

The Top Ten Mistakes Publishers See In Manuscripts.

Nathan True of Greenleaf Publishing compiled this list. Greenleaf, if you're not familiar, is a partnership press I send many of my clients to. We did a webinar on this topic a while back and I think this could be super useful. So I've totally ripped off Nathan. I'm sure he'll forgive me.

1. Poorly defined audience
2. A lack of or poorly defined market differentiation

[GBG looks at comp titles, gets feedback from buyers early in the process; brand strategists]

3. No answer to the *So what?* question
 - a. "Why would someone who doesn't know me read this book?" (especially memoirs)
 - b. You never want the reader to ask herself "Why am I reading this?"
4. Poorly defined promise to the reader

- a. Title, cover copy, design; segue from the last point: the value to the reader must be immediately clear]

[Great title: The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up]

[the average consumer gives 5 sec to each book *if* they pick it up; make yours stand out]

5. MS length inappropriate for genre
 - a. Esp. important for business books: should be roughly 200 pages (60,000 words at 6x9 trim)
 - b. But it depends on the content—no fluff, no overlooked necessary topic

[The GBG team is familiar with genres and buyers, experts at this sort of thing, stay on top of trends]

6. A lack of clarity or direction

- a. No clear plan for the book (large scale): Follow an outline!
- b. Circuitous logic or wording (small scale)
- c. Ann's bootcamp will get them there, similar to the first stage of our Project

Development process

[This is part of the promise to the reader—you have to guide them clearly]

[Time is so precious that you need to make your product worthwhile]

7. A focus on details instead of larger issues, especially at early stages

- a. Commas don't matter if you have no arc

8. Repetition

- a. Among chapters

[disjointed, obviously written separately]

- b. Within a section, even within a sentence

9. Letting go too early or too late

- a. Too early: AU thinks the first draft is the end of the writing process

[the first draft is just that]

- b. Too late: Late-stage changes lead to mistakes, can be costly

10. Not trusting your editor

- a. That doesn't mean that you should accept everything we say, but you should understand that our job is to help—nonadversarial
- b. We don't want to kill your darlings; we want to help you raise them well

[Having an editor in the first place—you're too close to the book; get outside professional eyes (i.e., in addition to friends or family)]

Bonus

11. No Hook

12. A lack of transitions

13. Memoirs: A lack of self-reflection

14. Fiction: A lack of character development, holes in the plot

15. Punctuation: commas!