
Publishing in the Right Places

Publishing in Top-Tier Management Journals

Facilitator: Russell Craig, Senior Director of Marketing, FTI Consulting

Harvard Business Review: Sarah Green Carmichael, Senior Editor and Host of HBR IdeaCast

Forbes: Fred Allen, Leadership Editor

MIT Sloan Management Review: Martha Mangelsdorf, Editorial Director

This panel of editors from leading management publications described what they are looking for and how consultants can get published in their publications.

Overview

Leading management publications welcome contributions from consultants and frequently publish the work of consultants. They want ideas from experts in a field that are unique, provocative, evidence based, and useful, and want real-world examples of the ideas in practice. Pitching ideas is best done in a personalized way via email, with a short (one-page) description of the author's expertise, the specific idea, and why it is unique, relevant, and compelling.

Key Takeaways

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW LIKES TO PUBLISH CONSULTANTS AND PRACTITIONERS—WHO HAVE SOMETHING ORIGINAL TO SAY.

Sarah Green Carmichael estimates that 40% of the content in HBR is from academics (30%) and staff writers (10%), with 60% of content coming from consultants (40%) and practitioners (20%). For consultants and practitioners, keys to getting published in HBR are:



1. **Expertise.** HBR wants recognized experts in a particular area.
2. **Evidence.** HBR wants content supported with data and research, as well as practical examples.

3. **Originality.** HBR wants unique, truly original ideas. Failing to be unique is the biggest stumbling block.
4. **Usefulness.** HBR wants content that blends theory with practical use, supported by examples.
5. **Being a joy to read.** In a crowded media landscape, HBR wants content that people enjoy reading.

HBR publishes across multiple platforms, and a digital platform like HBR.org with an article of 800-1500 words is often a good place to start. The best way to pitch HBR is by contacting an editor via email with a one-page summary of the idea/article. (Feel free to contact Sarah at sgcarmichael@hbr.org.) Common pitching mistakes are making the pitch too long (which won't get review) or lacking originality.

FORBES.COM IS SEEKING COMPELLING CONTRIBUTORS.

In 2010 Forbes.com embarked on a new business model of curating content provided by more than 1,000 contributors, many of whom are consultants. The idea is to find the very best experts in their fields, guide, them, set them free, and support them. Based on this model, Forbes.com has grown to 75 million unique monthly visitors.

The word "Forbes" in a large, blue, serif font.

Forbes.com accepts submissions for individual articles, publishing one to two per week. But Forbes.com's larger focus is cultivating an ongoing network of contributors who post compelling content regularly, such as daily, weekly, multiple times per week, monthly, or periodically.

What Forbes looks for in contributors and single submissions includes:

Contributors	Single Submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expertise, both broad and narrow ▪ A strong, informed point of view, beholden to no one and free of overt self-promotion ▪ A sense of what readers want to hear about and speedy responsiveness to relevant breaking news ▪ Ability to write clearly and cleanly, and to self-edit ▪ Self-sufficiency and dependability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A strong, clear, independent message of broad interest ▪ Timeliness (or timelessness) ▪ Clear, clean, concise, conversational writing ▪ Fresh, sharp, provocative, and surprising . . . yet solid and substantial ▪ Optimal length of 500 to 900 words

Hot topics at the moment include leadership, innovation, things in the news (like the election), globalization, the changing workplace, and anything a person has unique knowledge and insight into. To become a Forbes.com contributor or to submit a single article, contact Fred Allen at fallen@forbes.com.

MIT SLOAN MANAGEMENT REVIEW BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICE.

[MIT Sloan Management Review](#)

(SMR) is a research-oriented publication positioned between academic journals and mass-market business publications. SMR takes ideas from academics and other thought leaders and helps put them into practice. About 80% of SMR's content comes from academics, with consultants supplying some of the 20% of SMR's content coming from non-academics.



For consultant-authors interested in publishing in SMR it is important to know:

- The content in SMR is research oriented and some articles are peer reviewed.
- SMR is not primarily for consultant-authors, but provides great company to be in for consultants who do publish in SMR.

- The best ways for consultants to get published are by:
 - Collaborating with one or more professors.
 - Providing a shorter (700 to 2,000 words) analysis or op-ed article for the Frontiers section.
 - Submitting a guest blog (of 300 to 700 words).
 - Engaging in a “Big Idea Initiative” that provides the opportunity for in-depth, multiyear, co-creation collaborations. Examples include SMR collaborations with partners BCG and Deloitte.

Those interested in sharing ideas or potential submissions, contact Martha Mangelsdorf at mangelsd@mit.edu.

Other Important Points

- **Personalize the pitch.** Broadly blasting generic emails to multiple editors is no way to get published. Create highly targeted, personalized email pitches.
- **Measuring success.** These publications measure success through both tangibles (number of unique visitors to an online article) and intangibles (the perceived quality an article). In submitting content, it is important to know how a publication measures success and to convey in the pitch how an article will deliver on what is being measured.
- **Long form.** Some publishers are interested in conveying important ideas with long-form articles that can be “atomized” into smaller pieces of content.
- **Native content.** There is much buzz about this concept, which includes a brand voice and can take the form of sponsored content, like advertorials or “insight centers.” It should be clear on a site when content is sponsored.
- **Case studies.** Case studies are important in showing an idea in practice. Editors often don't require use of prominent companies in case studies. What is more important is the use of real companies that are identified as opposed to anonymous organizations.

Selling Books to Leading Book Publishers

Facilitator: Cathy Olofson, Chief Marketing Officer, Innosight

McGraw-Hill Professional: Donya Dickerson, Editorial Director

Penguin Random House: Natalie Horbachevsky, Editor, Portfolio

Bibliomotion: Erika Heilman, Co-founder & Publisher

For consulting companies, a book is a great calling card. It helps build a consultant's brand, provides validation of ideas by a third party, and helps drive more and higher paid speaking engagements, which further builds the brand and drives revenue. However, with more than 11,000 business books published each year, the landscape is cluttered. And only about 5% of all business books sell more than 5,000 units ever. This makes book publishers extremely selective in the ideas and authors they choose to publish.

In this discussion, leaders from top business publishers described what they are looking for in book ideas and authors.

Overview

Books are an important way for consultants to build their brand as thought leaders in a particular area. The keys to publishing a book are having a unique idea—possibly born from research or experiences—and having an author with a distinct voice and a significant following who is committed to working in collaboration with the publisher to market the book.

Those desiring to publish a business book should do their homework before pitching a publisher. This includes carefully defining the exact target audience, articulating what problem the ideas in the book will help solve for the target audience, and determining how best to position the book in a crowded marketplace. They should also think through

how to build and grow their social media following and how best to leverage all marketing and communication channels to drive sales of the book.

Key Takeaways

GETTING A BOOK PUBLISHED STARTS WITH GREAT CONTENT.

The panelists agreed that getting a book published starts with unique content and a big idea. This can mean new research, breakthrough thinking, or a fresh approach that solves a pain point for a specific audience. In assessing content, key questions that must be answered include:

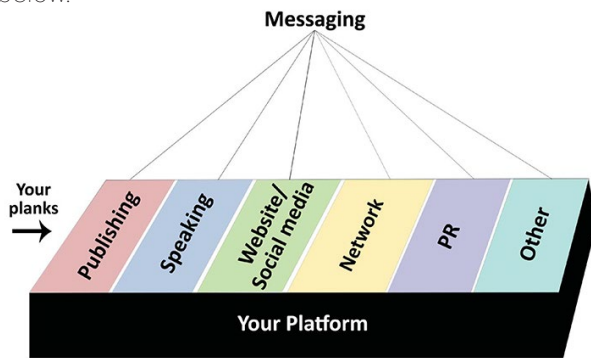
- Does the content carve new space in the literature?
- Does it express a point of view?
- Does it fit within the publisher's core content area(s)?

For book ideas from consulting firms, a publisher will want to know if the content reflects a core product or service offered by the firm, and if it will be an area of focus for the next three to five years.

THE AUTHOR IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE CONTENT.

These publishers place tremendous value on the author. They want authors who will be able to drive book sales because they have a unique voice, have a significant and loyal following including "leading a tribe" and having a large customer base, are recognized thought leaders, and are visible through multiple platforms, including social media. Publishers want authors who are adept at leveraging influencer networks, speaking at conferences, and engaging in

publicity and other marketing activities. An example of the multiple platforms where a presence is desired is shown below.



Source: Erika Heilman, Bibliomotion

In many ways, a book is just the beginning and the center-piece of producing content for multiple platforms.

When consulting firms are involved with books, publishers want to know if the firm embraces the book and if there is infrastructure to support the book, meaning are key thought leaders willing and able to promote the content?

PUBLISHERS WANT COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS.

Each of these publishers brings expertise in business publishing, distribution, and marketing. They seek authors who will work as partners in bringing new ideas to the market and work in collaboration to actively promote these ideas, both domestically and internationally. These publishers don't just want authors who create books; they want ongoing collaborative relationships to build brands and franchises.

GETTING PUBLISHED REQUIRES A UNIQUE COMPETITIVE POSITIONING.

Pitching a book idea is similar to pitching a product or service. A publisher wants to know precisely who the target audience is, wants to see a competitive analysis with three to five relevant comparables, wants to know how the book will be uniquely positioned compared to existing books in the market, and wants to know about the size of the author's platform (social media following and speaking engagements) and level of commitment.

Other Important Points

- **Agents.** Agents can help inexperienced authors with matchmaking, but for authors who already have a publisher, an agent adds little value.
- **Options.** Publishers aspire to build long-term relationships and multi-book contracts with authors, and try to insert in contracts options on future books as a way to build franchises. Even when options are not included in contracts, publishers hope that by investing in authors and working with them, relationships are established that lead to multiple long-term projects.
- **Airports.** Actual sales of business books through airport booksellers are fairly low and most books sent to airport stores are returned. In many instances, placement in an airport is a paid placement and the book is placed to please the author, who will see it when travelling.
- **New authors.** For a potential author who has a unique content idea but lacks a built-in following and a platform, a good idea is to partner with someone who already has a platform.
- **Timing.** It can take 18-24 months to write a book, have it edited, and launch it.

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