

7 criteria to make your book stand out



by **Jana Lynch** 

Once I began my employment as an acquisitions editor, and let my friends, family, and extended network know I was actively seeking manuscripts, I had my inbox flooded with requests to evaluate their ideas and completed (and half-finished) proposals and books. I tried to look at each one fairly and objectively and with the same set of criteria.

It's that last part we're going to talk about today.

Now, please bear in mind that these were simply my criteria for evaluating a manuscript. It's my mental checklist and not necessarily the same as another acquisitions editor. But, at the very least, it'll help point you in a direction and give you a sense of what your manuscript should look like before you send it off to someone like me (or an agent, but query letters are a completely different topic).

That said, here's what I looked for:

- **An engaging read.** Did it capture my attention? Did it make me want to keep reading? Did I care about what happens next? Was I learning something (for nonfiction)? Was the information easily digested but lessons or characters that would stick with me after the book was done?
- **Writing quality.** Was the book well written? Was it full of jargon and industry terms, or could anyone understand what you're saying? Was it passive or active voice? Was the vocabulary varied?
- **Flow.** Did the book flow naturally or was it forced? Did the chapters connect to each other or are they disjointed? Was it organized logically?
- **Structure.** For nonfiction, coaching type books—were the exercises or chapter summaries or workplans easy to use? Was there a table of contents and index? If not, did the book work fine without them? For fiction, how was the story broken up?
- **Editing.** Had you gone over it for major grammatical problems? Was it riddled with spelling mistakes and sentence structure problems? Were quotes properly cited?

- **Market.** Not your marketing but audience market. Was there a need for your book? Did it fill a gap in information or add something different or unique to a saturated market? Did it offer a new perspective on an old topic?
- **Passion for the topic.** It's not necessarily about my passion for the topic; it's about yours. Did it come through in how you've written the story? Could I tell that you'd done your research or carefully planned the characters and plot? For fiction, could I tell that you loved your characters? For nonfiction, did it make me feel enthusiastic for the topic, even if this was the first I've heard of it?

It's really that simple. A book didn't have to be perfect for me to love it but it had to have potential. It had to grab me. It had to make me want to learn or read more. And if your book had that, you were definitely ready to submit it!

But you might be concerned that your platform or social media isn't big enough. We'll address that in depth another day but in short, I'll just say that don't let how small your platform might be be a detractor. If your book is good, it can get published! It can do well! Because you can fix a small platform. You can't always fix a bad book.

Still Struggling?

Great Writing Takes ~~Two~~ Two People.

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