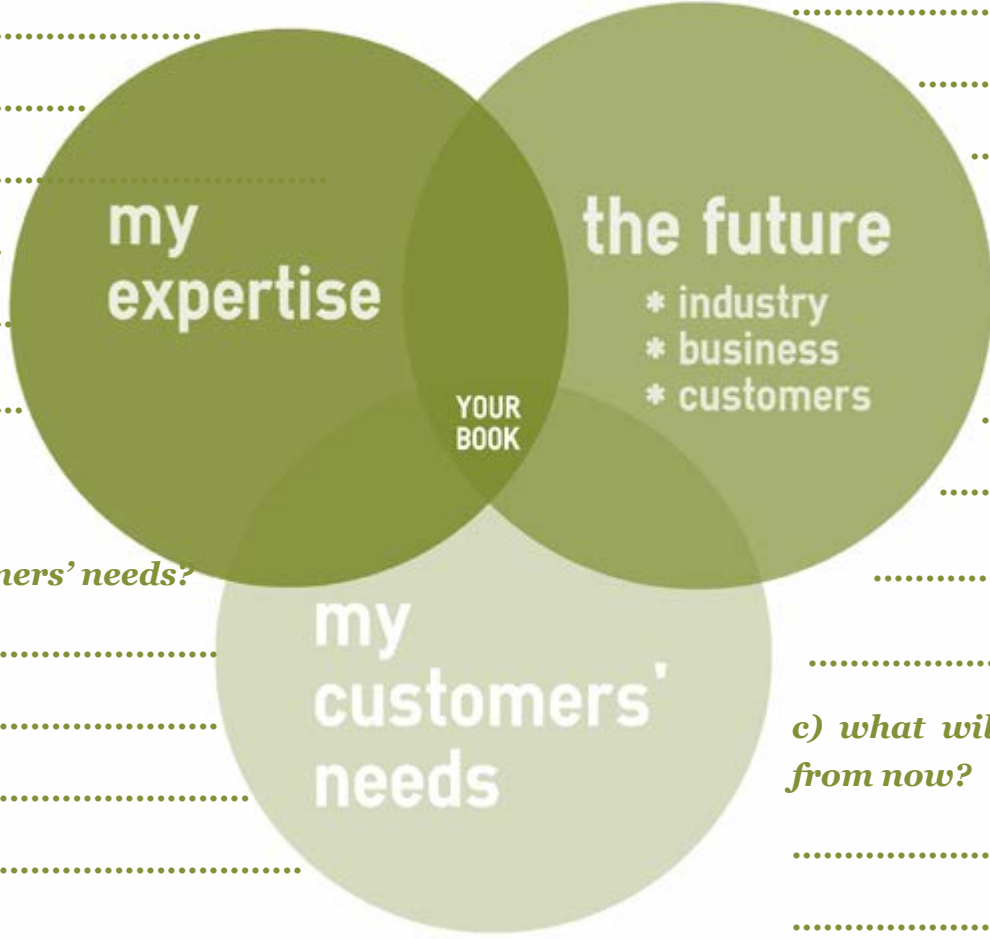
In the future...

a) what trends/opportunities are emerging in your industry?

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b) what areas will you be focusing on to grow your business?

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What are your target customers' needs?

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c) what will your customers be asking 2 years from now?

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Step 4 - Structure

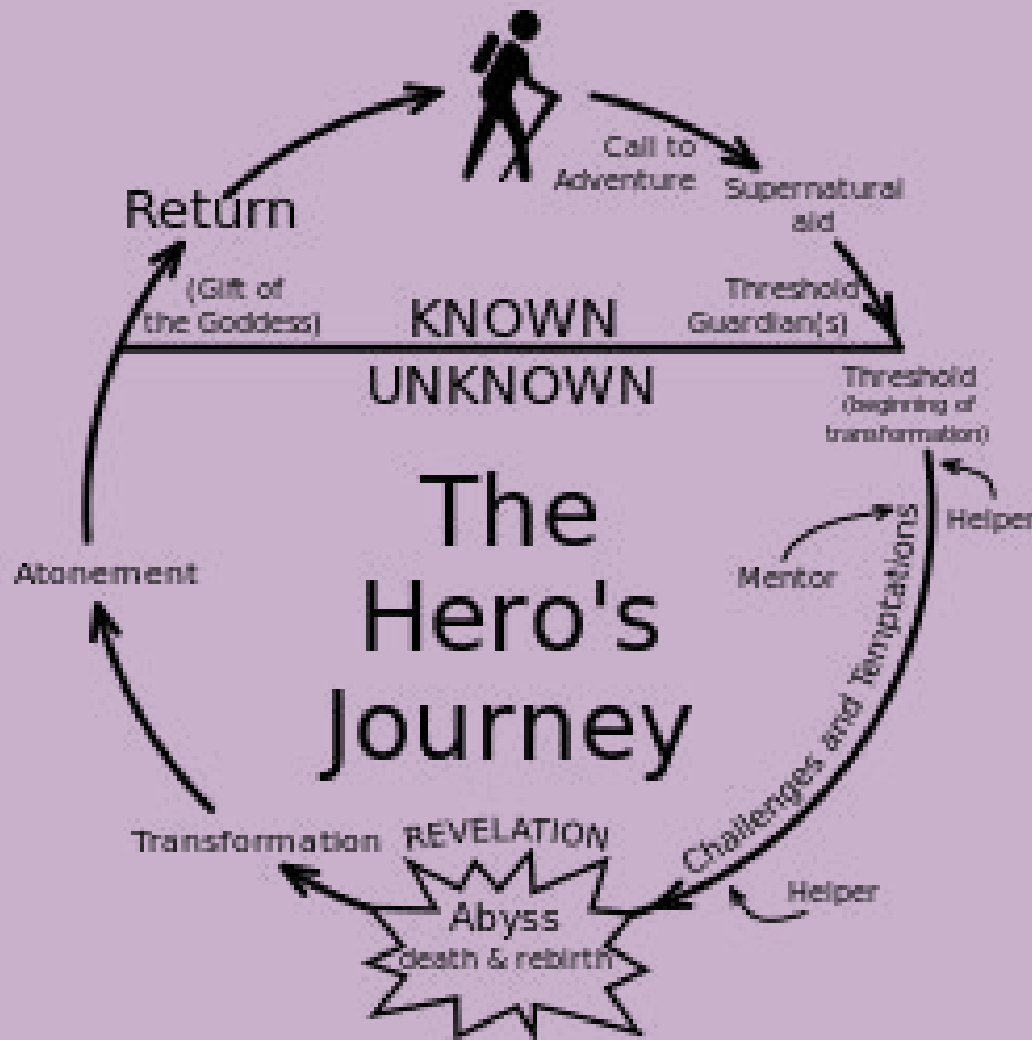
One of the key themes that always comes up when I work with clients is structure: how do you organize your fizzing mass of ideas into a readable linear narrative?

There are several tools I use to help with this, but in this step we'll focus on just two: the **Hero's Journey** and the **working TOC**.

The Hero's Journey

First identified by Joseph Campbell, this three-act structure seems hardwired into our brains as the natural shape for a story: the first act setting the scene and introducing the crisis that begins the adventure, the second following the hero as (s)he meets and learns from mentors, and faces challenges, temptations, doubts and what looks like certain failure, and the third climaxing with the final conflict, triumph and return home - changed by the adventure. There's a sense of forward movement, but also of closure and symmetry.

You might think this model is irrelevant if you're writing non-fiction, but the truth is that stories capture the reader's attention. When a book engages the brain's emotional limbic system as well as the more rational frontal lobe, readers focus and retain information better. So it's worth keeping this overarching structure in mind as you plan your book: identify the key 'scenes', characters and pivotal moments that will most effectively and efficiently represent your own journey.



Thinking of the Hero's Journey:

1. What is the key transformation in your story?

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2. Who are the key characters in your story? (eg mentors, helpers...)

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3. What are the key moments – eg call to adventure, challenge, atonement, return – that will capture your reader's attention, and what stories best communicate these?

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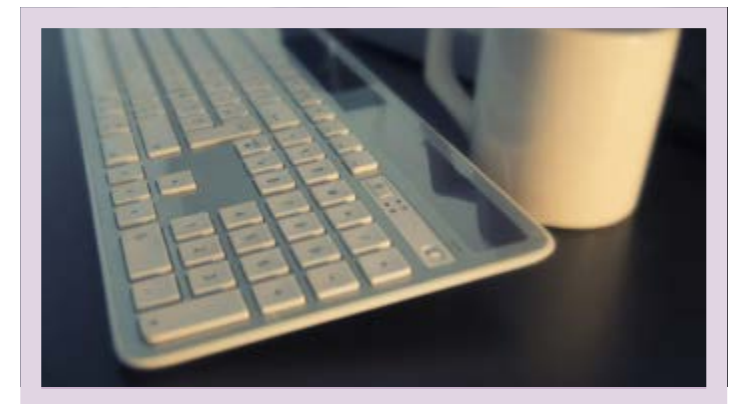
The working TOC

A table of contents sits at the front of all non-fiction books (and incidentally because it's visible in the Amazon preview it's a great sales tool too). But a 'working TOC' is a skeleton for your book, an outline of exactly what each chapter will include (I recommend using post-it notes as you generate and organize ideas, to keep it fluid).

You can reorder those post-it notes as bullet-points below each heading. Another useful technique is to generate questions for each section, written from your target reader's perspective; this is particularly useful for keeping you focused on your reader's perspective rather than drifting into a lecture.

Then when you come to write you won't waste energy wondering whether you're repeating yourself, whether this bit really belongs here, or whether it should even be in the book at all: you just take a post-it or bullet point and begin. Straight into purposeful flow.

A working TOC makes your writing time more productive, and that means you're more likely to sit and write.



Thinking of the working TOC:

4. What are the key themes/topics of your book, and how can these be organized into chapters?

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5. Is there a single linear flow or do you need to consider splitting the book into parts to group chapters together?

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6. For each chapter, what key questions might your target reader have?

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7. How long do you want your book to be (in words)?

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8. How will these words be divided between the chapters/parts?

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9. What prelims/endmatter will you include (eg preface, foreword, acknowledgements, further reading, index, etc...)

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9. Take a look at some of the books you admire and notice how they're structured: what works and what doesn't work so well? What can you learn or use for your own book?

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Step 5 - Stages

I'm a big fan of the lean approach in business: identify what you want to achieve and then decide on the first step. Deliver that first step and test it out, see what people think of it; take their feedback on board, then decide on the next step.

Your end goal might change over time as you learn more and as the environment in which you're working evolves. All the time you're engaged in a creative cycle: learning, designing or delivering the next step, measuring the response, and learning from that feedback to inform the next step.

And the same is true for your book: you now know where you're going in your business and what you're aiming for in your book, but instead of plodding through 500 words a day until you finish or grind to a halt, I recommend you break it down into stages.

Identify steps along the way that are useful and valuable in themselves, which support the business activities you identified in your Step 1 goals, and which allow you to test out the ideas and the lan-

guage you're using and see how they land with readers. This lean approach not only makes for a better book, it means your writing time pays its way from day 1.

This is the path I mapped out with one client recently: she wants to move from 1-to-1 coaching to a more scalable business, incorporating online programmes and also building a community. It's really important for her to get speaking gigs too to build her visibility and to give her opportunities to sell her book.

We identified these way points: a case study showing her impact on a recent client that matched her new target market perfectly, a webinar focused on the pain points she'd identified for that client from which she is upselling a workshop, and which will develop into an online course. She will distil her message into a TED-style talk for corporates and conferences, and all of this will feed ultimately into the book itself.

The route and the deliverables will be different for each business, but the principle is the same.



My Lean Book Route

STEP
01

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STEP
02

STEP
03

STEP
04

book STEP
05



Over to you

Bring together everything you've learned about your business goals and strategy, your market segment, the book you've selected and its structure. What stages of content creation will you use to build and test your book's content and ideas while supporting your business activities? Here's a checklist (it's not exhaustive!) of some kinds of outputs you might want to consider:

anecdotes/personal stories

animation

app/game

article

audio books

blog post

cartoon

case study

challenge

checklist

curated content (eg links)

dataset

debate

demos

diagram/model

ebook

email sequence

flier/brochure

guest post/article

'how to' guide

illustrated quote

industry awards

industry round-ups

infographic

interview

list

live-streamed video

manifesto

meme

news updates

newsletter

online courses/elearning

online summit

photographs

podcast

polls

poster

predictions

press releases

Q&A

quiz

reports

review

slide deck

survey

talk/presentation

templates

testimonials/endorsements

Twitter chat

Twitter story

user-generated content

video/vlog

webinar

website

White Paper

worksheets

workshop

Make sure the stages you choose support your business activities, are suitable for your target reader, align with the subject and structure of your book, are doable with the time and resources that you have available, and most of all that they inspire and motivate you. Set a deadline (at least for the first).

Now you're ready to write your book - start with Stage One and enjoy the journey!

That's it - you're kickstarted!

Now what?

If you've come this far well done - you've done some powerful thinking about your business and your book, and now you should be clear on what you're going to write, why, and how. Don't stop here: commit to creating the stages you've mapped out and shaping them over time into the book that only you can write, and which will make a real difference to the people who need to hear your message.

As you write you'll discover that one of the greatest benefits of writing a book is for you, not them: as Seth Godin puts it, 'The book that will change your life is the book you write.' Enjoy the process!

Over the last 25 years I have helped hundreds of people with something important to say clarify their thinking, structure and write their book, and then publish it for the world to read. Are you next?

Contact me - alison@alisonjones.com - today to book your free **Book Kickstart session** and get clear on how to translate your business expertise into a book.

What people say...

'Alison is a formidable book doula. I would not have been able to get this book out without her and more than that, she made the process fun.'

'Alison was professional, knowledgeable and incredibly helpful throughout.'

'She knows her subject and has a laser brain.'

'This work has been bubbling inside me for years but only with Alison's help has it become a reality. She has inspired, supported and challenged me alternately! I am really enjoying the process of writing and feeling much more confident in the result. I am profoundly grateful as this book has great personal meaning as well as being important to my business.'

'Alison has a huge amount of practical experience in publishing and brings a wealth of knowledge distilled into what I now realise I needed as an author and business owner.'

'Alison was an absolute pleasure to work with. Her methodology is organized and clear, and her knowledge on the subject of publishing was inspired.'

See more at www.alisonjones.com.



"I cannot recommend working with Alison highly enough. She is professional and personable and more than that, she cares as much as you do about the message you have to share."

Ebonie Allard, author, *Misfit to Maven*



About me...

I've been in the book business for 25 years now: I started as a writer and a bookseller, and then became an editor first with W & R Chambers in Edinburgh where I edited the *Chambers Dictionary of Quotations* and then with Oxford University Press, and most recently at Macmillan where I was Director of Innovation Strategy when I left in 2014 to set up a different sort of publishing business.

Now I work as a publishing partner with businesses and organisations – I help them get clear on their strategy and how their book fits with that as a sales and marketing tool, rather than something separate from their business.

I'm still very involved in traditional publishing – I work as a coach and consultant with several large publishers, I'm co-chair of the London Book Fair's Quantum conference 2016, on the board of the Independent Publishers Guild and I blog regularly for the *Bookseller* etc – but what really interests me is making publishing work for people like you, people who've got something important to say and want to say it beautifully.

Let's make it happen.



Practical Inspiration
PUBLISHING

www.alisonjones.com
alison@alisonjones.com
+44(0)7717 723515
@bookstothesky

Let's do the work...

