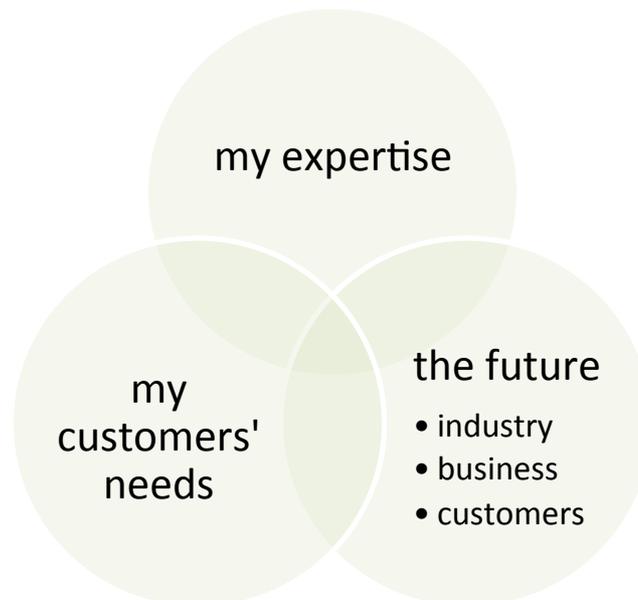


## TITLE SELECTION TOOL

Want to write a book but don't know where to start? Got too many ideas and can't decide which to choose? Take a piece of paper and draw three circles in the form of a Venn diagram:



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 customers 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? and how will these change your sector in the short to medium term? How is the old order changing, and what new opportunities are arising?
2. your business – in the light of these changes, 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.

Once you've identified your topic you can begin planning your book.

1. **Be specific.** If you address a broad area, you will be one of a number of competing titles. Find a micro-niche, or a series of them, and you will be an essential purchase for a very specific readership. If you have a blog, you may already have a sense of which topics attract the most passionate responses: this is a great place to start.
2. **Be unique.** Anyone can find the answer to almost any question if they're prepared to put in the hours on Google, but if you can provide something uniquely your own – the research you've carried out, your experiences – you give them a reason to buy your book instead.
3. **Be yourself.** You have your own story, and your own authentic voice. Write with passion, be honest and generous with your experience and insights, and never, ever plagiarise.
4. **Focus on your reader.** Resist the temptation to write an autobiography – unless you're already a celebrity, no one outside your family will be interested. Put yourself in the place of someone interested in the subject and wanting to know more: what are their likely questions and how can you help them? What can you give them that will be of real value to them, rather than simply general interest?

So you now have a sense of what you're going to write about and how you're going to stand out from the crowd. Here are a few more strategic points to consider:

1. **Scope.** You'll get more visibility (and almost certainly higher revenues) publishing a series of short books across an area, each dealing with a very specific topic, than you will with one longer, more general book. And they're much easier and more fun to write. If this is the first book in a series, think about the series title and how you can cross-promote titles.
2. **Price.** Do you want to market this as a premium product (if so, you had better have the name/content/unique selling points to back it up) or at a lower price point to increase the likelihood of sales?
3. **Purpose.** If you want to drive traffic to your site, how will you incentivize readers to click the link in the book? (For example, will you have additional resources such as multimedia or worksheets?) If you want to convert readers into customers, what call to action will you include and what's in it for them?
4. **Attractiveness.** Do people actually buy books on the topic you're planning to write about? Look on Amazon itself: do a keyword search, see what comes up, check the sales rank to see how books on this topic are actually selling (if there are several in the top 15,000, that indicates a very healthy level of interest). What does Amazon predict when you start typing the keywords? This can be a useful insight into what readers are actually searching for, helpful both for topic selection and for choosing your title. And check what 'Customers who bought this item also bought...' to get an idea of your potential readers' wider interests.

There's a book waiting to be written that only you can write and that will make the world a little happier, wiser or better-informed – it's a privilege and a pleasure, so enjoy the journey!

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