



WRITING A BOOK, GROWING A BUSINESS

How Publishing Their Stories Helped Launch These
Women Entrepreneurs to New Levels of Success

By Sharon Bially, Founder and President, BookSavvy PR



When Susan Peirce Thompson, Ph.D., founder and CEO of Bright Line Eating Solutions, sat down in 2014 to begin writing a book about how her personal weight-loss journey had given her the tools to help thousands of others lose weight and keep it off, she had no idea where that book would take her. She never expected to launch a thriving business that would affect hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.

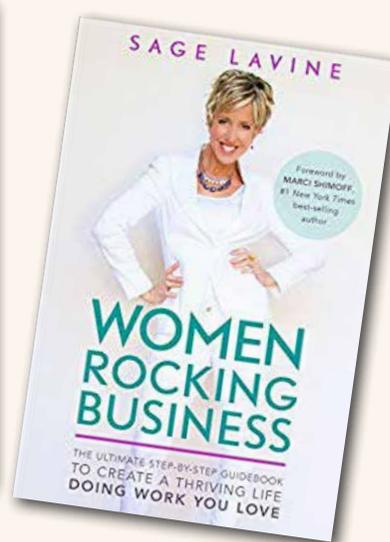
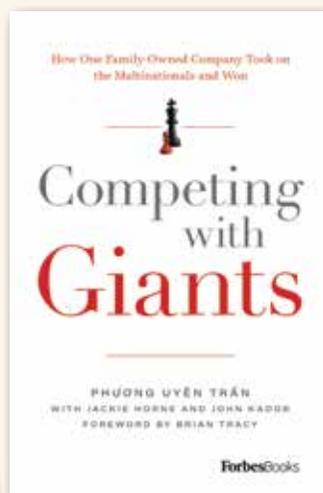
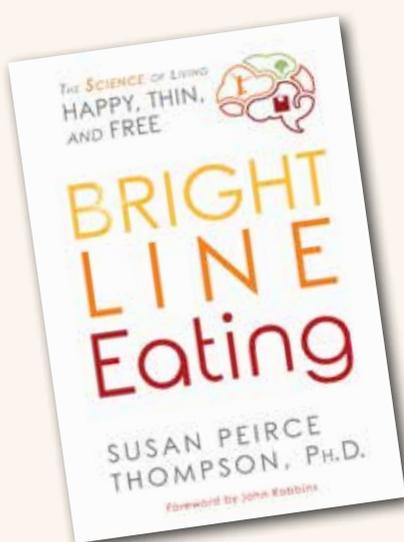
The process of writing her story became a springboard for so much more. In writing, Thompson came to articulate the powerful narrative of the scientific arc of food addiction and food recovery that she had been too deeply immersed in to see. This clear narrative allowed her to better communicate with all those in need of her help. It became her brand.

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All she knew was that she had to write it. Something inside her had been incubating, and she felt mandated to share the science that she knew could offer people everywhere a solution to their struggles with food and weight.

For months, she wrote daily, at the only time she could – from 4:30 to 5:00 AM, before her three young daughters woke up, the workday beckoned, and the day galloped away from her. But as she crafted her book proposal, she realized she needed far more than a book to have the impact she hoped for: she needed a platform.

Soon after beginning to build her platform, Thompson realized she couldn't afford to wait for her book to be picked up by an agent and a publisher – she had to help the people who were flocking to her now. So she created an eight-week online course and Bright Line Eating Solutions was launched. She had already been working one-on-one with dozens of people and had a team of alumni from her fledgling program coaching even greater numbers, but now she and her team formed the core of a company whose mission was crystal clear – to get one million people to goal weight by 2030.



Thompson's story is unusual. Bright Line Eating had had a worldwide impact and she had 18 employees before her book proposal was ever accepted by a publishing house. But by then, publishers were chasing her down, offering her a deal she couldn't refuse.

As the book's publication date approached, Thompson enlisted the help of several specialized firms, including mine, to promote it. The resulting media coverage catapulted her to the cover of *Woman's World* magazine and onto the pages of *Marie Claire*, *Parade*, *Shape* and *Time* – to name a few. She was interviewed multiple times on Fox News and CBS's *The Doctors*. Each media appearance became fodder for an email newsletter to her growing online community, which in turn engaged greater numbers of clients and generated more book purchases. In March 2017, *Bright Line Eating: The Science of Living Happy, Thin and Free* hit The New York Times Best Sellers list. And just recently, her second book, *The Official Bright Line Eating Cookbook: Weight Loss Made Simple*, hit The New York Times Best Sellers list as well.

Today, Bright Line Eating is a thriving company that has helped hundreds of thousands of people in more than 190 countries worldwide to lose weight and keep it off. In her community, 89% of the graduates of her online

weight loss course maintain their weight loss (and/or continue to lose), and of those who've gotten down to goal weight, 84% are still there.

Thompson's story is a stellar example of how a book and a business can go hand in hand. While the breadth of her success is fairly exceptional, her path is one that all entrepreneurs with expertise and a message to share can take. Others I have worked with include Sage Lavine, CEO of Women Rocking Business and author of – you guessed it – *Women Rocking Business: The Ultimate Step-by-Step Guidebook to Create a Thriving Life Doing the Work You Love*, and Phuong Uyen Tran, deputy CEO of her family's business, Tan Hiep Phat (THP) – Vietnam's biggest public food and beverage company. Tran is the author of *Competing with Giants: How One Family-Owned Company Took on the Multinationals and Won*.

For Lavine, writing and promoting a book helped her solidify and grow her existing audience and reach over 100,000 women entrepreneurs worldwide. Tran's journey as an author helped THP achieve its goal of establishing name recognition in the U.S. and helped Tran fulfill her own vision of becoming a sought-after public speaker here.



Common Themes on The Path to Publishing

Though each person's publishing path will look different, there will inevitably be several points in common that entrepreneurial authors can leverage, learn and grow from.

- Writing a book will help you channel your ideas, gaining clarity around your own story – past, present and future.
- A book is a superb marketing tool. With clarity around your ideas, you can craft a crisp, cohesive narrative that your audience and customers will readily engage with. This narrative can trickle out into all of your marketing initiatives.
- A book is newsworthy. It can be easily publicized, earning you and your business media coverage that you might not otherwise have been able to secure. Media coverage builds visibility, increases brand awareness and brings access to new audiences.
- By positioning you as an authority, a book lends credibility and opens doors. Authors are often invited to give talks and are readily introduced to – and sought out by – new clients.
- Books have a long shelf life. All of the above will still be true two, five and even 10 years after your book has come out.
- Writing a book brings immense joy and satisfaction. For many, it fulfills a lifelong dream.

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2 Steps to Get Started

Perhaps you're tempted by the idea of writing a book but daunted by the question: "How do I begin?"

While there is no single, easy answer that works for all, there are four steps that will help you get oriented and put words on the page:

1. Articulate your "big idea."

Stories can be messy, but books ultimately need to be coherent and clean. Knowing how to structure your story begins with knowing – and articulating – the core idea you ultimately want to express. You may already know what it is. If so, jump right on down to the next point. If not, journaling is an excellent way to begin getting clarity around what, exactly, you want to say.

2. Create a roadmap.

Some people use the word "outline," but I find it more fitting to think in terms of a roadmap because you may ultimately find yourself taking a different direction than initially planned – and it's important to leave yourself that option. A roadmap will give you a general sense of where you want to go and how to get there, but it leaves room for you to explore.

3. Commit.

Writing takes time, and the process is usually nonlinear. Some days, the words might pour onto the page, and you'll have made clear progress. Other days, you may find yourself staring at a blank screen or deleting everything you wrote. That's why it is essential to commit to writing regularly – ideally every day – even if it's just for an hour. Even when you feel you've gotten nowhere,

applying the effort helps the creative process advance. Without the blank page or the frustration of deleting a day's work, there is no progress.

4. Join a writing community.

Another writer's mantra is that it takes a village to write a book. It might sound contradictory, since writing is a solitary task and most books stem from a deeply personal place, but feedback and support from other writers is invaluable. Writersandeditors.com offers a state-by-state list of writers' organizations. Boston-based writing non-profit GrubStreet is the largest writers' organization in the nation and offers online options for those outside of the Boston area.

Another question that might be preventing you from taking this exciting step is, "How would I get published?" Fortunately, many acceptable options for publishing are available, ranging from the traditional path of seeking an agent who will find you a publisher, to self-publishing – which has become a more common option of choice, especially for business leaders who want to control their book's timing and marketing plan. Before you can pick, however, there is one crucial step that cannot be skipped:

3 Finish your book.

Even for a nonfiction book, where a book proposal rather than a full manuscript is the most important tool for securing an agent, finishing the book (or a solid draft of it) is often the only viable way to get the proposal in shape. Why? Your roadmap is likely to change as you work. Even your big idea is likely to evolve, so it would be premature to try to approach agents before you've gone through that process. Agents will also want to see the meat on the bones if you pitch them an idea they like, so you'll need to have something ready to show them.

Note that writing a book does not have to take an eternity. If, like Thompson, you begin with some measure of clarity about your message and idea, it is entirely possible to write a solid first draft in a matter of months.

If you still feel a bit daunted, the good news is you don't have to do it alone. Just as there are business advisors to help you formulate and execute strategy, there are professionals who can help you with everything from honing the concept and structuring the chapters to actually writing it for you and helping you navigate the many paths to publication. [↪](#)



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