

Use the power of the pen to leave a legacy

Many of us want to pass along our family values and history to our children. But getting through to younger generations isn't always easy. One tool that can be extremely effective is a book — written by you — that shows your heirs what you believe in, and why it matters so much.



This report was selected especially for you by Falkenberg-Poetz & Pidhirniak Wealth

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Key takeaways

- Writing a book can help impart your values to heirs and impact their futures positively.
- An effective book will have candid, honest stories that enlighten and benefit the readers.
- An outline and a formal writing plan are essential components of a successful book project.

Many of us want to pass along not just wealth and other assets to our heirs, but also the key lessons we've learned throughout our lives. By sharing our stories, we hope to instill important values in our children that they can carry with them on their own journeys.

One creative and highly effective way to do so: write a book that captures your experience, wisdom and knowledge.

A book that contains your personal history — the challenges, the victories and even the failures that taught important lessons — can give your kids a unique values-based road map that can guide them through their inevitable ups and downs.

Of course, you've probably never thought about writing a book — especially one about yourself — and the idea may sound about as easy as climbing Mount Everest.

The good news: it's easier to write a book than you might think. Here are some practical tips and action steps from Tucker Max. The author of four #1 New York Times best-sellers, Max co-founded book development and publishing company Scribe to help authors.

Big benefits of writing a book

Let's start by facing an important fact: you can't write a book overnight. It will take time, effort and commitment that could be spent on other things.

So why do it at all? A book offers some compelling benefits if you've got kids or grandkids.

1. **Legacy.** Think about how many stories you heard as a kid about your grandparents or distant relatives — their struggles, their wins, their losses and the hard-won lessons learned along the way. Usually those stories get told once a year, maybe twice, at a holiday gathering perhaps. But almost never do they get formally written down — which means that too often, those amazing stories fade and die over time.

By writing down those stories — your own and the stories of those who came before you — you help ensure that your family's history and values can literally be picked up and read at any time, by anyone you want to know them. That can help ensure heirs understand, for example, the reasons why you might be strongly urging them to save and invest their wealth wisely. Or why you consider money spent on experiences, such as travel, to be money well spent.

2. **Impact.** You might not think your story and the past events that shaped you and your values are interesting — but chances are, they will be compelling to the people and family who know you. Think about the times when you learned something that surprised you about a parent or grandparent. It's a common occurrence.

That means a book with details about your life can actually help your loved ones throughout their lives. Your experiences can help kids take certain actions or avoid others — if they know about your experiences and what they meant to you, that is.

Important. Of course, you don't need a book to have an impact on others. But usually a person needs to read or hear something numerous times before it truly sinks in. Having your story on paper and available on demand can help reinforce the values or lessons you hope to impart to others around you.

Getting set up for writing success

Don't simply sit down at the computer and start writing. Instead, ask yourself a key question to get in the right mindset:

How do you want your book to serve your readers?

You need to know to whom you are writing, and how you see the information in your book being able to help them in some way. If you don't know those things, the people you most want to communicate with through your book won't be engaged — which means it won't have an impact and it won't be an effective family legacy-building tool.

So ask yourself who your target audience is and why they should care about what you have to say. It might be one of the following.

- Your children
- Your grandchildren
- One or more siblings
- Your parents
- Some combination

How do you want your book to help them? Here are some possibilities.

- You may want to communicate big-picture values that you hold dear, and tell stories from the family's past that explain where those values came from and why they're so important to you.
- You may want to tell the story of how your family became (and has remained) successful — the attitudes and actions that drove the results that led to the lifestyle you and your heirs enjoy today. That type of story could motivate heirs to follow suit.
- You may want to tell a cautionary tale to your heirs based on a big mistake or misstep you made in your life that you don't want to see them repeat. If, for example, your family has a history of substance abuse, you might want children to know that so they can be aware of the genetic risks they face and seek to avoid behavior that could send them down a bad road.

These are just ideas. Think about your particular audience and what you really want to tell them that you think would help them the most in their lives, based on what you've seen, done and learned.

Remember: keep in mind that no one — not even your heirs — cares about your book, per se. They care about what is in the book that can enlighten and benefit them.

Next steps

Armed with that big-picture information, it's time to start the formal writing process — the part where the words spill out onto the screen.

The first step here is to create a written, formal **outline** of your book — chapter by chapter. Trying to write a book without an outline is like taking a cross-country road trip without a map — you'll spend lots of time needlessly wandering and may never get to your destination.

There's no need to create a massively complex outline, which will only slow you down. Instead, follow this structure for each chapter.

- **Setup.** This should be a personal story, a historical anecdote, a question to the reader, a shocking statement, or anything that draws the attention of the reader and sets up what is about to come in the chapter.
- **Thesis.** Plainly state what will be discussed in this chapter. Essentially, you briefly tell readers what you're about to tell them.
- **Supporting content.** This section should list all the key points/evidence for your statements.
- **Stories.** Effective stories are crucial to the success of a book that's meant to convey family history and values.
- **Reader's key takeaways.** A summary of the three or four key points should appear at the end of each chapter.

Next, develop a **writing plan**. Inspiration to write a book may get you started — but if you don't have a plan and the discipline to stick to it, you won't cross the finish line. Consider issues such as the following.

- Will you write the book yourself or hire a professional writer to interview you about the topics in your outline and draft the book?
- On what days and at what times will you write?
- Where will you get your writing done?

Without a clear plan, you'll find yourself trying to fit in writing when you can — which nearly always leads to the work grinding to a halt. Additionally, your plan should be written down and put on your calendar so it becomes truly real and makes you feel accountable.

Make it real

Even when you finally have all your words on paper, it's still just a manuscript — not a book. To have a big impact — even among an audience of family members — you'll want to publish it so you can give your readers a version they can hold in their hands and refer to repeatedly.

It's easier than ever to publish a book these days. Numerous services exist that will design a book cover and print your book in small or large batches. There are even books about publishing your own book. In short, what was once an opaque and pricey endeavor is now much more transparent and affordable.

Giving yourself

By giving family and heirs a book that is an extension of you and the things in life that are important to you, you can send a powerful message and have a powerful impact on the lives of the people you care about most. Such a book can mean that you're with your family, in some sense, every step of the way — helping them live their best lives even as you enjoy yours.

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