

Perfect Your Content with a Little Help from Friends

By Barbara McNichol

You've noodled through your book concept, you've created an outline that will move the plot along, you've fleshed out that outline with detail. You can now declare the *content* of your manuscript complete. Pat yourself on the back. Dance the snoopy dance. You've accomplished a lot.

But you aren't finished yet. You need to ask yourself if you've said everything that you want to say. Once you've satisfied yourself that you have, give the manuscript one more critical look to make sure it's complete. Then and only then are you ready for the next crucial step to making your manuscript the best it can be.

A Necessary Evil?

As those of you who've been through the process already know, a peer review is a necessary step in finalizing your manuscript. Peer reviews—sending your book to fellow writers and others “in the know” about your genre as well as readers in your target audience—is both essential and frustrating, but a necessary evil.

The reviewers' role is to help you “see” what you've written. They point out what's working in the text or storyline and what isn't working. They may nitpick on the wrong things and they often take you on tangents, offering suggestions that may or may not advance your ideas.

Still, feedback from reviewers is essential because they bring a variety of perspectives to their enjoyment of a book—as your buyers will. Be prepared for their suggestions to be dynamic and brilliant. Or they could be so far off, you wish you could take back the manuscript and say “never mind.”

To ensure their comments are valuable rather than distracting, guide the process the best you can.

Keep Reviewers on Track

How do you do that? Be specific about what you want peer reviewers to look for. Ask them if the content seems complete or if you have overlooked something important. Also ask them to forgive typos and punctuation glitches—those are addressed in the editing process. But resist the temptation to skip the peer review. The reviewers' questions often reveal muddy spots that need to be cleaned up, or they may simply say “I don't get it” in certain places. Pay attention to that, too. It's easy to get your nose too pressed to the computer screen to see what's actually there on paper.

When you go through this peer review process first, you'll find that people appreciate being asked. What's more, you'll have ambassadors out there when your book finally arrives. But if you rely on them for technical glitches, you could have a patchwork quilt of opinions you'll have to deal with. Best to let your editor ensure a consistency and an eagle eye for precision language. You can't expect that from peer reviewers.

Turn to peer reviewers to help you finalize your content, pinpoint problems, and sharpen your message.

Barbara McNichol, Barbara McNichol Editorial, writes and edits articles, website copy, book proposals, and manuscripts for authors and entrepreneurs. Contact Barbara at Editor@BarbaraMcNichol.com.

**Add power and persuasion to your writing.
Contact Barbara today!**

Barbara McNichol Editorial

520-615-7910

887-696-4899 (toll free)

Editor@BarbaraMcNichol.com

www.BarbaraMcNichol.com