

A “Winning” Book Proposal

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Compelling book proposals start with an idea



However, the truth is that an idea must eventually take the shape of a story.



It sounds overly simplistic, but *most* book proposals present, in *condensed form*, a story that has a beginning, middle, and an end.



Not all book proposals must take that exact shape necessarily, but the ones that are easiest to sell certainly do.

Here are the *most common* components of a nonfiction book proposal

Each part of nonfiction book proposal should remind the eventual agent and/or acquisitions editor ***why you are the right person to write this book right now—which is another way of saying, can we make money from you writing this book?***

Overview of the book

Chapter summaries

Chapter sample(s)

Author biography

Sources, exclusivity, timing, and word count (AKA: How're you going to get this done?!)

Comparison titles

Marketing & publicity

Media and other contacts

But remember, this is primarily a sales document and selling is a process (1/2)

- First, identify the idea.
- Second, draft the nonfiction book proposal (a good pressure test to see if this is a magazine article or an actual book).
- Third, send the nonfiction book proposal to agents.
- ***Hopefully***, agents respond. And when they do, you take the meetings you want and select the agent you want.
- That agent then revises the proposal and sends it to a list of editors at houses that the agent thinks will want to take a read.
- You wait until an editor responds with a call for a meeting.

But remember, this is primarily a sales document and selling is a process (2/2)

- After the meeting, the editor will send an agent an offer (or not).
- With more than two offers, an auction can take place, and your agent will accept bids and you and your agent will have to decide on which offer you'll take.
- There are exceptions to this process and terms that can complicate things (e.g., pre-empt, exclusion submission, and more), ***but at the end of the day you're just trying to sell them on your story.***