THE POWER OF THE WRITTEN WORD

Your guide to writing a book for a host of professional benefits.

BY TRACY DRUMM WELDON

Writing a book can be an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling experience. For many, it is a lifetime goal. Writers commonly spend years or even decades struggling to put pen to paper and bring their visions to life. However, once you find your “rhythm”, the process of creating a book can be an incredible experience with tremendous highs and benefits.

Writing a book can go further than just checking an item off of your bucket list. It can be a great way to connect with patients and strengthen your brand. Many aesthetic physicians write books or e-books to showcase their expertise, document their personal journey, and further their image as an authority figure. I have worked with several clients to develop their reputation as an expert within a niche of their specialty. These doctors worked closely with targeted groups such as mothers, teenagers, revision candidates, men, or patients of a specific ethnicity or they became experts in a unique treatment technique. The physicians created lengthy narratives that were emailed, posted on blogs, or printed for distribution. Through the power of the written word, their specialized brands flourished by engaging prospective patients with facts, credentials, and patient stories.

Having a compelling and professional patient-facing piece of literature can enhance your current marketing plan by strengthening activities you are already doing. You can email the book or excerpts to consults as they schedule appointments or send an e-book as a strong post-consult follow up tool. If you print, the book can be distributed at local events that attract your target market. Additionally, launching a new publication or “booklet” can help provide fresh visuals for social media as well as generate new content for your website.

If you are interested in expressing yourself to patients, the media, or your community through the written word, there are tips that can help you transform your idea into a powerful reality. After a year of struggling to complete a marketing textbook, I finally found my writing rhythm and transformed random thoughts into a cohesive guide. While rebounding from the year-long slump that hardly produced a paragraph, I realized there were triggers along the way that helped me learn to systematically create content. On a day when words poured from my finger tips to fill numerous blank pages, I analyzed what led to the “faucet” turning on. Below are the “top tips” that transformed my random writing into a systematic and passionate act of expression.

TOP TIPS TO WRITE YOUR BOOK

Tip #1 Map it Out. If you don’t know where you are going, it can be hard to get there. Start by creating a table of contents (TOC), which will serve as your outline and plan for the book. The TOC allows you to visualize a manageable path to starting and completing the project. A book is simply a sequence of smaller initiatives that together create one unified, powerful piece. Once you have created your TOC, you can choose smaller sections to tackle. Rarely is there a convenient time to pause life and write an entire manuscript. By breaking the project down into smaller tasks, you have a better chance of fitting the work into your presumably over-packed schedule. Creating a TOC turns the book from an “idea” into a process with defined action items.

Tip #2 Give the Book a Greater Purpose. After taking the plunge and diving into a writing project, you may hit a speed bump along the way. When “writer’s paralysis” consumes you, the deafening silence of a still keyboard can seem impossible

Creating a book, e-book, or patient-focused editorial can be a strong way to enhance your image as an expert, promote your credentials, and educate patients on the unique training that qualifies you to be their aesthetic expert. Consider taking a journey into the world of writing as a way to connect with, educate, and retain patients.
to overcome. After several weeks of failing to gain momentum on my opening chapter, I decided the project needed a greater purpose. To get the keyboard warmed up, I wrote the book’s dedication. I have always enjoyed reading the heart-felt words people include with their written work. As an aspiring author, I dreamt for years of writing a dedication and paying tribute to those that inspired me. As I began expressing my gratitude, something shifted in the project. The short tribute gave the book new life as the words became a motivational tool. The words of thanks poured out of me and proved to be the exact warmup activity my “writing mind” needed. Over the following 10 months, I would often read the dedication to reignite my drive to put the last word on the page. I knew that every time I fought writers block or isolated myself to focus on the project, I was getting one step closer to turning my dedication into a reality.

Tip #3 Write Now, Edit Later. A few years ago, a New York Times best-selling author offered me a critical piece of advice on writing. He said most aspiring authors get caught up in constructing perfect sentences and never let themselves develop a rhythm. “Write first, edit later” was his recommendation. He shared that newer writers often become paralyzed by focusing on the structure of the content they are building. Instead of trying to engineer perfect sentences, he suggests you sit down and write in “free form” style. Put your thoughts on the page and keep typing. After you complete a few paragraphs or pages, go back and edit. This allows a cadence to emerge and your thoughts to develop more organically. You can perfect everything later—this method allows you to make steady progress.

Tip #4 Collect Ideas versus Hunting for Them. If you are considering writing a book try to gather thoughts, ideas, pictures, or anything relevant to your story before you need it. It is much easier to “collect” ideas and files along the way than it is to stare at a blank page and attempt to recall interesting antidotes to enhance your story. Take note of unique patient experiences or inspirational moments as they happen. Keep a bulleted list of ideas, make daily comments in your calendar, or simply scribble thoughts on a prescription pad as inspiration strikes. By logging ideas over time, you won’t be forced to recall notable moments on the spot when it comes time to patch a story together.

If you are considering creating a book for patients on let’s say “The History and Future of Facelifts,” start to collect before and after photos as you see stellar results, versus hunting through a digital abyss later.

Tip #5 Exercise. Like a sport, hobby, or any skill, the more you do something, the better you become at it get. Writing is a lot like working out. The first few times you hit the gym after an absence, your body quickly becomes fatigued. Your muscles ache, and it often takes extra motivation to keep going back. And then it happens. Without realizing it, your body becomes stronger and the workouts become easier.

Writing follows a similar pattern. The first few times you sit down to type, it takes extra focus and drive to muster through the words. Eventually writing starts to become more fluid and effortless. Allow time for your “writing muscles” to develop—the more you write, the easier it becomes.

Tip #6 A Solitary Sport. “Productive” writing often requires isolation and limited interruptions. You can get down a few words at home with your family running around or at the office between patients, but this is usually an inefficient and frustrating way to produce a large body of work. Whether you are constructing a lengthy email, writing an article, or starting a book, seeking solitude and “protected time” can enhance your ability to create quality content.

During my last book, I scheduled appointments on my calendar for “writing blocks.” You can help set yourself up for writing success by designing an environment that is conducive to focus and flow. Often, finding this “protected” time comes at a sacrifice due to overbooked schedules. To find more “interruption-free time,” I would frequently set my alarm an hour earlier than needed. With the world silent and sleeping, I could aggressively dive into the project with incredible focus. Try to commit to an extra hour at the office before everyone arrives or after they have left to help create a more fruitful writing journey.

Tip #7 Perfect is the Enemy of Good. Writing is truly an art form and as Leonardo Da Vinci said, “Art is never finished, only abandoned.” Try to apply a timeline to your TOC to force yourself into meeting deadlines. As the creator of your book, there are limitless possibilities for how the finished product can look. Most writers I speak with edit their work dozens and dozens of times and ultimately finish due to a submission date rather than ever feeling their work is “done.” Strive for progress over perfection and, slowly, the small segments will merge together to create your personal masterpiece.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
Self-publishing options and technology have made sharing your written work more affordable and efficient than ever before. Further, aesthetic patients are hungry for concise and credible sources of knowledge. They are eager to find physicians with the experience, credentials, and voice they can connect with. Whether you want to write a personal memoir or develop a book to guide patients through their aesthetic journey, passion will be the strongest fuel to drive your efforts. If you aspire to connect with patients and have an authentic message to share, it just might be time to add “author” to your CV.

Tracy Weldon is a medical marketing expert with over 13 years of aesthetic experience. Check out her latest marketing book DRIVE that features 50+ specific ideas for unique holiday promotions www.drivethebook.com