

Feedback Before You Publish: Getting Peers and Audience Members to Critique Your Book

► **When you get close to completing your book, it is smart to put that book through a peer and/or audience review process.**

Sending the manuscript to objective professionals in your industry—at least three and maybe up to ten, respected for their feedback—will save you from making serious mistakes that you may be too close to your own writing to realize.

If peers like the book, then they are in a pivotal position to give a testimonial or recommend it. There is nothing more flattering to professional colleagues than asking them to review a manuscript. It shows you consider them at the top of the profession and value their judgment, and it is important the letter requesting the review reflect that.

It is also critical to get feedback from members of the target audience on how readable the book is and whether it fills their needs.

Starting a Review Process

Select as many as ten peer or audience reviewers, and personally ask them whether they would be willing to review the book and give them an approximate time when the book will be ready for review. You can do this months in advance of the time the review is needed.

A reviewer may ask to be paid for his or her time, particularly if he or she is a highly-paid subject matter expert. You will have to decide if their review is important enough to pay for. It may be that this well-placed person will be in the position to endorse your book and may be worth paying for.

Make sure you collect the relevant contact material with your initial request and ask if the reviewer would prefer a printed or electronic version of the manuscript (or both).

When the manuscript is completed and ready for review (completed in this context means the chapters, introduction and table of contents are finished and the manuscript may or may not have been edited, depending on your writing skill), then it is time to email the prospective reviewers and let them know that the manuscript is on its way, with an appropriate cover letter or email.

Review Request Letter

The cover letter or email sent with the manuscript should contain the following:

1. A sincere thank you for taking the time to do the review
2. A deadline that you need to have the review returned (usually 2-3 weeks) with a reason for that deadline (publisher commitment, publication schedule).
3. Specific questions or concerns you would like to have the reviewer address that pertain to what you are concerned about.
4. See the suggested letter and questions on page 2. use the Input Tool on page 3 or create your own to help readers rate your book.

Send a Thank You

Send a thank you by email at a minimum. It is customary to send a signed copy of the book with a thank you note for anyone who took the time to review the book.

Sample Peer Review Request Letter & Questions

Dear Barbara,

As you know I have been writing a book, entitled *Women Mean Business*, intended to inspire more women to start their own businesses. I am so excited to report that I have almost completed the manuscript. Now that the writing is completed I am looking for input from people we respect before we get it ready to be published.

As someone whose opinion I greatly value, I have a request: Could you give us your time to read the manuscript and give us your honest feedback? I would provide you with the book in either electronic or hard copy (whichever format is easier for you) as well as a list of about nine questions for you to answer.

The manuscript is about 100 pages and meant to be easy to read, so we hope it will be easy and fun to read for you.

Our publishing deadline is the end of the year, so to keep on track, we would need your feedback about three weeks after you receive the manuscript, and the book will be ready to send to you within two weeks.

I would be honored to have you give the book this important first review and get your valuable guidance, but I will also completely understand if you can't help at this time.

Best wishes,

Joan Smith
Joan Smith
joan@joansmith.com
310-555-8807

Reviewer Questions for *Women Mean Business*

Please feel free to email answers to these questions separately, answer them in the spaces below, or fax your responses back to me at 310-555-2728.

1. What did you think about the flow of topics (and chapters)?
Did the progression make sense/work for you?
2. What exercises were the most engaging and compelling to do?
Which exercises were you not motivated to do?
3. What do you wish we had covered, but didn't?
What concepts felt like they were missing?
4. Were there concepts presented that did not make sense to you or were difficult to follow?
5. What was your favorite part of the book?
6. What was your least favorite part? Was there a section that was particularly difficult to get through or slow reading? Do you have any suggestions as to how to make this better?
7. What concept was most interesting and/or new to you?
8. After reading the book what was your personal "take away."
What is the thing/concept/idea that you remember most from the book and want to implement in your life?

Sample Reviewer Input Tool

AUDIENCE REVIEW

Boring in places | Keeps my interest at all times

Clear message and viewpoint | Weak purpose

Trust the author | Wasn't sure the author was sure

Author understood me / my needs | Author talked down to me

Overly detailed | Not enough information

Well organized | Confusing organization

Meets promise of the title | Misleading title

PEER REVIEW

Accurate | Some inaccuracies

Concepts fully explained | Needs more detailed explanations

Viewpoint clear | Viewpoint not fully developed

Fresh viewpoint | Trite

Tracking the Review Process

You may want to create a log of everyone who has been asked to provide a review and include contact information, date sent and follow up information.

Unfortunately, considering what a big job it is to do a review of a book, you can expect that some of

these individuals will never get around to doing it and you may never get a response. That is okay – that is the reason you started with ten. If half come back this is plenty of information for you to use.

Follow up very gently on or about the day you've requested the review be returned and again every week for the following two weeks. If you don't hear anything after a month, just drop it.

Sample Review Tracking Form

Peer/Audience Review Log							
Book Title: _____					Updated: _____		
Name	Address	eMail / Phone	Electronic or Print	Sent	Rqstd Due Date	Follow-Up	Returned
J. Smith	1 Main St Ny, NY	jsmith.com	Print	4/1	4/22	4/28, 5/1	did not
L. Jones	4 Taylor St. Concord, CA	Laura@jonesandco.com	Print	4/1	4/22		4/21
P. White	411 31st Palo Alto, CA	pat@whitewash.com	Both	4/1	4/22	4/28	5/2

Titles in this eBasics series on Writing a Nonfiction Book

- From Idea to Published: How to Get It On Paper
- Create a Nonfiction Book that Sells
- Know Your Readers: How to Conduct Audience Research
- Feedback Before You Publish: Getting Peers and Audience Members to Critique Your Book
- How to Get Permission to Use the Work of Others in Your Book
- How to Edit Your Own Manuscript and Get it Ready for Publication
- How to Proofread Your Book
- Finding Your Perfect Publisher: It's Easier Than You Think
- How to Decide Whether to Publish Yourself or Find an Established Publisher

Publishing a Book and Book Marketing are also covered in two other eBasics series.



To buy these and many other book publishing essentials or to take classes or find a professional book coach and consultant, go to WWW.PUBLISHING-STORE.COM or call 888-337-0636.