

Welcome to the Write Publish Market podcast. If you're an entrepreneur considering writing a book to serve your business, you're in the right place. Or maybe you've already decided — that's even better. I'm your host, Jodi Brandon, book publishing partner for entrepreneurs and 20-year veteran of the book publishing industry. On the Write Publish Market podcast, in addition to learning from me, you'll meet entrepreneurs just like you and hear about their experiences as we explore all facets of writing, publishing, and marketing a book that will help your business grow in ways you might not even have dreamed up yet.

Hello, hello, author entrepreneurs. Welcome to today's episode, where we are talking today about editorial feedback. That means the edit memo, or the editorial letter. That's specifically what I'm talking about today: the feedback that comes with your manuscript after the editor is finished working on it. So you're an author, you've written a book draft, you've revised it, you've gotten beta feedback — all of that — and then you've submitted it to an editor. We're talking about that editorial memo letter that comes back with your edited document. This is something that's very intimidating to authors. I know that as an author, myself, who works with professional editors on my own books, but as well as an editor for my one-on-one clients. These are some of the things that I have been told from my clients over the years about their feelings when they've gotten their editorial memo: One, *holy crap*. Two, *I was so scared to open that document*. Three, *I'm too intimidated. I don't know where to start*. And then after the fact, sometimes I get *That wasn't so bad, or I didn't really need to be scared*. And as an editor, let me just say, please don't be scared or intimidated — although I understand why you are. But those actual responses that I've gotten from clients over the years make me realize that maybe as an editorial community, we're not doing the best job of preparing our clients for that feedback.

I understand that part of it is just that no one likes criticism. No one likes to think that they're going to need to do more work. They're hoping the bulk of the work is done now that the book is written and they're in the revision stage of the production process. And it is true that sometimes you're not as close to being finished as you had maybe hoped that you were. But by and large, there's nothing to be intimidated about. I'd also remind you that if you've hired someone that you trust as your editor, that should make this process feel a whole lot less intimidating and daunting. What the editorial letter is going to give you is more of the big-picture feedback. So it's not the nitty-gritty, line-by-line feedback. It's the big picture overall feedback: structurally where the book is. Hopefully, your editor has talked to you about your goals for the book. What is the problem you're trying to solve for your readers? And their job, then, is to make sure that you're addressing that goal — that you're solving that problem through your text. They want to make sure that your meaning is clear, at every stretch, and that your voice is maintained. A good editor is not trying to change your voice. A good editor is not trying to make sure that every one of those seventh-grade English rules are followed to the letter, but moreso that your message and your meaning are clear. They're coming across. And whatever goals you've identified for yourself for the book are actually being met. So if your editor has not asked you what those goals are, before they start editing, you want to have a conversation about that, because that's something that's absolutely critically important in how they're framing all of their feedback.

I always tell my editorial clients to please start with that memo when reviewing feedback. Start with the edit memo, because that's where I'm framing the project for you. Here's where you're trying to go, here's where you are, here are the ways that we can improve. To make things clearer for readers, here are the things that we need to do to make sure that we're not missing the mark with those goals. And then you want to wrap your head around the big-picture feedback. Think about those concepts that an editor is raising in that letter, memo, or whatever they're calling it, and *then* you get into the nitty-gritty where you're approving individual changes. *I think the sentence doesn't need a comma or you've used the wrong word here or I think this is what you mean here. Am I right?* All that kind of feedback is the nitty-gritty. That's not part of the edit memo. The edit memo is more "let's take a step back." It's the bird's eye, 30,000-foot view versus walking through the forest. You really need to have a handle on that big-picture feedback in order to properly revise and keep getting your book closer to being finished.

Again, I understand the reason that it feels scary and intimidating. One, it's an unfamiliar process. For most people listening to this podcast, if you're a business owner, you're not writing 15 books. You're not trying to be a professional writer. This is probably the first time you've done it. If it's not, it's the second, or maybe even the third, but it's still a relatively unfamiliar process to you. You're an expert in whatever your business is; the editor is an expert at editing. It's uncomfortable to not be the one in charge. I'm using air quotes, even though you can't see me. It's human nature to worry that the feedback that's going to come back is *Nope, this isn't great. We've got to start over.* Let me say in 20-plus years of editing, I've never told an author, "You have to start over." Human nature bubbles to the surface because of this unfamiliar process. Because writing is so personal, and also because we've spent so much stinking time working on this manuscript, we're ready for it to be out in the world. And we want to be done with this phase of it and close the book — pardon the pun — on this stage of the process.

So keep in mind, again: The bigger picture here is to just get a handle on the big picture feedback for the book to make sure that you are meeting the goals that you've set for yourself. Editing is a collaboration, or it should be. One of the things that I pride myself on as an editor when I'm working one on one with clients is open communication. If there's feedback that I give that an author doesn't understand, or maybe doesn't agree with, we have a conversation about that so that you can see where I'm coming from editorially, and I can then see where you're coming from. Once we have that conversation we see, for example, *Okay, is the best way that we can phrase this? Is this the best place in the book for this information? Is this information necessary to meet that goal of solving that problem for the reader?* Those are the kinds of things that are really important, as you set up your book team, which we've talked about on the podcast before and elsewhere. The relationship between an author and editor is so important for that reason: because that collaborative nature of this relationship is really going to strengthen your book manuscript.

This is different from feedback from beta readers. Those are people in your target market who are reading the book to give you feedback about usually specific kinds of things. *Do you think I need more case studies? Would you rather, as a reader, see footnotes or endnotes?* Anytime there's an area in the manuscript where you struggle with writing it, that makes a great question to ask beta readers. Editorial feedback is different from beta feedback. An editor is a professional, they work with books all the time, they're not "just" a reader. I hate to use the phrase *just* for beta readers, because that feedback is also critically important. But it's *not* professional feedback from an editor who does this for a living. It's really important to take their advice to heart. They're coming from a good place of trying to make sure that you're maintaining clarity throughout your manuscript, so that when the book comes out, it does solve that problem for readers. It does help you meet your goals. It helps your readers meet their goals by you meeting your goals. All of those things come into play when you get that letter.

The letter is different for every project, of course, and lots of factors come into play: how many words your book is, how complete the manuscript really was, when you sent it, lots and lots of factors. But the editorial memo is typically several pages long. So you're looking at pages of information to wrap your head around — and that's even before you then get into the manuscript and look at all of the line-by-line and sentence-by-sentence changes and suggestions that the editor has for you. But this editorial feedback in the form of the edit memo or edit letter really comes first and it's where you should start when you receive your materials from your editor. You want to open that up and give yourself some time to dig into that feedback and really try to get a handle on where the editor is coming from (versus just, *Oh, they're trying to fix this, this, and this*). Come at this from the same place that the editor is coming at it from, which is: *Is my meaning clear? Is my voice clear and maintained throughout? Am I getting readers to where I want them to go? When I set out to write the book, I have decided on that North Star, which is where I want readers to be after finishing the book. Am I getting them there? And if I'm not, how can my editor help me get them there?*

Always keep in the back of your mind the collaborative nature of the editor-author relationship, especially as you are working through all of that feedback. And again, that open communication is huge. Try not to be scared. Try not to be intimidated. Open that memo in that letter and get to work, because honestly, the sooner you get to work, you're one step closer to holding that finished book in your hands. And that's everybody's goal for your project: that moment where you get to first hold it in your hands. Then get it out there to your readers to make those changes, and serve your business and grow your business — all of those reasons that you wrote the book in the first place.

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Write Publish Market podcast. I know just how busy entrepreneurs' schedules are. I'm grateful you've taken some time out of yours to journey into the world of book publishing with me today. If you enjoyed this episode, take a quick screenshot and share on social to let others know you're listening. Use the hashtag #writepublishmarket to spread the love. Until next time, friends, happy writing.