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***2nd Edition***

**Joel Orr**

**America's Empowering Book Coach**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### **Why I wrote this book**

I want everyone to be able to write a book with ease, because every person has a book in them. At least one!

I've always loved books. I learned to read at 18 months. Our house was full of books, and I explored many of them.

My parents had high regard for books, and I sensed that. I always aspired to write books.

When I finally did begin to seriously write, after graduate school in pure math, after a few years as a technical writer and a programmer, it was tortuous. I was unsure, unsettled, rattled by the thought that I would produce a book that would instantly be seen to be full of holes, full of foolishness. The thought was unbearable.

So I went round and round, getting lots of people to read my writing and comment on it, getting it edited. And research. Oh, yeah—research!

Research was always needed. Each new thought required me to go to the library, to write to someone else. What if I missed something important?

The amazing thing is that I got anything written at all. Even books that were simple anthologies of my articles—like

“The Victorious Engineer”—took a long time. Each article needed an introduction, something to place it in context. Was it the right thing? Would this article date the book? Should I leave them in chronological order, or group them by topic? (I ultimately did the latter.)

Yet shortly after each book, I knew I would write another. I still wanted to. I was still unfulfilled. I still hadn’t delivered my soul.

After the first six books, when thinking about the seventh, I knew I had to do something different.

I interviewed my friend, the late Dona Meilach, who had written—at that point—about 60 books. (She wrote another 26 before she passed away at age 80 in 2006.) I read interviews with Isaac Asimov and other prolific authors. I bought courses and read books.

From several months of exploration, I distilled a process—the process you’re reading about in this book, the process I used to write this book.

I didn’t invent the process; I took what I found helpful from many sources. There may be other processes more productive than mind; I don’t know.

But I do know this: My process works.

With this process, I wrote my seventh book in under three months of very part-time work. And I wrote my eighth book in one month.

I wrote this book to share what I learned.

**What this book is about**

This book is about the method that I distilled and synthesized, which I call the BookProgram™ process. Its essence is known to many, and it is elegant in its simplicity: First structure; then content.

In other words, first you put together the organization of your book—what’s first, what’s next, what’s last. You decide how you will break up the information you want to communicate so as to get it across in the most effective way.

And—crucial point—you break it down into chunks that you can write in five to ten minutes of continuous, non-self-critical writing.

There is something about this unit of writing that seems to be harmonious with human thought and ideation. It’s like a breath, a heartbeat, a night of sleep; I intuit that it has some physiological or neurological basis. It may be only cultural; but whatever it is, everyone that I have seen learn about the process experiences it as an organic and natural unit.

I started writing “What this book is about” at 8:53 pm. I am not stopping to contemplate what I write. In the structuring phase, I already decided that “what this book is about” will be a single unit—a single ZipWriting™ unit, as I call it. (I teach you to ZipWrite™ in Chapter 5.) I’ll keep writing until I’m done with this unit, and almost invariably, I will find that ten to twelve minutes have elapsed.

If at the end of that period I haven’t finished writing about “what this book is about,” I will start another such session. I won’t waste time wondering about whether I should have

defined this piece of the book as two sections rather than one; it is what it is. I continue.

The book is about the process. I wrote about how I came to the process; now I am beginning to hint at its precise nature. I will explain the process in detail; I will describe the two powerful tools that support it; and I will give you specific instructions as to how to employ the process to write and publish a book.

I've also included information about publishing—self-publishing, agents, and traditional publishing. I've discussed marketing, and how the book fits into your overall marketing, should that be of interest to you. (To most of my clients, it is.)

And I've included numerous references to my websites and to other resources on the up-to-the-minute, ever-changing worldwide web.

I hope you are as excited about this book's potential to help you as I am!

### **How to use it**

Read the book all the way through. It is written to be light, to be easy to read. It is also written so that you can easily refer back to the parts that did not stick with you on the first reading.

By reading the book all the way through, you will absorb more of it than you realize. Many of the points will be familiar when you refer back to them, and will take hold in your subconscious.

And I want the points to make it into your subconscious, because I want to instill certain beliefs in you:

- Writing a book is “do-able.”
- If I follow the process, I will wind up with a book.
- I can do this.
- Having a published book will benefit me.
- I am unique; this book will begin to reveal my uniqueness.

Perhaps you are a business professional, and you are writing a book to communicate with your prospects. You want them to know more about you than can be conveyed in a brief conversation, more than what can be put into a brochure. You want people to get to know you and your approach. And you also want to establish yourself as an authority.

You might have a family history that you want to share with your family and others. A book is a great way to do this, and to give order to the bits and pieces you’ve collected, to tell the story—or at least, a story—of your family.

You’ve decided to share your knowledge of a craft or your love of a place or your passion for a cuisine with others.

Whatever your motives in writing the book, MY motive in writing THIS book is to teach you a simple method for writing yours!

So I encourage you to read the book all the way through as a first step. You’ll discover that towards the end, I actually

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instruct you how to implement what I've shown you—how to take the steps that will result in a published book.

Don't start to write yet. Read on.

## Chapter 2

### What Should I Write?

#### **Your pressing purpose**

You want to write; that is why you're reading my book. But—why? What is it you want to say? To whom? To what end? You have a pressing purpose. You may have not been able to articulate it clearly, but you have one. I know you do; you wouldn't be here if you didn't.

Your job is to identify it.

One way to do that is with the clustering tool I'm going to show you in Chapter 4. If you are impatient, skip over to that chapter and learn how to cluster. It doesn't take long to learn, and it is very helpful.

Another approach is to look at your life, to think about it. What draws you? What, beyond the need to earn your daily bread, tugs at your soul?

I believe everyone has a purpose—a reason they are here, on this planet, at this time, in this body, in this family. And it is pressing, because life is short. We know we came here to do something, and we have only a hint—if that—as to what it is. Tomorrow is not promised to us; we have only this moment.

So shouldn't we be finding our purpose and working on it?

I think writing a book is not a main purpose for many people. For most, a book is a means to an end. A way to tell their story, to convey their message, to establish their authority. A way to speak to many people, over a long period of time.

### **What is your pressing purpose?**

If you have someone very close to you, you might ask them: What do you think my pressing purpose is? What have you seen in me, in my behavior, in my yearning, in my disappointments, in my triumphs, that hints at something larger?

You might take some time to be alone. Quiet yourself. Meditate, if you are comfortable with a quieting, focusing practice. Go for a solitary walk in a quiet place.

Do you keep a diary or a journal? You will surely find clues in it. If you don't keep one, consider starting one.

You have a purpose. You know what it is. Don't be afraid, and don't be impatient. It will reveal itself to you.

### **Your passion**

Some people have a passion for something—their children; a sport; a hobby; a spiritual pursuit. My brother had a passion for poker. He loved the game, in all its forms—table card games, casino electronic versions, on-line groups. He played them all, and earned a living at it.

Jerry had a passion for numbers, for “the odds,” for statistics. He learned to control his emotions, so that he

could “pass” on hand after hand, only playing when he “had cards.” “Poker, played correctly, is not gambling,” he often said. He could always tell me his average hourly earnings for the preceding month or year; the numbers were never huge, but always more than enough to cover his humble living expenses.

Poker was his passion, and he wrote about it.

“Passion” is a synonym for “emotion.” Usually, it is used to imply strong emotions, positive or negative.

What is your passion? Don’t be timid about saying, “model trains” or “birdwatching.” There need be no blood, sexual tension, or physical violence in passion; it is a gauge of how much you care about something.

If you care a lot, you have a lot to say about the object of your caring. You should consider that object a good candidate for writing about.

Are you in business? Are you thinking of writing a book as part of an overall business plan? Then let your passion for helping your customers, your clients, come out. That will help you find the questions to which they seek answers—which you can supply in your book.

### **Your curiosity**

What do you want to know? What draws you to keep surfing, googling away, when you have commitments standing in line? Could it be your curiosity?

Most of us have within us a deep desire to know more. Sometimes it's to know more "about," sometimes it's just "to know more." That energy that drives your curiosity can be the very thing on which to base a book.

Has it occurred to you that you can write a book about something that you know very little about? Many journalists are driven by curiosity. They run across an odd fact, a strange situation. "What's behind that?" they wonder. "How did it come about?" And off they go, interviewing experts, witnesses, involved parties. They read the leading books on the subject. They find out what is known and what is not known; where the opinions are divided. And they begin to record their own observations and conclusions.

There aren't enough lifetimes for me to pursue all the things that make me curious. What really happened on September 11, 2001? Let's say I buy the collapse of the Twin Towers; how did Building 7 collapse? How did the passengers on Flight 93 make phone calls? I've surreptitiously tried to make calls from many airplanes; it doesn't work. So what really happened?

Not only are there more and more mysteries coming to my attention every day—it's getting easier and easier to find them, thanks to the Internet. Want to look for hidden treasure? Just be a little creative in your search strategies on the web. You'll find more than enough material for a whole series of books (even if you don't learn where the gold is buried).

Where is your family from? Who are your forebears? Ancestral and genealogical research have led many people

to become authors, to share with authors the amazing things they find in their family histories. Again, Google is your friend in this endeavor. So are the Mormons, of course, who are meticulous and generous with their genealogical research.

Just ask yourself: What piques my curiosity? What am I always wondering about? Perhaps it is time to pursue it.

A word of caution: Don't go digging deeply just yet. Skim. Find the things about which you are curious. And if you decide to write about one of them, first complete this book and its exercises. That will help you focus on what you need for your book. Then you can go and explore just for fun.

### **Your message**

There is something in your heart. Perhaps it's always been there; perhaps it became clear to you after some intense experience. It's a discovery you made, an insight. It has helped you, and you know it can help others.

If you have a message to deliver, a book may be the perfect way to do it. For one thing, books persist in the environment. They don't just disappear, like an email. They are unlikely to be thrown away like a brochure.

We care about books. It's in our culture. Even people who don't read a lot usually have some respect for books.

So if you publish your message in book form, it will probably be read by more than one person per copy. And even people who get the book but don't read it right away will have it, and they may read it at some time.

When someone reads a book, they enter into a tacit agreement with the author: “You can have my attention as long as I continue to be interested in what you have written.” Brochure-readers don’t make that implied agreement with brochure-publishers. A book is different.

A book takes the reader on a journey. The nature of the trip is entirely up to the author. So if you have a message to convey, you have a unique opportunity in a book to lay it all out, to show the reader what it’s about, to describe the benefits of the change you are recommending, to caution against dangers.

A book lets you communicate your message. That is an awesome responsibility, and represents considerable power. Use it wisely.

### **Your love**

You may not have a specific message. But your heart is always overflowing with love. Your primary motivation in all that you do is caring.

A book can manifest your caring. It can validate your reader, strengthening her, encouraging her, comforting her.

A book attains a level of intimacy with its reader that is seldom reached between humans. The reader’s heart is open to the book—to the author of the book. The reader exposes her fears, her hopes, her frustrations to the author.

The reader can grow to trust the author. The author must not take this lightly, but be trustworthy.

Love your readers. Your book can resonate with your love.

**Your duty**

“Duty”—a word that has fallen into disuse. Yet a very useful word for “the requirements of a role or position.” I have a duty as a father, a son, a husband, a citizen, a brother, an uncle, a Jew, a friend. The requirements are dictated by the role, not by who I am or the particulars of the situation. “To do one’s duty” means “to fulfill the requirements of a position or role.”

What does this have to do with writing a book? That depends on your roles and positions. For example, you may be the oldest person in your expanded family. You may see it as a duty to record what you know of the family and its stories, characters, and adventures.

Your duty as a citizen may call you to clarify issues of national concern to your fellow-citizens. Your duty as a sister may impel you to tell the story of your siblings, so that future generations will have the facts.

This goes beyond love, although in my view, duty is a manifestation of love. This is not a message, or a particular message.

Duty is a set of requirements that come from a role or position. It is an important motive. Although there may not always be universal agreement about the duty of a particular role, the existence of duty is not usually in dispute.

It is salutary to consider your duties from time to time, and gauge how you are doing them.

### **Books in your market**

Browsing in a bookstore or library, or on Amazon.com or BN.com, can be a wonderful source of inspiration. As you follow your fancy from one area to another, note what you are drawn to. See if there are areas that you feel are not completely served by the books that are there.

Dropping down a level, if you are drawn to a particular genre or subject, begin examining its books. How many pages do most of them have? How many chapters? How are they laid out? What is the typical size and shape? Who are the main publishers? What topics do they cover? Does each book have an index?

Studying the nature of the books in a given field teaches you something about that market. Do you want your book to stand out? Do you want it to look like any particular book or type of book in this genre? You will learn a great deal by going through this exercise.

Even if you are surprised or intimidated by the number and variety of books in a field that attracts you, do not turn away. The fact that there are many books in it means it is a burgeoning market. Think about your “angle,” the information you have that is in none of the current books in the field. This will not only motivate you, but also help you define your market more clearly.

**Decision time**

You've gone through a variety of motivations and a range of subjects. You may know, with confidence, exactly what you want to write about. Or you may still be unsure.

Now is a good time to use clustering. If you haven't done so already, read ahead and learn how to cluster.

Cluster your topic. Make several clusters, if you have several candidates. Take your time. This is important.

When you are ready, commit.

## Chapter 4

### Essential Tool 1: Clustering

#### **You know more than you realize**

You have much more knowledge and experience than you can easily catalog, in every aspect of your life. Even when you focus on an interest or passion, I picture your knowledge in clumps, floating in a mysterious solution at different levels. The stuff that is near the surface is what you are aware of; it's what you describe if someone at a party says, "What do you know about this subject?" But whatever it is that you say, there is much more in your mind than that.

I've discovered that much more of it is accessible than I ever believed possible, without hypnosis. You get at it through a process called "clustering."

Years ago, I read "Writing the Natural Way," by Gabriele Lusser Rico. It is a wonderful book that I still recommend to anyone thinking about writing. But in it, I found an incredible gift of inestimable value: Clustering.

Clustering grew out of work done by Tony Buzan and others on the process generally known as "mind mapping." A mind map is a diagram, with bubbles, arrows between the bubbles, and decorations of all kinds.

Mind maps are often hierarchical; that is, the thing in the middle is at the top of an outline, and branches from it are “main topics.” Branches from the main topics are “subtopics.”

Literature about mind maps encourages you to color and embellish your mind map, to make it as multi-sensory as it can be. The idea—or one of them—is that having a multi-sensory experience of your concept, project, or idea allows you to apply more of your marvelous mind to it.

Clustering, the way Rico teaches it, is an abstraction of that process. You don’t stick to a strict hierarchy. You don’t get involved with lots of decorating. It’s quick, almost meditative—as you’ll see in the following paragraphs.

The power of clustering is that it keeps your “left brain” (which Rico calls, “the sign mind”) occupied so that your “right brain” (“the de-sign mind”) can bring out what you know about the topic. These are the clumps of knowledge I envision as suspended deeper, below the surface, in the mysterious solution that is your mind.

Some of the knowledge is facts; some of it is meta-knowledge, like the fact that you are ignorant of an important subject.

All of this comes out in clustering, as you will see.

Learning to cluster changed my ability to plan and communicate—profoundly. And many whom I’ve taught to cluster report similar transformation. (Hang on; we’ll get to the actual practice below.)

**Right brain, left brain**

Having mentioned the “two sides of the brain,” I wanted to share just a bit more about this understanding.

Here’s some of what Wikipedia has to say on the topic:

A longitudinal fissure separates the human brain into two distinct cerebral hemispheres, connected by the corpus callosum. The sides resemble each other and each hemisphere's structure is generally mirrored by the other side. Yet despite the strong similarities, the functions of each cortical hemisphere are different.

Popular psychology tends to make broad and sometimes pseudoscientific generalizations about certain functions (e.g. logic, creativity) being lateral, that is, located in either the right or the left side of the brain. Researchers often criticize popular psychology for this, because the popular lateralizations often are distributed across both hemispheres, although mental processing is divided between them.

... While functions are lateralized, the lateralizations are functional trends, and are not applicable in every case. Short of having undergone a hemispherectomy (removal of a cerebral hemisphere), no one is a “left-brain only” or “right-brain only” person.

Brain function laterization is evident in the phenomena of right- or left-handedness and of right or left ear preference, but a person's preferred hand is not a clear indication of the location of brain function. Although 95% of right-handed people have

left-hemisphere language function, only 18.8% of left-handed people have right-hemisphere language function. Additionally, 19.8% of the left-handed have bilateral language functions.

Linear reasoning and language functions such as grammar and vocabulary often are lateralized to the left hemisphere of the brain. Dyscalculia is a neurological syndrome associated with damage to the left temporo-parietal junction. This syndrome is associated with poor numeric manipulation, poor mental arithmetic skill, and the inability to either understand or apply mathematical concepts.

In contrast, prosodic language functions, such as intonation and accentuation, often are lateralized to the right hemisphere of the brain. Functions such as the processing of visual and audiological stimuli, spatial manipulation, facial perception, and artistic ability seem to be functions of the right hemisphere.

Other integrative functions, including arithmetic, binaural sound localization, and emotions, seem more bilaterally controlled.

By knowing a little more about how your brain works, you can be more effective in exercising it to write.

### **Gabriele Rico's clustering process**

Here's how it works:

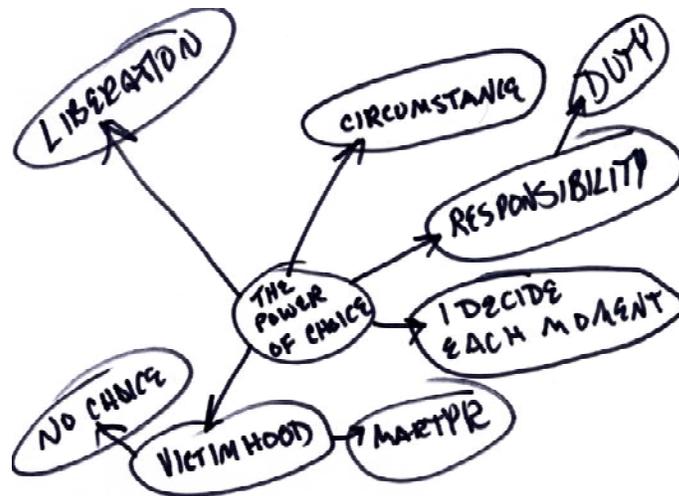
- Have a writing implement and something to write on; pen and paper are fine, as is a whiteboard and

marker. I recommend not using a computer for clustering; I find that it gets in the way, at least initially. Once you are an experienced clusterer, you may enjoy using the computer to do it.

- Find a quiet place to cluster.
- Find the calm within yourself. Take a deep breath; let it out slowly. Again.
- Write the idea, goal, objective, or whatever you want to cluster in the middle of the paper. Draw a circle around it.
- Now write other words around the circle, circling them. Connect them with arrows to the central circle.
- If you feel like connecting a new circle to a peripheral circle, rather than to the central circle, do so. Don't think about hierarchy. Just write down what comes to mind.
- Keep your hand moving. If no new words occur to you, go over the outlines of the circles or the arrows.
- Keep going until you feel as if you are finished. I experience this as a kind of "kerchunk." Rico calls it a "felt sense." It will probably happen in five to twenty minutes.

That's clustering.

Much of the power of your cluster has already manifested by the time you're done. You may use it to create an outline or a list; you may pin it up on the wall to remember; or you may set it aside and not look at it again. But whatever you do with it, you have been changed by the process of producing it. You have surfaced thoughts and knowledge that were inaccessible to you before, and you can now move forward.



### Try it out!

Time for some action! I suggest you start by taking something from the list below as a “seed” for your first cluster:

- The joy of springtime
- My first computer
- Planning a birthday party for (someone close to you)
- My next vehicle
- Introducing my hobby: (fill in your hobby)

Give yourself time to experience the “kerchunk.” But don’t worry if you don’t feel it with your first few clusters.

Don't think a lot about the process. Just do it. You are doing it right; I can tell even though I can't see you... ☺

Now, cluster something of your own. Your plan for the rest of the day. A call you need to make. And yes, your book, if you're ready.

### **What to use it for**

I've introduced you to clustering so that you can use it to write your book. I'll suggest different places to apply it—in deciding what to write about; in naming your book; in coming up with a table of contents; in coming up with sub-chapters; and so on.

But clustering is an empowering tool for every part of your life. It's for planning and reflection, two activities most of us neglect. Clustering is a short cut; it gets you further, more quickly, than anything else I know.

Try it. Use it for anything. Carry a notebook around so that you can cluster at the drop of a hat, and know where to find your clusters later.

It's powerful.

You can write a non-fiction book--quickly! Joel Orr has distilled the best techniques of prolific authors and added his own, so that you can quickly create a book that will credentialize you, differentiate you in your market, and establish you as an authority in your field. His method yields a book--and organizes your knowledge so that you can easily create ebooks, courses, and presentations for multiple streams of income!

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