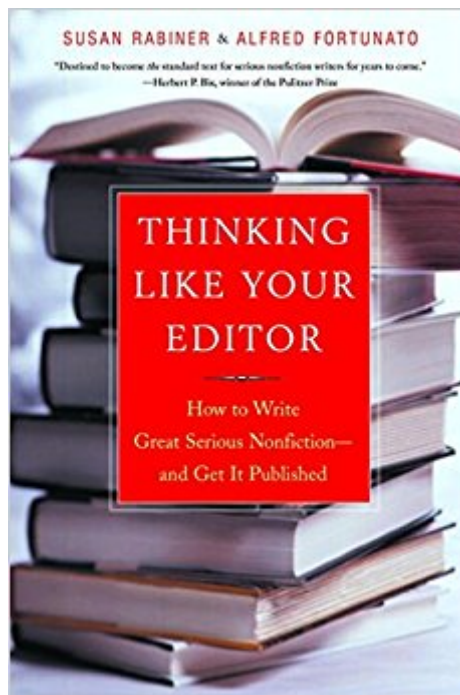




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Thinking Like Your Editor: How To Write Great Serious Nonfiction And Get It Published



Synopsis

Distilled wisdom from two publishing pros for every serious nonfiction author in search of big commercial success. Over 50,000 books are published in America each year, the vast majority nonfiction. Even so, many writers are stymied in getting their books published, never mind gaining significant attention for their ideas and substantial sales. This is the book editors have been recommending to would-be authors. Filled with trade secrets, *Thinking Like Your Editor* explains: why every proposal should ask and answer five key questions; how to tailor academic writing to a general reader, without losing ideas or dumbing down your work; how to write a proposal that editors cannot ignore; why the most important chapter is your introduction; why "simple structure, complex ideas" is the mantra for creating serious nonfiction; why smart nonfiction editors regularly reject great writing but find new arguments irresistible. Whatever the topic, from history to business, science to philosophy, law, or gender studies, this book is vital to every serious nonfiction writer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I bought five books to help me write a book proposal: "How to Write a Book Proposal, 3rd edition," by Michael Larsen "78 Reasons Why Your Book May Never Be Published & 14 Reasons Why It Just Might," by Pat Walsh "The Forest for the Trees," by Betsy Lerner "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Getting Published, 4th edition," by Sheree Bykofsky and Jennifer Basye Sander "Think Like Your Editor," by Susan Rabiner and Alfred Fortunado The worst was "How to Write a Book Proposal."

This book felt like a bad date, like I wanted to wash my hair after reading it. The intent is to teach you to be an "Authorpreneur (r)." Yes, Larsen has registered this word. You'll learn such gems as everyone has 250 friends, and each of them has 250 friends, so you can "spread the word" about your book to more than 62,000 people by e-mail. I think there's a word for that -- spam. Larsen also says to include your promotion plan in the book proposal, including pushing "the paperback edition as hard as you can" when it's published a year after the hardcover edition. I'm not an agent or editor, but I'd think that an agent would giggle quietly to themselves if you were so presumptuous as to include a marketing plan for the paperback edition. (To the author's credit, he doesn't say you should suggest which actor should play the main character in the movie version of your book.) Then there's the chapter about including illustrations and cover art. Excuse me, I thought the editor and art director develop the cover art? I can't imagine creating the book cover to include in the proposal. And the author recommends including a "surprise," such as a baby shoe with a note saying "Now that I have a foot in the door." The book has one good piece of advice: pick a good title.

I have a very specific reason why I can't give this book five out of five stars. First, why it DESERVED five stars: This is clearly the best, most inspiring, book I have ever read that's specifically targeted at serious nonfiction writers and the challenges they face getting their work published successfully. I just got the book today in the mail, and wasn't able to put it down (except to jot down notes!). Every page has good ideas. Every page. Now I don't have to attend some cheesy ...seminar to get an insider's view of What Works and What Doesn't. This book explains it and does so brilliantly. Now why it DOESN'T deserve 5 stars: I cannot give this book five stars because, honestly, this is the worst book I have ever read --- from the standpoint of copyediting and typesetting!!! I am simply ****appalled****! Guys -- I know you're going to read this, Susan, Alfred, and Ed Barber --- didn't anyone copy edit it before it went to the printer? Didn't anyone check the galleys?!? I have never seen so many problems with a book before. Glaring typos -- here are but three I'll mention offhand: in the middle of page 249 ("Way was Beecher so important to his times?" Um, I think you meant "Why") or the middle of page 23 ("you prefer not to factor in them in" -- huh? one too many "in"s, yes?) or on page 30 ("because they wanted something beyond money as settlement for their terrible loses." Um, isn't it "losses"?). Aaaaauugggh!! And then, throughout the book, something else: first I thought it was a single occurrence, the second I opened the book up for the first time, randomly, to page 73 and noticed the typesetting error on line 9. But then I noticed this problem occurs THROUGHOUT THE BOOK!

I've read or skimmed several of these books, which have been highly uneven, and typically covering the same turf so I wasn't expecting to find much new here. But I'm embarking on my third book proposal (having failed once and sold the second to a major house) and I thought I'd see what was out there. I was intrigued to see the PW review said this one broke new ground, and compared it to Betsy Lerner's book which I loved, so I gave it a try. It greatly exceeded my expectations, particularly in two areas:

1. The lengthy chapter 1, "Thinking Like an Editor" really drove me to focus my book. She uses a variety of approaches to focus you on who the audience will be for this book--and why they will want to read it--but also why you want to write it. It really forced me to step back and think about what I wanted to get out of my book, and re-evaluate its central narrative structure. Page after page of her book helped me re-evaluate mine. At one point, I actually decided not to proceed, but I kept reading and drew new inspiration about the central question driving my book.
2. Chapter 7: "From Introduction to Epilogue: Writing Your Book Chapter by Chapter ..." really takes you through the nitty gritty of honing down your structure. (The previous chapter, "Using Narrative Tension" was also great in introducing key ideas, but this one takes you through step by step, hitting one problem after another, and challenging to keep considering alternative structures (with lots of anecdotes and examples) until you find the best one for your book. The real test of this book was that it had me writing madly. I kept putting it down every several pages and scribbling new copy, marking up my proposal intro and my outline.

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