Book proposal guide

The following is a suggested roadmap to writing a book proposal. Various length indicators are given (e.g. 2-3 paragraphs), but all of these are a guide and not prescriptive. If the information can be delivered more succinctly, excellent; if longer is required, do it, at least in the first draft. Some points may not suit the nature of your book either, so omit what doesn't add value to your pitch, or merge together as required. You can also reorder some of the points below if it creates a better 'flow' for your pitch document.

Proposal outline

1. Title & elevator pitch
2. Comparisons
3. More on the content
4. Table of contents
5. Audience
6. Author credentials
7. Author platform
8. Promotion
9. Word count
10. Sample
11. Additional points

In more detail

Title & elevator pitch

The suggested title, subtitle and single sentence summary of your book – the 'elevator pitch'. You can always submit a working title rather than a final title, if unsure and are open to publisher input.

Comparisons

Pick up to three books/authors as comparisons for content, topic, style and/or tone, even if you are mentioning those comparisons to illustrate the uniqueness of the idea. (Often the bigger, more recognisable/successful names the better, but you can also go for topically appropriate choices.)

More on the content

One to three paragraphs explaining the content of the book, the tone, what it's about and why it's unique.

Contents

A table of contents listing the chapters, with a line or two to explain the content of each chapter. This is entirely open to change during the writing and editing process, so anything submitted here is far from final. The point of this is to demonstrate the level of thought that has been put into the book, to show that there is more than just an idea at this stage but actual substance, too, which has potential to be fleshed out into a full book. This could also be a more loose 'Contents' list without being a strict chapter list that still indicates the general structure of the book.

Audience

Who is the intended reader? Why would they pick up this book?

Author credentials

One to two paragraphs on your background and authority on the subject matter – a brief author bio.

Author platform

A paragraph on your profile/platform/media experience. This shows not just that there is a market for the book, but adds to the business case for what you bring to help attract reader interest beyond your credibility/subject matter expertise.

Promotion

Is there anything of particular significance or a kind of unique access opportunity you have to help promote the book? Do you have any high-profile connections, know any 'influencers' and/or have media contacts that will help with the endorsement/promotion of the book at point of publication? This can include organisations.

Word count

The approximate length your book will be, in words. (To the nearest 10,000 is fine.)

Sample

A sample of your writing. This could be a standard chapter, but usually it's recommended to be a short preface, introduction or prologue. This doesn't have to be the introduction that begins the book in the final draft. The sample introduction serves as a tool to: (1) showcase your writing style, and ability to write; (2) establish the tone of the book; and (3) create a strong hook – whether narrative, topic of intrigue, or both – to get all considering the pitch keen to keep on reading.

Additional points

Anything else that may be of relevance to the book proposal and would impress the publishing house.