

MELISSA NEWTON

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# CO-AUTHOR TEAM GUIDE TO WRITING BOOKS

Save time, money, and grow  
your brand by working together

## THE RIGHT WAY TO WRITE BOOKS SERIES

Discover the **benefits of collaboration** on a book.

Q & A format to get quick insights on **how it works**.

Learn how to **create a successful team**.

AUTHOR OF "HOW TO RE-USE CONTENT TO PUBLISH BOOKS"

# **Co-Author Team Guide to Writing Books**

**Save time, money, and grow  
your brand by working together**

*Melissa Newton*

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*Co-Author Team Guide to Writing Books: Save time, money, and grow your brand by working together*

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“Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.”

~ Helen Keller

“Teamwork is the ability to work together  
toward a common vision.”

~Andrew Carnegie

“Coming together is a beginning,  
staying together is progress, and  
working together is success.”

~ Henry Ford



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# INTRODUCTION

Over the years, I have had the privilege to partner with many terrific authors. Our collaborations have been incredibly rewarding. It has been throughout this journey that I have continued to learn the best approaches to share the knowledge, ideas, and experiences of others through their books. I have also discovered a truth that remains unknown to many people who want to become an author. Here it is:

**Co-author teams are a winning option  
for individuals who want to become an author.**

How did I reach this conclusion? Let me share two main experiences in 2022 that have shaped my perspective. The first circumstance has to do with several different business owners I spoke with regarding doing a book project. These individuals have tremendous stories and knowledge to share. They expressed real interest in writing and publishing a book. Unfortunately, these wish-to-be authors came across two barriers that they felt would keep them from even reaching the starting gate:

1. Despite a conservative budget, they could not afford to invest in writing and publishing a book as a single author.
2. They felt they could not come up with enough material for a full book.

Let's be honest here. I am always disappointed when a book project does not work out. It is how I make a living. But, I feel really bad for people who don't have the chance to write and publish a book. It is a life changing event they may never experience. They won't get to open the delivery box and hold their book in their hands. They won't see their name beautifully printed on a book cover. They will not be able to share the exciting news of becoming an author with their family and friends. They will lose out on so many opportunities that would open to them if they had become an author. In short, a dream of authorship is left unfulfilled. For someone who has published many books of her own and participated in the joy of my authors writing a book, I know what they are missing out on.

What about the second experience that influenced my attitude about co-author teams? In 2022, I had the opportunity of working on an incredible co-author team book project with the [National Aging in Place Council](#) (NAIPC). I had the privilege of observing the power of collaboration in action.

With a team of twenty co-authors from NAIPC chapters throughout the U.S., their book [Aging in Place Conversations: What Industry Experts Have to Say](#) was released in the fall on Amazon. The book not only is changing the lives of readers, but for all the co-authors as well. Their success was because they saw the vision of what pooling their collective resources could do. As Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

### **Authorship Begins by Saying "Yes" to Teamwork**

It is exciting to provide a unique solution to individuals who want to write and publish a book. All that is required is to say "Yes" to teamwork and make authorship a reality. I have watched people do it. I have been honored to be part of making the dream of authorship come true by being part of the team.

How do you make it happen for you? I wrote this short guidebook *Co-Author Team Guide to Writing Books: Save time, money, and grow your brand by working together* to answer many of the common questions I'm asked about how co-author teams work. It is in a question and answer format so it is a quick read.

*Co-Author Team Guide to Writing Books* is also a companion book to my [FREE virtual presentation](#) that I give to nonprofits, practices, associations, and others. I thrive on sharing the idea of the co-author team approach to writing and publishing a book. My audiences learn about how the co-author team approach works and the benefits of collaboration. They discover the fabulous marketing tool that a book becomes for an author. Most importantly, they discover how becoming an author will grow their brand and business in ways they never could have imagined.



Co-Author Teams is an exciting, innovative approach to writing and publishing a book. There is incredible power in collaboration. I invite you to browse through the questions and answers in this book. I know you will be as excited as I am about bringing a team of colleagues together to change the world with a book project.

So, let's get started.

*Melissa Newton*



**Co-Author Teams bring together multiple contributors to writing a book. Through the power of collaboration, everyone works together to achieve a goal – to write and publish a book.**



# 12 Questions & Answers About Co-Author Teams



**The Co-Author Team approach to writing a book saves time, money, and effort for all the contributors.**

I find the Q&A format a reader-friendly approach to consuming information. You will see that I provide more of an overview without getting too deep into the details. It is not the purpose of this guide to get into the step-by-step minutia of working with a co-author team or writing/publishing a book.

I have found over the years a mixed feedback from my authors regarding how much detail they want to know. Some authors choose to leave the details to me to manage. They don't want to know, and that is perfectly fine. Others are curious about some matters, so making it available here will meet the needs of those readers.

I hope you find this guidebook helpful as you explore the innovative approach to writing and publishing a book working with a co-author team. I encourage you to write down your questions. When we have a conversation or I present to your audience, I am happy to answer your questions. Enjoy!

## **1. What are the barriers to people who want to write and publish a book?**

The first and most common barrier for single authors is the book budget to work with a professional writer. There are numerous costs including the work of the writer (interviews, writing the manuscript, editorial, etc.), designer costs for book layout, and book cover design. Plus, there are administrative costs such as submitting the manuscript to the U.S. Copyright Office and purchase of an ISBN from Bowker Identifier Services.

A second barrier I have come across is not having enough content for a full-length book. Typically, a full-length book is about 200+ pages or 50,000+ words. Of course, a short-book or selection of short books as a book series is always an option.

Making the decision to write and publish a book is both a time and financial commitment. Being part of a co-author team solves the issues of cost and content volume. How? Instead of paying the full investment as a single author, you can split the cost between the contributing writers. In addition, once the book topic and detailed outline is determined, the writing assignments can be split out amongst the contributors. Instead of writing thousands of words, depending on how many comprise the team, each author may only need to write a few thousand or less.

## **2. What does it mean to be on a co-author team?**

A co-author team is a group of two or more authors who join together to write and publish a book. The total number of individuals on a co-author team is completely up to the team, organization, or group. Each individual's name will be listed as an author on the book cover or, for larger groups, can also be listed inside the book. In addition, each individual name can be listed in the distribution platform (Amazon, for example) so they are acknowledged as contributing authors. If you wish, you can watch a short video on my website that talks about the co-author team approach. See [melissanewton.com/co-author-team](http://melissanewton.com/co-author-team).

## **3. What are the challenges of writing with other people?**

Writing with other people is only a challenge if the book project is not managed well. This is where my role as a project manager comes into play. I help keep the book project moving forward. I have come to see that two key factors are critical to ensure that a co-author team book project runs smoothly and the final product is a well-written and professional book: *communication* and *working with a book project manager*.

Clear and regularly scheduled communication is critical to enjoying a positive writing experience with other people. All participants must be informed on the book topic, detailed outline of the book, subjects and areas of expertise that will be handled by each individual. Pre-scheduled Zoom meetings must be held to keep all participants updated on the progress of the project. As with any team project, communication is key to ensure a positive and productive experience.

Second, a project manager who is knowledgeable on writing, editing, and the publication process is really important. It's why I really enjoy the work I do because it is a detail-oriented function. I create a writing and publishing calendar to keep all the writers on track. The calendar is deadline-driven to meet the release date of the book, which can be months down the road. As the project manager, I also develop the manuscript once all the individual submissions are complete.



The value to co-author team book projects is that multiple voices with diverse backgrounds are coming together in one book. These can be efficiently and beautifully brought together with effective editing and manuscript development.

#### **4. What are the benefits of writing and publishing a book with a co-author team?**

I developed a checklist of ten benefits co-authors receive by working together to write and publish a book. Depending on the goals of the team, multiple benefits can be enjoyed by the writers collectively. What I find gratifying is that whether the purpose of the book is to showcase members of a nonprofit, association, or group of professionals of a networking group who wish to pool their financial and intellectual resources, it is a win-win for everyone.

Below are the ten benefits I referenced that co-author contributors enjoy. In the end, writing and publishing a book brings tremendous added-value to marketing your brand and growing your business.

1. Establish credibility as an expert in your industry.
2. Grow your nonprofit or group membership by offering publishing opportunities to members.
3. Expand your business through speaking opportunities.
4. Share the mission of your organization.
5. Create an added revenue stream to your business.
6. Use a book as the anchor for training and/or educational programs.
7. Expand your personal and professional network.
8. Showcase your practice's team of professionals.
9. Take advantage of the budget-friendly savings by splitting costs between team contributors.
10. Enjoy the personal and professional growth of becoming a published author.

*NOTE:* If you are a member of a nonprofit or association, it gives you the opportunity to get to know other fellow members, particularly outside your local chapter. Another huge added-value is that as part of a co-author team, all the authors have a built-in sales team to help promote the book. Instead of just you the author promoting the book, you can have multiples of your fellow authors promoting the book. It broadens the market footprint!

## **5. How does becoming an author help me grow my brand and business?**

Believe it or not, simply adding the title "Author" changes the game. The bottom line is this: becoming an author will open doors that may not otherwise open to you.

Being an author adds credibility to your brand. It will allow you to nudge your way into promo opportunities like being a guest panelist, guestpert on television, radio, or podcast, or as an expert to be quoted in articles or blogs. Let me give you a couple of other specific examples.

**Example #1: Professional Speaker:** If you want to be a professional public speaker or trainer, it is a default that you need to publish. Simply look at the profiles of professional speakers. They all publish.

**Example #2: Stand Out to Your Competition:** If you want to showcase your knowledge to stand out amongst your competition, adding “Author” to your profile achieves that goal. Why? Honestly, even today with the opportunities to publish abounding, so many professionals still don’t do it.

One of the reasons I really like the co-author team approach for nonprofits, associations, and groups is that members can work together for a common goal – publish a book. The side benefit is that each contributor becomes an author without needing to take on a book project by themselves. It provides a unique opportunity to showcase both the organization and the individual authors. Once again, it’s a win-win.

## **6. What is the cost to each author on a co-author team if they work with someone like you?**

When I have an initial conversation with the leader(s) of a co-author team, I gather information about the book project that helps me assess a final estimated cost. Some of the points to know are total length of the book, what will the content include (total page number, words only, QR codes, images, complexity of the layout), how many authors wish to participate, etc. Also, what is the extent of my participation, i.e., participate as a writer (write the Introduction, for example), creation of the manuscript, editing, proofreading, administration, and following through with the publication phase.

In addition, I always ask what the budget range is for a group and we back into the project from that point. Clearly, there has to be some budget to allow for not just the months of time I spend working with a co-author team, but utilizing the talent of my graphic designer who performs

some of the execution of the publication phase of the book, i.e., book layout, book cover design, etc.

For authors who are curious about the entire writing and publication process, I developed a ten step process. Within each step are multiple steps to complete and move on to the next step. There are many details involved in the writing and publishing of a book. This is why a project manager is helpful in keeping everything organized for the co-author team.



So, what is the total cost for each co-author? It depends. Will the book project be subsidized by the nonprofit, association or company? If not, co-author participants can split the total cost between all the writers. It can still be a comfortable investment, particularly if you have multiple contributors. Ultimately, the total cost per co-author is significantly less than if investing in a single author book project. Typically, a co-author team participant may invest in the hundreds instead of thousands for a single author book.

## 7. Are there different book format approaches to writing a book?

The one aspect I enjoy about writing and publishing is that no one book has to be the same as another. Depending on the content, number of contributors to your co-author team, you have many format choices. Here is a list of three book project formats, all of which can be different page lengths depending on your team's goals:

**Q&A Format.** The question and answer format is by far the easiest and reader-friendly approach to writing a book. It is the book format we used for the National Aging in Place Council project I talked about in the Introduction. As you can see, I also chose to use the Q&A format for this book.

The Q&A format works really nicely, particularly if you want to use a lot of contributors. Organizations with high-volume membership can find this approach really valuable because it expands the opportunity for participation. Also, it really drives down the individual cost. Let me give you an example. If you write a Q&A book and have 50 co-authors participate, the cost could be a little as \$160 per person. As a business owner, this cost could be written off as a marketing expense. Each individual could be assigned one or two questions. All 50 co-author contributors would be book ambassadors to help promote the book. Most importantly, a book could be easily produced and made available in an organization's book library for current and future members. It could be used as a promotional or educational tool at an organization's annual event. The possibilities are truly endless.

**Interview Format.** Similar to the Q&A format, the book could be a collection of interviews written by each co-author contributor in the first-person. Each author could answer a question or series of questions. Depending on the length of the book and number of co-authors on the team, each individual may write two to five pages or more of manuscript. Can you imagine the collective knowledge of bringing a team of authors together to discuss their niche area of expertise on a book subject? It could be marketed as a leading resource in your industry.



**Topic By Chapter.** The Topic by Chapter is a more conventional approach to writing a book. The group would decide on a lead subject. A detailed outline would be developed that would touch on specific topics. Each co-author contributor would select or be assigned a chapter based on their area of expertise.

The work involved in the editing process and development of the manuscript would be important. Continuity, transition between chapters, and final chapter conclusions for appropriate calls-to-actions would need to be managed. In the end, showcasing the knowledge and experience of each co-author participant could result in an outstanding resource for the marketplace.

### *Bonus Idea – Book Series*

I would like to close this section by providing a bonus idea to writing and publishing books. I always encourage authors to think outside the box. A really useful strategy to producing books is to consider creating a book series. In this way, you can work with a higher volume of co-author contributors, touch on topics in greater detail per book, and each book could be done as a short book – under 100 pages. These books can be more quickly produced and ultimately provide an extensive catalog of book resources, particularly for a nonprofit, association, or networking group.



## **8. What if I am not a writer?**

Let me give you some words of encouragement. You may be surprised to find that the majority of writers participating in a co-author team book project are not professional writers. Some may have done some blogs, maybe one or two have self-published a book. However, the majority of your fellow teammates are people just like you - have knowledge and information they want to share.

What is important is that each contributor has experience and knowledge that is super valuable to readers. When I work with a co-author team, I'm with them every step of the way serving as a guide. I offer ideas on tools they can use to help a writer refine their process. If they have questions or need to bounce ideas on what to write, they can get feedback from their co-author team. I have also had people contact me directly, and we work through the content together.

Contributors can then forward their work to me, which I review, edit accordingly, and provide feedback as needed. This can all happen before the manuscript is compiled and the first draft completed. I must say that the vast majority of contributors do a really nice job putting their thoughts on paper. I encourage writers to use their natural voice, to pretend they are speaking through their fingers as they type. This can be a useful strategy because then each writer is being themselves and letting the content flow.

Let me just say this – do NOT walk away from the opportunity to participate with a co-author team because you have never written anything before. You may be surprised at how much you enjoy the process. Most importantly, you are working with a professional writer – me – and your co-author team. It may be the most rewarding experiences of your life.

## **9. How do you build a co-author team?**

Putting your co-author team together can be an exciting task. It can also be a challenge depending on if you want to work with a limited number of authors for a project. Once organization members or colleagues find out you are planning a co-author team book project, you may be surprised at how many want to be part of the team. Why? It is because it is a unique opportunity that professionals want to participate in. Plus, it offers a chance for want-to-be authors to add the description "Author" to their professional profile in a much easier and budget-friendly way.

Let me provide some tips to keep in mind when you are determining who will comprise your co-author team.

1. Take full advantage of the expertise of your members, colleagues, or team.
2. Determine how many people you want to work on the team.
3. Decide if you would like to write and publish a series of books.
4. Determine if you want the book to be subsidized by the organization or for co-author participants to provide the funding. If so, to keep per person cost down, consider working with a larger team.

I would also like to provide some general thoughts on specific co-author teams:

**If you are a nonprofit or association** – The reason I like the idea of nonprofits and associations doing co-author team books is that these organizations are mission-driven. Book topics can be focused and bring added-value to members and prospective clients of its members. Also, it is convenient to publish the book through the organization (as copyright holder) and all book proceeds being directed to the nonprofit or association itself. It is a win-win for both the co-author team and the organization in which the team is associated. More details about how this works can be provided when we have a conversation.

**If you are a practice** - There are numerous types of practices who provide services to the consumer market. These practices can be comprised of multiples of professionals as employees and/or contractors including therapists, medical or health and wellness physicians or practitioners. Other practices may include a collective of third-party service providers. Whatever the circumstance, bringing together the various talents in the practice pool can be incredibly valuable.

A book project can benefit 1) clients and/or patients, 2) add credibility to the authors and the practice, and 3) add financial value to the practice itself. Keep in mind, if the practice serves as the copyright holder, the book becomes an asset to the practice.

**If you are a networking group** – The advantages of individual business owners and professionals working together to write a book are numerous. It is a budget-friendly option, offers the opportunity for contributors to become an author, and if desired, utilize the brand of the networking group to publish the book. I have found that more doors open if a co-author team has an organization standing behind them.

If your networking group is local, you can access the local talent to comprise your team. Should your networking group be part of a larger organization beyond your local chapter, tremendous opportunities await you. Why not consider tapping the knowledge and expertise of other group members outside your area. Thanks to technology, geographic location is no longer an impediment to easily working together to write a book. While doing the National Aging in Place Council book, we met regularly using Zoom, recorded the meetings, and engaged with our co-author team with members from all over the United States. It was a stimulating and inspiring way to work.

## 10. How is the manuscript put together?

One of my key functions as a writer is to put the manuscript together like a puzzle. I will review, edit, and proofread the individual manuscripts written by each co-author. I then bring all the pieces together to create a master manuscript. Once the manuscript receives a final approval, we can then move to the publication phase of the book project.

What is included in this process? Administrative tasks include submitting the manuscript to the U.S. Copyright Office, obtaining an ISBN, and working with my graphic designer to do the book layout, book cover design, and final production of the book. There are a lot of moving pieces at this juncture that are essentially going on behind the scenes. The work of the co-authors has been completed. But, the communication continues so the co-author team is kept aware of the book's progress.



## 11. Where is the book published?

Where the co-author team book will be published is decided at the beginning of the book project. It all depends on the goals of the team and/or the organization (if applicable). Typically, publishing through Amazon's platform using Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) is a common choice. Why? Let me give you a few reasons:

1. Amazon has the largest footprint for book distribution in the U.S. Canada, and Europe.
2. Amazon allows authors to upload what it refers to as "[A+ content](#)" (images, verbiage, video, etc.) to "engage readers and give them more information as they consider buying your book." Visit the [landing page for the National Aging in Place Council's book](#) to see an example of A+ content:

There are other distribution platforms like Barnes & Noble, Lulu Publishing, IngramSpark, and others for paperback and/or hardcover. We can discuss the option that works best for your co-author team when we have a conversation.

## 12. Who owns the copyright of the finished book?

Only one person or entity can own the copyright of a book. It is typically why I recommend that co-author teams who come together through a nonprofit, association, networking group, etc., have the entity be the copyright holder. This can be a practical and worthwhile approach. Let me explain.

1. Instead of being individual authors who have teamed together for a book, the group has the backing and support of an established nonprofit group.
2. Being a nonprofit organization will open more doors for speaking and promotion of the book *because* it is a nonprofit organization. The book proceeds will not be divided between the individual authors. Instead, the monies will go to the nonprofit.

3. Authors still receive the significant value of becoming an “Author.” In the Amazon platform, for example, individual names can be listed on the book’s landing page. Prospective buyers will be able to see the names of the authors. In addition, the co-author team names can be individually listed for SEO value on an organization’s website. If performing a Google search, an individual’s name will come up in the search results.
4. Book proceeds can be deposited into an account for the organization. These funds can be used either for a specific purpose or to simply support the mission of the group. This is a feel-good approach for everyone involved.
5. Since the organization is the copyright holder, it will be easier to maintain permanent long-term records of the published book.



# Your Next Steps



Now that you have read through this short guidebook on co-author teams, I hope you are as excited as I am about doing a book project. Your next step is to talk with some of your fellow colleagues and group leaders. Let's plan to have a preliminary conversation. There is no commitment. I'm here to answer your questions and see how we can make your dream of writing and publishing a book a reality.

I am also available to do a free presentation to your group about co-author teams. You can find out more about my talk on my website at [melissanewton.com/speaking](http://melissanewton.com/speaking). I have uploaded a short video that talks about my program.

In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you. Contact me at [Melissa@MelissaNewton.com](mailto:Melissa@MelissaNewton.com).

*Melissa Newton*



# About Melissa Newton

## My Early Years

I have enjoyed reading all types of books since I was a child. The first book I collected for my personal library was on Pocahontas. I was nine years old. I still have it.

As for writing, it has been a part of my life experience since high school. When it came to college, I made certain to include some literature and history classes in the mix. Why? I was a student who thrived writing essays and research papers. My great interest in reading, research, and writing followed me into my professional work life.



**Books are an integral part of my life. The books on my office bookshelf are very special to me. Some of these history books were my father's.**

## Writing, Editing, and Publishing

I have decades of writing, editing, and publishing experience. My background includes being a former managing editor of two online magazines I published. One was a literary magazine with a subscriber base of over 600,000 and a small team of writers. My most recent magazine was niched in money and financial literacy, which I published until 2016.

As a prolific author and writer, I have authored many books, hundreds of blogs, articles, newsletters, and white papers. I also have enjoyed a rich experience ghostwriting blogs, articles, and books with c-suite executives, business owners, and leaders in various industries as a confidential and trusted writer and publisher. I also work with co-author teams to publish a book using multiple collaborators.

I invite you to learn more about me by visiting my website at [MelissaNewton.com](http://MelissaNewton.com). If you would like to have a conversation about how we might collaborate on a book project, feel free to e-mail me at [Melissa@MelissaNewton.com](mailto:Melissa@MelissaNewton.com).





Live the life  
you've imagined.

--Henry David Thoreau

