



Making History



A Strategic Guide

to Creating Books



for Your Organization

and Yourself



Jeff Widmer

Books get attention. They generate excitement and understanding, revenue and pride. Whether you chronicle your company's innovation or your own struggles and triumphs, a book can become a savvy part of your communications plan. It can motivate employees, influence thought-leaders, shape public perception, and extend the brand. For an individual and his or her family, a book can leave a legacy far more influential than an article or a plaque.

Books can take many forms: corporate history, ghostwritten memoir, or a combination of the two. They follow one of three business models: private or self-publication, academic publication, or commercial publication. Within each model are five major stages: planning, researching, creating, selling, and marketing. Despite these variations, each project involves a similar process that can be benchmarked and reproduced. The following guidelines and lists represent best practices based on hundreds of editorial projects. They can help you create both a strategy and a work of lasting value. Use them to create history.

Defining the process

Each of the five stages consists of a number of executable steps. Here is where an experienced consultant can add value, by integrating your business objectives with the source material to create a work that not only chronicles a company or a life but functions as a marketing tool. Those stages include:

1. Planning

- Define the business objectives.
- Define the editorial themes.
- Align editorial presentation with corporate strategy, personal objectives.
- Determine the scope of the project.
- Determine the outcomes.
- Clarify the application of the material.

2. Researching

- Assess the written record.
- Identify key sources.
- Conduct interviews.

3. *Creating*

- Allow themes to grow organically from the material.
- Align those themes with objectives.
- Contract editorial and creative services, including writing, editing, photography, and design.

4. *Selling*

- If publishing privately, contract printing, binding, mailroom services.
- If publishing commercially, create a marketing proposal for editors.
- Submit proposal, sample chapters to academic or commercial houses.

5. *Marketing*

- Work with in-house communicators and external publicists to leverage the project.
- Repurpose the material for use by internal, external, investor, and marketing communications, in both print and electronic forms.

Defining the project

Each book is as individual as the company or person profiled. These questions can help define the project and estimate the costs:

1. What is the genre—corporate history, memoir, or a combination?
2. Who will publish the work—the individual or company (private publication) or commercial/academic press (commercial publication)?
3. What are the business and communications objectives?
4. What will the final product look like?
5. How will it be used?
6. Who are the audiences and what are their needs?
7. What services do you require? A turnkey operation could include:
 - strategic planning
 - project management
 - research
 - interviewing
 - writing
 - editing
 - photo selection
 - photography

- permissions management (securing permission to use editorial and photography not owned by the organization or individual)
 - design
 - proofreading
 - bidding, supervising of print, mailroom services (private publication)
 - registration (copyright, Library of Congress number, ISBN number)
 - creation of a marketing plan
 - submissions to agents and editors
 - supervision of publication process (commercial publication)
 - creation of after-market publicity
 - repurposing of materials for internal and external communications
8. How many drafts of the manuscript would you like?
 9. How many drafts of the design?
 10. How many printer proofs (blueline and color key)?
 11. For accountability, can you designate a single contact within the organization to whom the consultant will report?
 12. Is the organization willing to defray some of the consultant's business expenses including the following?
 - travel (airfare, meals, lodging, car rental)
 - transcription of recorded interviews
 - telecommunications (telephone, Internet access while writer travels)

Creating the timeline

Since there are no average projects, there is no fixed time-to-completion. Experience, however, has given us some guidelines.

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Estimated time</u>	<u>Budgeted time</u>
Planning	1 month	
Researching	3-6 months	
Writing	3-6 months	
Rewriting/approvals	2-4 months	
Design	2-4 months	
Selling to publisher	1-6 months	
Printing	1 month	
Marketing/publicity	2-12 months	
Total	15-40 months	

Creating the budget

There are a number of major categories to consider when drafting a budget for a book-length project. The grid below can provide a handy checklist when soliciting proposals:

Activity	Cost estimate
Strategic planning	\$
Project management	
Research	
Interviewing	
Tape transcription	
Travel	
Writing	
Editing	
Photo selection	
Photography	
Permissions management	
Design	
Proofreading	
Bidding, supervising production services	
Printing and binding	
Prepress and proofing	
Mailroom services	
Postage and shipping	
Registration of copyright, etc.	
Creation of marketing plan	
Submissions to agents and editors	
Supervision of publication process	
Creation of after-market publicity	
Repurposing for electronic use	
Repurposing for organizational use	
Total	\$



About the Author

JEFF WIDMER has written, designed, and managed projects for corporations, agencies, and individuals for thirty years. A specialist in corporate history and ghostwritten memoir, he is the author of *The Spirit of Swiftwater*, the history of vaccine pioneers, and other large-scale works.

Jeff has supervised an internal communications department and served as editor of several newspapers, magazines, and newsletters. His work has appeared in publications ranging from *Advertising Age* to *National Geographic World* and his syndicated column in newspapers across the country.

Samples of work using this process can be viewed at www.jeffwidmer.com or by contacting the author for printed materials.

On the cover



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Director of Homeland Security Tom Ridge. Cover of *The Spirit of Swiftwater*. An inside look at R&D. Dr. Jonas Salk.